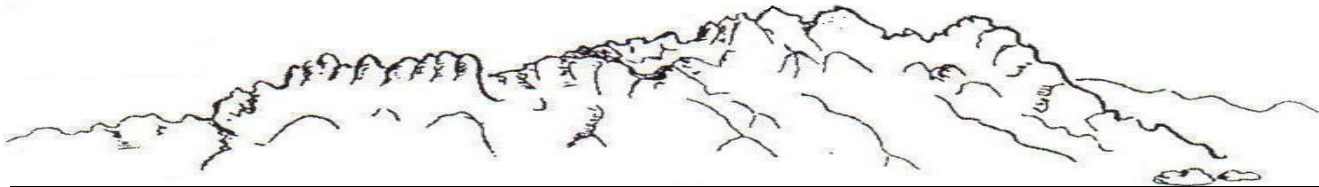


The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
November 2011



Lunch with a Leader

Monday, November 14, 2011, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (Note: Extended time)
Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

PANEL DISCUSSION KICKS OFF AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY

Christina Little and Vicki Simons, Co-Chairs

The Affordable Housing Committee has completed its year-and-a-half study of affordable housing in Las Cruces and will present the information it has gathered to members in two phases. The first phase will be a panel discussion at Lunch with a Leader on Monday, November 14, with three experts in affordable housing in the area: **David Dollahon**, Community Development Manager, City of Las Cruces; **Thomas Hassell**, Executive Director, Las Cruces Housing Authority, and **Rose Garcia**, Executive Director, Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation. (See p. 6 for biographies of panelists) They will briefly discuss the working of their agencies, conduct a discussion of latest developments in the field, and then take questions from our members. These three housing experts were part of the committee's ten interviews. The material from the other seven interviews can be read in *Voter* articles listed on page 6.

The second phase of our information presentation to members will be **two unit meetings on January 23 and 30, 2012**. During those meetings, the committee will present more material, discuss the consensus questions, and then formulate a consensus position and vote on it. We look forward to having you help us reach a position that will allow us to take action on this important issue that affects our community.

(Continued on page 6)

CALENDAR

November 2 (Wednesday) - 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., **Board Meeting**, Branigan Library, Board Room.

November 7 (Monday) - **Deadline for Lunch with a Leader**. RSVP Paula Nielson, Email: paulanielson@comcast.net, Tel: 386-7957.



November 8 (Tuesday) - **Las Cruces Municipal Election**.

November 14 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., **Lunch with a Leader, Topic: Affordable Housing Study - Panel Discussion: David Dollahon, Thomas Hassell, and Rose Garcia**, Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Lunch is \$10.

Notable Dates in November:

11 - Veterans Day
12 - Elizabeth Cady Stanton Birthday (1815-1902)
24 - Thanksgiving Day

Save These Date

December 3 - League Holiday Social
January 14 - Legislative Breakfast
January 23 & 30 - Affordable Housing Unit Meetings

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
Paula Nielson

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Director, Membership
Roberta Gran

Director, Voter Services
Erika Graf-Webster

Nominating Committee
Chair: Vicki Simons
Elected Member: Sadie Valverde

STUDY GROUPS

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

Education
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013

**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
burnb@comcast.net

**EDUCATION STUDY POSITION
(199, 1999, 2001, and 2011)**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC) supports public schools as the primary method of educating students, K-12. Further the League believes that education is the cornerstone to perpetuating a strong and viable democracy. The public education system should establish as important goals for all students an understanding of the nature of democracy and the responsibilities of citizenship, the ability to think critically, and the acquisition of skills necessary to continue to learn and function as adults in a complex society.

In addition, the LWVGLC supports the following strategies to ensure the greatest possible academic success for all students:

Innovative Practices for Student Success:

- Use of accepted national standards for a common core curriculum that provides a uniform body of knowledge and academic skills for all students accompanied by flexibility for local school systems to determine how this body of knowledge and skills is imparted to students.
- Alternative educational options for parental choice within the public education system that fit the individual abilities and learning needs of their children.
- Project-based learning focused on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills of students, as well as the use of technology for self-paced learning.
- Engagement of local businesses in formalized one-on-one relationships through partnerships with individual schools that benefit student preparation for the workforce.
- Business initiatives that offer incentives to encourage students to develop career skills, graduate from high school, and seek work schedules that support student attendance at school.

