

The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
March 2013



U.S. Border Patrol, Las Cruces Station

Monday, March 11, 2013, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Good Samaritan Social Center
Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

Richard Hudson, Patrol Agent in Charge of the Las Cruces Station, will speak to League members about border patrol operations in Las Cruces. He will review the 2012-2016 U.S. Border Patrol Strategic Plan, the role at the regional and local levels of the U.S. Border Patrol, and the operations in Las Cruces.

Established on May 28, 1924, by an act of Congress in response to increasing illegal immigration, the U.S. Board Patrol is the law enforcement arm of U.S. Customs and Border Protection within the Department of Homeland Security. Added to its original mission is the detection, apprehension, and/or deterrence of terrorists and terrorist weapons. Border Patrol agents work to facilitate the flow of legal immigration and goods while preventing the illegal trafficking of people and contraband.

Seventy-five years ago, border agents numbered 450 officers. Today, there are over 20,700 with approximately 17,000 assigned to the southwest border. Border agents are part of the U.S. Civil Service

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March Calendar - Women's History Month

March 4 (Monday) - **Deadline to make reservations for Lunch with a Leader.** RSVP Roberta Gran, Tel: 373-8490, Email: robertagran@q.com.

March 7 (Thursday) - 2-4 p.m., **Board Meeting**, Branigan Library, Roadrunner Room.
Deadline for submission of reports and Annual Meeting to Bonnie Burn.

March 11 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., **Lunch with a Leader, Topic: U.S. Border Patrol, Las Cruces Station, Richard M. Hudson, Patrol Agent in Charge**, Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Lunch: \$10. **Reservations are required.** If you don't cancel your reservation, you will be charged for lunch.

March 21 (Thursday) - 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. **Current Events Book Club** - Gwen Hanson's Home, Tel: 556-9251, Email: gwenhanson10@gmail.com. Book Selection: *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth* by David C. Korten

Notable dates

8 - International Women's Day
17 - St. Patrick's Day

10-16 - Open Meeting Sunshine Week

Mark Your Calendar

April 20, 2013, - LWVGLC Annual Meeting
May 18 and 19 - 2013 LWVNM Convention hosted by LWVGLC

The VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

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Web Site: www.lwvglc.org

President - Bonnie Burn

Vice President & Program
Erika Graf-Webster

Secretary - Martha Duran

Treasurer - Ruth Benjamins

Director, Membership
Roberta Gran

Co-Director, Voter Services
Gracia Class
Gwen Hanson

Nominating Committee
Chair: Nancy Phillips
Elected Member: Judith Scott

STUDY GROUPS

Affordable Housing
Vicki Simons -522-4813
Christina Little-373-1882

Education
Jane Asche - 532-8087
Sue Cain - 647-8250

Impediments to Voting in Doña Ana County

Johnnie Aldrich - 522-1544
Roberta Gran - 650-8490

Mental Illness Services in Doña Ana County

Becky Beckett - 522-8171
Mickey Curtis - 532-5655

Metropolitan Court
Marjorie Burr - 522-2528

Action Committee
Vicki Simons - 522-4813

Web Master - Dale Yeo

Newsletter Editor
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013
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U.S. Border Patrol *(Continued from page 1)*

system and enter the service at a government service (GS) grade of 5, 7, 9, or 11, depending on education and experience. To become an agent, one must meet qualifications such as U.S. citizenship, no conviction for domestic violence or a felony, residency of at least three years in the U.S., valid driver's license, and pass a medical exam, drug test, and a background investigation. A prospective agent must enter the service before the age of 40, and is eligible for retirement after achieving 20 years of service and age 57.

The Border Patrol is responsible for patrolling 6,000 miles of Mexican and Canadian international land borders and 2,000 miles of coastline around the Florida Peninsula and the Island of Puerto Rico. Agents are on duty 24 hours per day, seven days per week, in all kinds of weather, and in many isolated communities throughout the U.S.

Our guest speaker, Richard Hudson, hails from the Washington, D.C. area. He is a graduate of George Mason University (1993) with a BA in Government and Politics. His areas of secondary emphasis are Spanish Language/Latin Culture and Soviet Diplomacy/Russian Studies. He holds a MA in National Resource Strategy from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Department of Defense, a component of the National Defense University.

Patrol Agent Hudson graduated in the 271st Session of the U.S. Border Patrol Academy in Glynco, Georgia. During his career he has been involved in immigration and naturalization, anti-smuggling, detention and deportation, and anti-terrorism. He has traveled throughout Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Asia, and he taught Academy courses. He rose through the administrative ranks of the Agency and took up his post in Las Cruces in September 2010.

