

The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
July/August 2014



Lunch with a Leader

South Central Regional Transit District
Sharon Thomas, Former City Councilor & Mayor Pro Tem, City of Las Cruces
Jack L. Valencia, Jr., Project Manager, South Central Regional Transit District



Monday, August 11, 2014, 11:30 a.m.
Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

At the League's January 2013 Lunch with a Leader, Jack Valencia introduced members to the South Central Regional Transit District. (See *VOTER*, February 2013, Look Back, p. 5). Sharon Thomas, then Las Cruces City Councilor, was working with Mr. Valencia to bring the ambitious program of uniting three counties, Sierra, Otero, and Doña Ana, and eight municipalities, Las Cruces, Mesilla, Alamogordo, Sunland Park, Truth or Consequences, Elephant Butte, Hatch, and Williamsburg, into a single transit district.

Since then, both have been working diligently on this initiative and their presentation will bring us up to date on their efforts and next steps in making the transit district a reality. In New Mexico, transit districts

(Continued on page 3)

CALENDAR

August 4 (Monday) - Deadline for making reservations Lunch with a Leader, RSVP: Ruth Benjamins, Email: benjpa@q.com, Tel: 527-0204.

August 7 (Thursday) - 1:30-3:30 p.m., Board Meeting, City Hall Conference Room 2007A. All are welcome!

August 11 (Monday) - 11:00 - 11:30 a.m., LWVUS Convention Debrief and Discussion. Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. (See Ad, p. 3)



August 11 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Lunch with a Leader: Sharon Thomas and Jack Valencia, Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. \$10. Reservations Required: Ruth Benjamins, Email: benjpa@q.com, Tel: 527-0204. If reservations are not cancelled, you will be charged for lunch.

August 21 (Thursday) - 2:00-4:00 p.m., Third Thursday Book Club, *Privacy in the Age of Big Data* by Theresa M. Payton and Ted Claypoole, and *Dragnet Nation* by Julia Angwin at the home of Dale Yeo, (575) 405-7530 (C). Please select one book to read and let Dale know your choice so that a balanced conversation can be held.

Notable Dates

August 26 - 94th Anniversary of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1920) giving women the right to vote and Women's Equality Day.

The VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

P.O. Box 8322
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*President's Message*

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer and enjoying your travels if you are spending some time away with family and friends. Many of our members, including Board members, are out of town during August. It almost seems that we should be taking August off instead of July (or maybe both??).

The little bit of lull in our activities has led me to ponder how to better harness the skills of our members and convince some of our inactive members to become more active. There are so many things that need doing! Some of these activities could provide you with interesting opportunities to get to know our community better and would enable our League to have a bigger impact in the region. Here are some of our needs:

- We need members to serve as observers who attend and report on these community meetings:
 - ◇ County Commission
 - ◇ City Council (I try to attend or at least view most of them on CLC-TV)
 - ◇ Viva Doña Ana Planning
 - ◇ Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District
- We need members to represent the League at community meetings that deal with areas of interest to the League such as poverty-related issues (for example, minimum wage) and immigration issues – this would involve collaboration with other organizations such as ACLU and CAFé
- We need more members to participate in interest groups and committees dealing with health, mental health, water, and land use. We have a small cadre of members who are participating in these groups but we really could use quite a few more in order to keep on top of these issues.
- We need volunteers who can review the myriad of planning documents, for example, the Las Cruces Sustainability Action Plan, that are being released by various governmental entities. These plans identify areas where League advocacy might make a big difference in the future of our community.
- Finally, we are in great need of having someone serve as our public/community relations person who can interface with the media, keep on top of important ad hoc community meetings that are announced, and bring more visibility to the League.

So think about it – could you take on one of these activities? We, the League, would be very grateful, and we would be stronger for it. As always, you can contact me at egrifwebster@q.com or 521-0600.

Erika

Transit District *(Continued from page 1)*

are charged with connecting existing transit service and filling the gaps where no transit service exists. The South Central Regional Transit District (SCRTD) composition has changed so that only Doña Ana and Sierra counties and seven municipalities within those counties are part of the district.

SCRTD has recently put in place three pilot projects across the two counties.

1. A contract with Z-Trans (Alamogordo) to add to its Alamogordo to Las Cruces route. That route now has four stops in Doña Ana County on the east mesa along highway 70.
2. A contract with Rio Grande Transit that connects Hatch to Las Cruces with stops in Elephant Butte, Truth or Consequences and other locations in Sierra and Doña Ana counties.
3. Developed four new routes to the south. There are two routes that go from Las Cruces to Anthony. One goes down Main Street and the other goes down Highway 28. In addition, there is a route from Chaparral to Anthony and one from Sunland Park to Anthony.

The pilot projects will be in operation until November and there will be a request for permanent funding on the November ballot.

In this presentation, Sharon and Jack will describe the high need for public transportation in our region. They will discuss their work with the Empowerment Congress, a component of the Ocotillo Institute of Social Justice, whose members identified transportation needs as a major focus of its work to increase quality of life in our communities. Finally, they will focus on the future of transit services in our area.