Early Childhood Education and Community and Parent Involvement:

- Collaboration among a broad base of community organizations, social service agencies and the local school system to provide parents with programs to assist their children from birth to age 5 in acquiring the language experiences that prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.
- Programs that encourage increased parental involvement in the education of their children that are welcoming and inclusive of parents from economically disadvantaged families.

Evaluation of Teachers, Students and School Performance

- Student evaluation that focuses on student academic progress rather than rigid standards of proficiency.
- Standardized testing that is focused on measuring student progress in

(Continued on page 4)

President's Message

Approval of the Education Study position this month was a major milestone (see p. 2 and 4 for complete position text). The Committee appreciates the interest and participation of our members in reaching consensus that enables advocacy action—especially in the upcoming 2012 NM Legislative Session.



We can be very proud of our voter services activities for the 2011 Las Cruces municipal election. The invitation to hold our candidates forum in the City Hall Council Chambers was a welcome surprise. That the forum was televised live and rebroadcast throughout the month of October was a special benefit to us and to the community. Our *Voters Guide* was in demand and very well received.

Our November Lunch with a Leader kicks off our Affordable Housing Study, and we hope that all of you will attend. Having an affordable housing position will enable us to act on this important community issue.

As you know, decisions about redistricting of our U.S. Congressional and NM Legislative Districts will be made by the court. The NM Legislative Redistricting Committee, 18 members and 35 associate members, held ten meetings throughout the state. More than 100 New Mexicans gave testimony. The state League's Fair Representation Committee has been keeping the public informed and videotaped the hearings. Their concluding opinion is that after all testimony was heard, none of it was considered and no new concept maps were drawn. Legislators considered the original concept maps produced by Research & Polling that were given a bill number by the Legislative Council Services for identification purposes. The Fair Representation Committee is again raising the issue of an Independent Redistricting Commission that would not include sitting legislators and whose duties and responsibilities would be clearly spelled out by statute.

Bonnie Burn

Board Highlights

October 5, 2011, 10-11:30 a.m., Branigan Library, Board Room

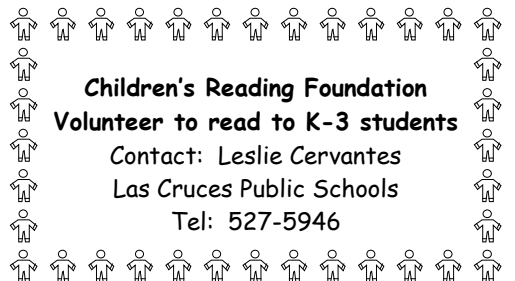
- Education Study Position: Adopted by Board (see pp. 2 and 4 for full statement).
- Voter Services: Candidates Forum will be held on October 5. *Voters Guide* will be published in October 14 issue of *The Bulletin* and will be available on League's web site: www.lwvglc.org.
- Fund Raising: A fund drive will be organized by a committee that will look at short- and long-term opportunities.
- NM Bicentennial Celebration: The League submitted its entry form to participate in the downtown parade, January 7, 2011.

Welcome! 
NEW MEMBERS

**Membership Directory
Email Address Corrections**

Jane Carter
janecarter34@gmail.com
(No period between Jane and Carter)

Christina S. Little
Christina.S.Little@gmail.com
(Christina spelled with an "a")



Children's Reading Foundation
Volunteer to read to K-3 students
Contact: Leslie Cervantes
Las Cruces Public Schools
Tel: 527-5946

Friends of the League

- John Ameriks, M.D.
- Biad Chile Ltd. Co.
- Joseph P. Camunez, DDS
- Citizens Bank
- Dental Associates, PA
- Doggie Dude Ranch and Cat Farm
- Donald and Winifred Dresp
- Adrian and Jackie Edwards
- Nancy & Ken Hall
- First New Mexico Bank
- Edward Jones - Connie Lee
- Patricia Kratz
- Lilley Law Offices
- Louise P. Lockhart
- Barbara Myers
- Francisco Mario Ortiz Law Firm
- Judith Scott and Paul Thomas
- Wanda Skowlund
- LaJune Smith
- Marie Sutter-Sinden
- Tom Tate
- Zia Engineering & Environmental Consultants

Thank You

Education Position *(Continued from page 2)*

all core academic subject areas over frequent intervals and provides timely results to the teacher to guide the design of instruction to aid individual student progress.