Board Highlights - February 7, 2013, Meeting

- Erika Graf-Webster and Roberta Gran attended League Day at the Legislature and reported on visits with legislators and the program of speakers organized by LWVNM. (See report p. 5)
- The Annual Meeting committees are working on business agenda for the meeting and will report to the Board at its meeting on March 7.
- Voter Services reported that the update of the directory of elected officials, *Who's Who*, is completed and available on the League's web site: www.lwvglc.org. Print copies should be ready for distribution by the end of February.
- The Voting Impediments Study survey has been revised and is currently awaiting distribution.
- In preparation for the 2013 LWVNM Convention, May 18 and 19, 2013, the GLC Planning Committee will be meeting on February 12. Registration form and convention details will be published in the *La Palabra*, Spring 2013 issue.

President's Message

Did you know that Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was a member of the League of Women Voters? I learned this only recently, and I have made her the focus of attention during March, Women's History Month.



Although Eleanor Roosevelt was a well-known public figure, I was surprised to learn that during the 1920s, she was a League member. She served as Vice President for Legislative Affairs in the during the first decade of League history.

She was not a suffragist, although her life overlapped with Carrie Chapman Catt (1859-1947) and Alice Paul (1885-1977). She worked hard for many of the social reforms that were issues for the League (e.g., child labor laws, minimum wage, opportunities for women in government and industry). After women got the vote, she acknowledged that they had an important role to play in the political life of the county.

During the 1920s, the League achieved its legs. Inheriting its organizational structure from the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), it was a federation of affiliated state Leagues that eventually grew into a grass roots organization. At that time, all League programs at the national, state and local levels were proposed by national Board program departments and standing committees and then authorized by the delegates at a national convention. Combining the legislative expertise of the suffragists and her own interest in politics, Eleanor was able to effectively pursue the early League policy on legislative activism.

After the death of President Roosevelt, she continued to contribute. At the end of World War II, President Truman spearheaded the establishment of the United Nations. He asked the League of Women Voters to help publicize and encourage support for the organization—which it did. In 1945, President Truman appointed Eleanor as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly. She then became chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. She was instrumental in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. After stepping down as chairperson in 1951, she served as the first U.S. Representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Under President John F. Kennedy she chaired the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. In recognition of her work, she was posthumously awarded the first Human Rights Prize in 1968.

A final footnote: The League was one of the first organizations in the country officially recognized by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO). It still maintains official observer status today and has special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council.

Bonnie Burn



Membership Update

Carol Groves
3045 Buena Vida (#208)
Las Cruces, NM 88011
Tel: 521-3220
Email: cjgroves@gmail.com

New Address:

Nancy Phillips
2975 Terrace Dr. (# 226)
Las Cruces, NM 88011
Email: Phillips775@msn.com
(575) 649-5591

Friends of the League

John Ameriks, M.D.
Anonymous
Biad Chile Company
Reed R. Burn
Joseph P. Camunez, D.D.S.
Donald Dresp
Edward Jones - Connie Lee
Jackie and Adrian Edwards
Roberta Gran
Nancy and Ken Hall
Win Jacobs
Al Kissling
Diane and Michael Lilley
Lilley & O'Connell Law Offices
Louise P. Lockhart
Barbara Myers
Francisco Mario Ortiz Law Firm
Jean Ossorio
Kathryn Schultz
Wanda Skowlund
David Sudimack, DDS
Sunspot Solar Energy
Donna and Tom Tate
Williams Design Group, Inc.
Zia Engineering & Environment
Consultants

Thank you



League News



League of Women Voters - United States:

Legislative Priorities: Annually, with suggestions from local League members, the Board establishes legislative priorities. For 2013 the priorities are as follows:

- Tier 1 - Money in Politics and the many facets of Election Reform
- Tier 2 - Climate Change, Gun Safety and Immigration
- As opportunities arise and if League can make a difference, action will be taken on other issues such as Health Care, Defense, and Budget/Taxes.

Supreme Court Case, *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*:

LWVUS and LWV of South Carolina are urging the U.S. Supreme court to uphold Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and not erase 50 years of progress for minority voters. (See article, *The VOTER*, February 2013, p. 4)

Membership Database Census was concluded on January 31, 2013. The Greater Las Cruces League has 76 members (57 Individual, 9 each 1st and 2nd Household, and 1 Honorary member). The total membership for LWVNM is 515. Per member payment is as follows:

- LWVUS - \$31 for Individual and 1st Household; \$15.50 for 2nd Household.
- LWVNM - \$12 for Individual and 1st Household, \$6 for 2nd Household.