Sharon Thomas, a League member, is a retired English professor from Michigan State University. She and her family opened the Red Mountain Café in Las Cruces in 1998. Sharon was on the Las Cruces City Council for six years and was Mayor Pro Tem for four of those years. Since retiring from the city council in 2013, Sharon has been working for the South Central Regional Transit District. As a city councilor, she was chair of the SCRTD Board and now chairs its Citizen Advisory Group

Jack Valencia has a wide range of hands-on-experience in federal, state, and local government in transportation and transit related fields. He served as executive director of the NM Passenger Transportation Association and is a former Las Cruces City Council (1985-2001).

We invite you to join us for lunch and presentation!

{Public transit}...drives economic growth by providing businesses with access to new customers, new employee talent and new tax incentives to encourage public transit use.

**William Millar, Former President
American Public Transportation Authority**

**MEMBERSHIP
DIRECTORY
2014-2015**

**Remember to pick up a copy
at Lunch with a Leader
on August 11.**

**Copies will be mailed to those
members not attending.**

LWVUS 2014 CONVENTION

LOW DOWN



Ardyth Norem

LWVGLC Delegate, will give a short briefing about the business of the Convention and her first impressions.

Monday, August 11, 11 a.m.

Half-hour preceding
Lunch with a Leader
Good Samaritan Social Center
3011 Buena Vida Circle

League Friends

- John Ameriks
- Anonymous
- Sharon Burbano
- Bob Burn
- Joseph Camunez, DDS
- Ken & Nancy Hall
- Pat Kratz
- Louise Lockhart
- Barbara Myers
- Clifford Pelton
- Nancy Phillips
- Betty Pool
- Sunspot Solar Energy
- Donna Tate

Thank you

Board Highlights - June 5, 2014, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m., City Hall, Conference Room 2007A

- **Education Committee:** Ruth Benjamins, Co-Chair, reported that the newly written paper, *For-Profit Virtual Charter Schools - Literature Review and Report*, was ready for distribution. The Board approved the cover letter and distribution list. Board approved holding a unit meeting on November 17 to update members about this initiative.
- The following **Lunch with a Leader schedule** was adopted:
 - ◊ September 8 - Julia Brown, Doña Ana County Manager speaking about County issues.
 - ◊ October 6 - Afternoon Social, Bureau of Elections Supervisor Scott Krahling and Deputy County Clerk Mario Jimenez speaking about the upcoming November election and constitutional amendments related to the election process.
 - ◊ November 10 - Bill Childress, District Manager, Las Cruces District Office, Bureau of Land Management, speaking about next steps in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument process.
 - ◊ December 6 - Legislative Breakfast
- LWVGLC will be collaborating with AAUW, Café, and the Bureau of Elections in a **“Get Out the Vote”** effort for the November General Election including a **Voter Registration Fair at Young Park on Saturday, September 20** (see Burr article, p. 7).

Look Back: Las Cruces Consumer Loan Abuse
Steve Fischmann, Former NM State Senator and Community Activist

Reported by Johnnie Aldrich

Former NM Senator Stephen Fischmann has left the elective political scene so that he is now a full-time resident of Las Cruces -- but he is still on the campaign trail.

Fischmann’s current campaign begins with educating the public and legislators about predatory lenders and their negative impact on the economy of New Mexico and Doña Ana County. The second part of his campaign will involve advocacy for change; he will challenge NM leadership to listen to and act upon the desires of the 86% of polled voters who want to see more stringent regulation of predatory lenders.

He began with the definition: These are small businesses, many of them controlled by out-of-state entities, that make loans with little or no effort or collateral required of the borrower. Classified variously as “payday, title, and installment loans,” they are repaid at exorbitant interest rates. Fischmann was blunt: “Let’s avoid euphemisms: these are loan sharks whose business fits the definition of usury.”

Who are the customers? What constitutes “abuse?”

Almost 100% of the clientele can be classified as low-wage earners. They are single parents, veterans, the elderly, and heads of low-income families. Many of them already receive government subsidies of one sort or another. Thus the abusive practices of the lenders constitute a “siphoning off of government funds,” money that might be spent otherwise in the city or county.

Fischmann offered two telling examples of the abuses from his extensive study of the issue:

The typical average payday loan is for \$350 borrowed for two-to-four weeks. The borrower is able to renew; many of them take advantage of the 140 days of credit. At the end of the payment period, the customer will have paid out \$800 for the \$350, an APR (Annual Percentage Rate) of 330%.

(Continued on page 5)

Look Back *(Continued from page 4)*

Another popular product of the sharks is the interest-only car title loan. Borrowers hand over an extra set of keys to their car (in case of the need for repossession) and a copy of the title. If they are lent as much as \$1,000, they must pay \$250 monthly ON THE INTEREST. The principal of the loan remains intact until the victim comes up with sufficient cash to pay it off. The APR (annual percentage rate) on these loans can go as high as 800%.