- Teacher performance evaluations that demonstrate the teacher's in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and pedagogy.
- Evaluation of teachers based on achievement of personal professional goals in the performance evaluation plans developed at the local school system level that includes job performance observations and consideration of student academic progress.
- Termination of teachers and principals using a due process procedure when they no longer meet minimum standards.

Finances and Funding

- Funding for public education positioned as the highest of state budget priorities.
- A funding formula that provides for a high quality education for all students that is consistently and fairly applied across the state.
- Public education funding being limited to public schools or alternative options that fall within the public school system.
- Funding of programs that foster children's language development, from birth to age 5, for success in kindergarten and beyond.
- Full funding of all state and federal mandates, so as not to place an undue burden on the local school system.

The League recommends that the assessment of the performance of schools and of teachers be based on multiple factors that indicate not only the overall quality of the education provided to the students, but also improvements in student academic growth measured through multiple methods, not solely through standardized tests.

*Adopted October 5, 2011, Board Meeting
League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces*

Committee members: Jane Asche, Sue Cain, Sally Christman, Erika Graf-Webster, Roberta Gran, Judy McGuire, Betty Pool and Bonnie Burn, chair.

Thank You

Voter Services - Erika Graf-Webster, Director**A Busy October for Voter Services** - Erika Graf Webster, Director

Another successful cycle of support to local voters is coming to a close. The first half of October was jam-packed with voter services activities related to the upcoming Las Cruces municipal elections.

Candidates Forum

Thanks to an invitation by the city's Public Information Officer, Udell Vigil, we were able to hold our Candidates Forum in City Hall Chambers on Wednesday, October 5. This forum was televised live, and is being rebroadcast repeatedly until Election Day on November 8. Twelve candidates (3 Mayoral, 2 Municipal Judge and 7 City Council) were certified by the City Clerk, and attended the forum. Over 100 individuals filled the audience. The Forum was moderated by Bonnie Burn. Cliff Pelton, Roberta Gran, Johnnie Aldrich and Sue Cain served as question screeners. Bob Burn was the timer, and Fran Clark, Gwen Hanson, Martha Duran, Ellen Haltom, Christine Pheley, and Dale Yeo assisted Erika Graf-Webster in ensuring that everything went smoothly. Two student volunteers from Mayfield High, Fabian and Mallory, assisted with picking up the cards.

Voters Guide

Preparations for the *Voters Guide* had to proceed concurrently with the preparations for the forum due to the very short timelines between candidate certification and the start of early voting on October 12. Dale Yeo again headed this effort – she did a yeoman's (pun intended) job in turning the submitted responses into a final finished document submitted to *The Bulletin* in only three days! Voter Services worked with *The Bulletin* to develop an attention-getting cover for the *Voters Guide* that showed the newly redistricted districts and precincts. The *Voters Guide* was published and distributed on October 14.



**2011 Las Cruces
City Election
NOVEMBER 8**

Report from Affordable Housing Committee, October 2011

Vicki Simons & Christina Little, Co-Chairs

A discussion of the use of tax credit in affordable housing programs concludes the interview phase of the Study.

A Primer on Tax Credits

Federal Tax Credits

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program was created 25 years ago. It applies only to affordable rental properties (either new construction or purchase and renovation). The IRS authorizes a certain volume of tax credits that each state has the authority to issue (a certain amount per capita authorized to each state, adjusted for inflation). The Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) is the LIHTC allocation and compliance agency for New Mexico, and each year developers (housing authorities, nonprofits, and for-profits) apply to MFA for tax credits.