New League Forums: Effective in February, the League Discussion List system will be closed because it has been replaced with a League Forum system. The new system provides an opportunity to interact with fellow League members on specific topics and to share experiences and tools. A notification system allows you to decide if you want to follow a topic, a single discussion within a group, or even just a single member. All messages are archived online for future reference. You can easily build and manage your own personal profile.

To join, go to www.lwv.org, click on LOGIN in the top red bar. Once logged in, use the **Forums link** in the left navigation bar. Members

interested in learning more are welcome to view a recorded webinar introducing the new Forums.

League of Women Voters – New Mexico

League Day at the Legislature (February 4 and 5) was a success. The Friday evening reception, to which legislators were invited and included a panel discussion about a priority legislative issue, was well attended by legislators and members. Visits to offices of the legislators to distribute information about priority issues for the League, followed by a series of guest speakers concluded the program. Erika Graf-Webster and Roberta Gran represented the Greater Las Cruces League and summarize the event on page 5.

2013 LWVNM Convention: Save the Date, May 18 and 19, for this biennial event that will be hosted by the Greater Las Cruces League. Registration and program details will be published in the Spring issue of *La Palabra*. To ensure the success of the **Silent Auction**, please search your house for items you would like to donate (see ad, p. 8).

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces:

GLC's Legislative Action: With studies completed and positions adopted, members of the Education and Affordable Housing Committees are monitoring legislative bills for opportunities to take advocacy action.

There are currently nine education bills of interest, and three related to Affordable Housing. Of particular interest is SB166 (Senator Nancy Rodriguez) asking for \$5 million for the state Housing Trust Fund.

Other bills of interest include HB 151 (Representative Mary Helen Garcia) that allows current non-attorney magistrate judges to continue to run for election as long as there is no break in service. Two of the currently serving judges are attorneys.

League Day at the Legislature

Erika Graf-Webster and Roberta Gran, Reporting

The annual event when League members travel to Santa Fe to meet with legislators and attend special League sessions about issues important to its advocacy was held on February 4 and 5. This year both of us represented the Greater Las Cruces League. It was our first time, and we were able to meet a number of the officers of the State League, members from other Leagues, and legislators.

On Monday evening, League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) hosted a reception and panel discussion for League members and legislators. The topic of interest was improving elections in NM. **Diane Wood** of Common Cause discussed the importance of being vigilant about voter suppression, including the lack of sufficient polling places and voting machines, as well as biased, unfair redistricting. She also addressed new campaign finance reform legislation that has been submitted and would apply below the state level in smaller communities (Las Cruces is not likely to be affected.) The next speaker, **Denise Lamb**, Santa Fe County Elections Director, discussed the push towards creation of an independent State Elections Commission. The legislation being proposed for this is based on the Wisconsin Election Accountability Model that is generally viewed as an excellent example of an independent elections commission. Finally, **Dick Mason** handed out "Day at the Legislature" packets to the attendees. These packets included instructions for finding and meeting with the legislators, as well as a list of all the draft legislation submitted to date. Bills that the League has decided to support or oppose were highlighted.

Visits to meet legislators and leave Fact Sheets about priority legislative issues for the state League were the first agenda items on Tuesday morning. This also was an opportunity for us to visit with the Doña Ana Legislative delegation. The Education Committee of our local League met several weeks in advance of this opportunity and reached a decision to compose and distribute a letter about our priorities for local education and introduce our education position. Both packets of information were delivered to all 12 legislators, and Roberta was able to meet and discuss early childhood education with Representatives Archuleta and McCamley, and Senators Griggs, Cotter, and Soules.

On Tuesday, the program concluded with three guest speakers:

Nandini Kuehn, Ph.D., Health Care Expert, spoke about implementing the Affordable Care Act in New Mexico. She first addressed the expansion of Medicaid. Governor Martinez had originally been opposed to accepting this provision of the Affordable Care Act, but there was a big public advocacy effort that resulted in her changing her mind. Medicaid expansion means that an additional 170,000 New Mexicans will now have health care coverage. The remaining big issue in implementing the Affordable Care Act is the establishment of a Health Insurance Exchange. An initial bill to set up this program was vetoed by the governor. She now wants this program to be controlled by the governor's office and has named the existing New Mexico Health Insurance Alliance to be the Health Exchange. There is strong public opposition to this, including by the League, because the Insurance Alliance consists solely of the insurance companies currently operating within New Mexico. The League is supporting an alternative proposal that would have the Health Exchange be made up of representatives of the public, appointed by the governor and by the legislature, plus one representative from the NM insurance industry.

Ruth Hoffman, Director, Lutheran Advocacy, spoke about Social Justice and Public Policy legislation that she will be following during the current legislative session. The bills that Ruth is monitoring cover the following areas: affordable housing, homelessness, family subsistence income, child care assistance, raising the minimum wage, individual development accounts (a program that matches savings by the poor by a factor of 3 or 4 to 1, enabling them to buy homes or send kids to college), maintaining food stamp assistance at the current level, working family tax credits, and driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.

Mary Wilson, attorney, and Immediate Past President of LWVUS, discussed "Essential Elements for Reforming Redistricting in New Mexico." Mary Wilson participated extensively in the NM redistricting process, including attending numerous meetings all over the state where public input was

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League Day at the Legislature *(Continued from page 5)*

sought. She said that a number of lessons were learned; she called them “redistricting ideals”. They are:

1. Be sure to start with a good population count – immigrants, the poor, Native Americans tend to be undercounted in the census.
2. Formalize transparency and public participation in the process. It is important to have the public understand how the legislators feel about various redistricting options – in the end, they are finalized behind closed doors, and the public never gets to know what drove the final result.
3. Pay strong attention to “Communities of Interest” – be sure to define what is meant and how to determine what are the Communities of Interest (for example, the community around a university might be a Community of Interest).
4. Be partisan neutral – i.e., no political party should be favored. If practical, ensure that districts are competitive, so that neither political party has a clear advantage.
5. Independent or bi-partisan commissions work best. Commission members should be just members of the public, they do not need to be judges. Recent experience has shown that there have been very few court challenges where redistricting was done by an independent or bi-partisan commission.

Our first-time experience was well worth the trip. Visiting the House and Senate chambers proved interesting. The Roundhouse houses the offices of the Governor and Secretary of State. One gets a mini-tour of the Roundhouse while delivering League information to the legislators. Because of the brevity of the event, we were not able to attend committee hearings, which is a must for next year’s event. Also, arriving one or two days early would enable more in-depth touring.

Affordable Housing Committee - Christina Little and Vicki Simons, Co-Chairs

League members will remember that the need for affordable housing in our community is acute. The City of Las Cruces 2011-2015 Consolidated Plan and the 2011 Action Plan estimated that there is a shortage of 4,700 affordable rental units for renters earning less than \$20,000. Additionally, there are 7,600 units where renters are cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of household income for rent).

Affordable Housing (Continued)

On January 21, the City Council committed \$200,000 in HOME funds to West Wind Apartments. The proposal is being made by the Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority (MVPHA), JL Gray, and ASA Architects. The project would involve renovating 20 apartments on Pecos Street and building 36 additional units on adjacent property. The Pecos Street Apartments are owned by MVPHA and are not HUD-subsidized.

At a special meeting held on January 29, the City Council funded the Affordable Housing Trust Fund with \$200,000 from the Vehicle Acquisition Fund. This is a very significant move. The money comes from the General Fund and demonstrates the City Council’s commitment to affordable housing. The Trust Fund will serve as a mechanism that allows the City to create and leverage a variety of projects. The mechanism has been in place for over a year; but until this point, there had been no funding.

At the same January 29 meeting, the City Council committed \$200,000 in funding from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to Crosstown Station. This 72-unit mixed affordable and market rate development is located 11 blocks west of downtown on the old SWIG-Compress site; it will consist of rental units ranging in size from efficiency to three bedrooms. It will also have set-aside units for homeless veterans. The project is proposed by Tierra del Sol and Thomas Development.

Both the West Wind Apartments and Crosstown Station are supported by the city for low-income affordable tax credits. The statewide process for the allocation of these tax credits is very competitive. These will be awarded by the Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) in late spring. The City of Las Cruces will not provide the supporting funds unless the tax credits are awarded to the projects.

At the same time, the New Mexico Housing Corporation and Tierra del Sol are working on farm workers’ housing in Hatch. They have received a loan for \$2.12 million from US Department of Agricultural - Rural Development (USDA-RD) and are applying for USDA tax credits. The proposed development (El Camino Real Apartments) will consist of 4 single-family dwelling units with two, three, and four bedrooms.

Committee members are observing the meetings of MVPHA, paying close attention to the actions of relevant governmental bodies, and meeting with representatives of various groups and agencies.

LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS

The League's Observer Corps can enable greater coverage and information gathering, provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern, increase League's visibility, and assist in networking with other groups. We appreciate the reports that are submitted by Observers. Following the League practice of publishing nonpartisan, objective reports, the information submitted may be edited for content and brevity.

Joint Meeting of Las Cruces City Council and Las Cruces Public School Board – February 5, 2013, 1-3 p.m. - Bonnie Burn, Observer

All members were present. The agenda consisted of three items:

School Siting Committee Report: At its October 16 joint meeting, the possibility of establishing a School Siting committee made up of two subcommittees, policy and technical advisory, was discussed. The committee structure may be similar to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) may be established among LCPS District, City Council and County Commission.

Brian Denmark, Assistant City Manager, reported about the first meeting of the Policy Committee held on January 9, 2013. The committee consists of two members from the City Council, two from the County, and two from LCPS. Members discussed the purpose of the committee and submitted suggestions to Councilor Sharon Thomas, who collated them into three categories: conversations and dialogue, schools as community anchors, and planning infrastructure, safety, and health. The Siting Committee does not have the power to choose school sites; but can make recommendations. A second subcommittee, Technical Advisory, has not yet been established.

Mr. Denmark presented the concept of organizing a regional group that would include identified community commissions and boards within the county that share a common interest in specific issues. Although the list was not inclusive, a few examples of entities with common issues of interest are the city and county governments, the Extra Territorial Zone, Las Cruces School District, Town of Mesilla, and the Siting committee. The goal would be to continue working together on policy issues that impact us regionally with recommendations submitted back to the relevant boards or commissions. An MOU would be used to form this group. The issue will be considered further.

School Safety: Sgt. Kiri Davis gave a detailed presentation about the emergency preparedness plan for LCPS District. Her report is not repeated here because it was covered in detail by both local newspapers.

Joint Facility Use: Associate Superintendent of Operations, Dane Kennon, presented an update on the softball complex and soccer fields that are shared by LCPS and the City of Las Cruces. He reviewed the maintenance service and guidelines for use for the area around the Field of Dreams.

The joint committee members agreed to meet at six month intervals.

Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority (MVPHA), February 19, 2013, Board Meeting, Noon – 1 p.m.– Vicki Simons, Observer.

Chairman Art Jiron called the meeting to order. All commissioners were present. The first order of business was public participation, and Chairman Jiron asked that I introduce myself and talk about League's interest in affordable housing. I mentioned that we had sent a letter to the City Councillors thanking them for their recent funding of affordable housing projects (see report, p. 6).

The consent agenda that included changes and clarifications to existing policies was passed.

Reports from management followed. Sharon Hansen, Accountant, presented the financial report, and there was a discussion about the irregularity of receiving grant monies from HUD. From month to month, the MVPHA doesn't know how much it will receive, although presently this is not causing a financial problem.

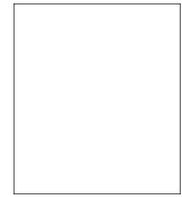
The Housing Choice Voucher Program and Modernization/Maintenance Managers gave their reports involving routine matters.

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FIRST CLASS

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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN
 VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO**

2013 CONVENTION

Saturday, May 18 thru Sunday, May 19
 Hilton Garden Inn, Las Cruces

Details in *La Palabra*, Spring 2013



**SILENT
 AUCTION**

**LWVNM Convention
 May 18 and 19, 2013**

Search your cupboards, storage areas,
 and households for items (in good
 condition) that you can donate to make
 the 2013 LWVNM Convention Silent
 Auction a success. Bring items early to
 the first meeting on Saturday, May 18.

Contact: Andrea Targhetta
 (505) 792-1148,
 Email: atarghetta@comcast.net

Housing Authority *(Continued from page 7)*

Jesse Padilla, Deputy Director and Housing Program Manger responsible for overseeing the rental program of units owned by the Housing Authority, explained that the waiting list for units is based on matching requests for a certain bedroom size for the requesting family and availability of units. The voucher program is a lottery process that awards a certain amount of money to aid families with rentals, and the voucher may be used at any cooperating rental in the private market anywhere in the U.S. There are long waiting lists for both programs, but the voucher program has a longer wait.

Robbie Levey, Executive Director, discussed the proposed tax-credit projects West Wind Terrace (Housing Authority) and Crosstown Station (Tierra del Sol and Thomas Development). There were questions from the Board about the Robledo Ridge complex where the renovations are just being completed. She remarked that the Housing Authority will no longer consider building houses to sell to the public. This type of project has not turned out well in the past.