As an example, say MFA awards \$1 million in tax credits (not actual money) to a developer of a qualified project. The developer then sells the credits, either directly to one or more investors or to a tax credit syndicator (who then assembles a group of investors and acts as their representative). Provided the property maintains compliance with program requirements throughout the affordability period, investors may claim a dollar-for-dollar credit against their federal tax liability every year for 10 years, so the \$1 million in credits is actually worth \$10 million to the investors. The investor or syndicator buys the credits from the developer, usually at a discount. In this example, let's say the investor or syndicator purchases the credits from the developer for 90 cents on the dollar of the total (*i.e.*, 10-year) value of the credits – in other words, the developer receives \$9 million in exchange for the \$1 million in credits (which is valued at \$10 million because the credits may be claimed for 10 years).

The developer benefits because the \$9 million provides up-front equity for the project, minimizing the project's debt which in turn increases future cash flows and allows the developer to offer lower rents. The investors (typically corporate investors) benefit because they may claim a credit against their federal income tax liability each year for the next 10 years. If a syndicator is involved, the syndicator benefits because it makes a profit from the spread between

what the investors pay for the credits and the discounted price they paid the developer for the credits. (In this example, let's say the syndicator paid the developer \$9 million, but the investors paid the syndicator \$9.5 million – the syndicator would net \$500,000 in profit.) Note – the numbers used here are exaggerated and the actual transaction costs are simplified to streamline the example and convey a general sense as to how the LIHTC works.

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit program is extremely competitive. The tax credit application process provides a number of incentives to developers to incorporate design and/or operational features in their projects to address certain policy objectives. For example, developers may earn more points in the scoring of their applications if they demonstrate commitments of other funding sources (leverage), target certain income levels and/or populations (*e.g.*, seniors or families), support service plans for residents, and include energy efficient and green design features. All projects must demonstrate evidence of community support, and a design competition is built into the process. Many of the projects are very aesthetically pleasing.

Bottom line, this is a very powerful incentive for engaging private capital in the development of affordable housing. The LIHTC program is a federal subsidy.

State Housing Tax Credits

The New Mexico Affordable Housing Tax Credit is based on a charitable model. Essentially, the state also authorizes a certain level of tax credits (tied to population). The developer (better to be nonprofit) can apply to MFA for a certain amount of tax credits. The developer then solicits charitable donations and offers tax credits to the donors, who may claim a credit of 50 cents on the dollar against their state tax liability. Also, if the developer is a 501(c)(3) organization, donors may claim the federal charitable tax deduction on their federal income taxes.

An organization like Habitat for Humanity can apply to MFA for the credits and if awarded, can then go to

(Continued on page 6)

Affordable Housing - Lunch with a Leader *(Continued from page 1)*

The Voter articles: *Issues of The Voter are available on the League's web site: www.lwvglc.org.*

September 2010	Report from MFA Town Hall, Las Cruces
November 2010	Interview with David Dollahon, City of Las Cruces
January 2011	Interview with Las Cruces Housing Authority
May 2011	Habitat for Humanity
June 2011	Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation
July 2011	Housing First, Community of Hope
August 2011	David Dollahon, Report on 2010 Census as Related to Housing
September 2011	Sharon Thomas, City Councilor, City of Las Cruces
October 2011	New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA)
November 2011	Affordable housing tax credits

David Dollahon, AICP, has served as the City of Las Cruces Neighborhood Services Administrator since August 2000. The Neighborhood Services Section implements HUD-funded entitlement programs; primarily Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) programs. Between the two programs, this averages approximately \$1.5 million per year that must be directed to those making less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).

Thomas Hassell is the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Las Cruces and the Doña Ana County Housing Authority. Mr. Hassell was hired in June, 1987, and has 24 years of service. He is currently also President of the New Mexico Housing Corporation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose purpose is to develop and manage affordable housing within the State of New Mexico; active Director of the New Mexico Housing and Community Development Corporation; and Chairman of the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority, Housing Advisory Committee.

Rose Garcia is the Executive Director of Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, a premier affordable housing and community development organization devoted to this region of New Mexico, West Texas and Southern Arizona. For over 25 years, Garcia has managed housing developments, directed services and completed 6,000 affordable housing units to assist residents of several communities who earn low to

Affordable Housing - Tax Credits *(Continued from page 5)*

its donors and raise the money. The credit may be used to offset state income taxes, gross receipts taxes and compensating taxes (excluding local option gross receipts taxes imposed by a municipality or county, or state government gross receipts tax) to any eligible individual, business, and local or tribal government that donates land, buildings, materials, cash or services for an affordable housing project approved by MFA.

For the state tax credit, the minimum permitted donation to an Affordable Housing Project is \$200; the maximum donation to an Affordable Housing Project which will be eligible for an investment voucher is \$1 million.

Eligible affordable housing projects include MFA approved single-family homebuyer projects, multifamily rental projects, transitional housing and emergency shelters. Eligible activities may include land and building acquisition, construction, remodeling, improvement, rehabilitation, conversion and weatherization. Down payment and closing cost assistance is an eligible activity related to the acquisition of single-family housing. Funding of operating expenses is not an eligible activity under the New Mexico Affordable Housing Tax Credit Program.

(Continued on page 7)

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.

Las Cruces Public School Board Meeting, September 20, 2011, 6:30-7:00 p.m. Sue Cain, Observer

Dr. Connie Phillips called the meeting to order with all members of the board present except for Dr. Bonnie Votaw who was out of town.

Mr. Christopher of Comcast Cable, presented a \$21,524 check, part of Comcast Cares Days, that will form a partnership with the public schools to address the "digital divide." The check is based on the number of volunteers who showed up to help clean and fix Alameda Elementary School on April 30, 2010. The 1,165 volunteer count earned the district the national program's second highest check behind only Portland, Oregon. Comcast Cable offered Alameda students a discount on Internet Service (\$9.95 a month) and computers (\$150) if they qualify for the National School Lunch Program. Only 45% of households earning under \$30,000 a year have any type of broadband or Internet.

The Superintendent's Report included a Certified/Classified Employee Report by Andrea Fletcher and an Athletics Equity Act Report by Teresa Romano and Ernest Viramontes. The LCPS has been adding new sports and using strategies for involving more female students based on both a similar proportion of female and male students and on the numbers of males and females in each

middle and high school. The state has given public schools three years to attain the standards of no greater than 3% difference in participation by boys and girls. The philosophy of the middle school athletic programs is "no one cut" and "everyone gets to play."

Dr. Sanchez gave a report on long term suspensions in 2009 and 2010. His research indicates that 121 high school students were suspended long term in 2009 and only 79 in 2010, a decrease of 34.7%. Middle school long-term suspensions also dropped from 78 in 2009 to 55 in 2010, a decrease of 27.6%. This positive trend was the result of many hours of hard-work by teachers, counselors and administrators.

Superintendent Rounds shared the following legislative priorities for 2012:

- Funding concerns that include money for the roads for Centennial High School and charter schools.
- Governor's issues: retention of students, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), grading schools A-F, and teachers' evaluations.
- A resolution from LCPS to have the legislators postpone any new legislation about the Governor's issues until the next legislative session. More time is needed to determine the impact of the possible changes proposed by the Governor.

Affordable Housing - Tax Credits *(Continued from page 6)*

The New Mexico Affordable Housing Tax Credit Program was created in 2005, and since its inception the program has been underutilized. This may be partially due to a lack of public information about the program. Also, the developer does have the burden of raising the money, and this is not always easy.

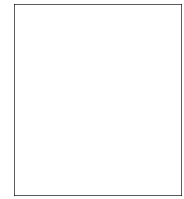
Depending on the donor's tax liability and the donation amount, the donor/tax credit recipient can claim a portion—not the entire amount—for up to five years after the tax year during which the original donation was made.

At this point tax credits are practically never the only way that projects are financed. Generally there are as many as six to twelve funding sources. The process is very complex.



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FIRST CLASS



NOVEMBER 2011
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Membership Application

Membership: Individual (\$60), 2nd Household Member (\$30), and Students (\$25)

Name: _____

2nd Household: _____

Address: _____ **City/State/Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____ **Email:** _____

\$ _____ Contribution to the League Make Check payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces

\$ _____ Contribution to the Education Fund (Tax Deductible) Make check payable to
 League of Women Voters Education Fund

All checks should be mailed to

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.