How extensive is the lenders' presence?

At present, 646 of these businesses involved in "store-front lending" are licensed across the state of New Mexico; at least 50 of them in Doña Ana County. They are part of a nation-wide system, an "invisible industry," invisible because most of us pay little attention to them. The industry hires lobbyists to represent the sharks as "defenders of the people" and to influence legislators and state-level regulators to ignore their abusive practices.

What can government do?

- Some states have banned the industry.
- The U.S. military and 15 states have established interest and fee caps for the sharks' enterprises. The Pentagon claims that the practices of the lenders cause "so much stress for our families that military readiness is affected."
- State leadership, executive and legislative, could support low-interest credit alternatives.
- Local ordinances could discourage abusive practices. (Such ordinances have been adopted in Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio TX).

What can Las Cruces and Doña Ana County do?

- Adopt resolutions urging the NM legislature and governor to enact interest-rate caps.
- Develop local ordinances that limit predatory lending abuses.

Why have such remedies not been enacted?

The industry is powerful and rich, with ample funds to spend in lobbying in both the executive and legislative branches of our government. The result?

- Our NM Legislature has failed to act on various reform bills during the last six years, (i.e., the bills never leave the committee step of the legislative process).
- Our attorney general has failed to exercise legitimate regulatory security.
- The NM Department of Regulation and Licensing has failed to exercise regulatory authority given to it under the Small Loans Act.

Industry arguments against regulation

- Losing access to rapidly acquired "emergency money" will hurt low-income citizens. (Fischmann noted that 70% of the loans are not caused by emergencies. In fact, the high cost of repayment usually helps to CREATE a financial emergency for the borrower.)
- Enacting interest rate caps (like the 36% adopted in many states) will drive the sharks out of business and the state will lose jobs. A lowered rate doesn't mean that the sharks will not continue to make money, Fischmann pointed out, but it does lower their usurious profits. They'll stay in business.
- Most people repay their loans on time, so the annual percentage rate is irrelevant. (Repayment funds usually come from another loan from a different shark. The cycle of debt continues.)

What can YOU do?

Senator Fischmann is asking targeted anti-industry groups to support his efforts to change the industry by signing petitions and contacting legislative and executive leadership in New Mexico.

Mail: Stephen Fischmann, PO Box 2580
Mesilla Park NM 8804, Tel: 505-273-4956,
Email: steve@steviefischmann.com



League News



LWVUS - 2014 Convention June 6-10, 2014, Dallas, Texas

*Reported by Donna Reynolds, President
LWV of Santa Fe County*

Highlights from this biennial event are given below.

Elisabeth MacNamara was re-elected President in a contested race with Deidre MacNab, President, LWV of Florida

Per member payment will be raised to \$32 in fiscal year 2015-2016.

A **Human Trafficking position** was adopted by concurrence by delegates:

LWV opposed all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern day slavery and we believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.

A study and update on **Campaign Finance Reform** was adopted:

A study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution; a review and update of the League's position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change; and a review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress.

In other action, resolutions about carbon tax and felon disenfranchisement were passed. Delegates failed to pass a proposed living wage position and a study about economic inequality. The new Agriculture position was shared with delegates.

LWVUS Convention Commentary -

Ardyth Norem, LWVGLC First-Time Delegate

I was impressed. Imagine being there as you joined 700 women and men in one great hall, all participating in an energetic democratic decision making process! New policies were considered, a new multiple study focus for the next two years was approved, actions to improve and facilitate work at the national and local levels were taken. Multiple agendas focusing on issues of justice, individual rights and empowering voters were at varying stages of study, documentation and implementation. A series of caucuses focused on building skills and resources that will strengthen and empower local Leagues. The meetings occurred from 7:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. each day with no scheduled breaks. Individuals made their own arrangements to get meals. All of this occurred with an intensity of intention and committed focus to get things done.

I was deeply impressed by the high activity and deep commitment occurring at the level of local Leagues as well as the broad spectrum of tasks being addressed at the national level. A league member who serves as a League lobbyist to the United Nations said that UN members from other countries seek out League-derived information. The work of the League is respected and sought after by some decision makers who seek to make informed and effective choices.

The June 2016 LWV national convention is scheduled for Washington DC. Can you plan to attend? Expect to experience new insights, new possibilities and greater appreciation of issues as you increase the focus and energy of your participation in our local League and community. It can give you a joyful sense of being part of a larger community of common commitments!

LWV of Greater Las Cruces

Voter Services

Marcia Anderson, Co-Director

Spring and early summer have been spent planning voter services activities for the upcoming November, 2014, General Elections. Marjorie Burr and Johnnie Aldrich are coordinating voter registration activities (see Get Out the Vote article right column). Dale Yeo, Co-Director, will be editor and manage the production of the *2014 Voters Guide*.

Candidates Forums Three are being planned to accommodate the large number of candidates running for state and local offices. The League again has been fortunate to be able to use the City Council Chambers for the forums and will have access to the city's television capabilities. This means the forums will be rebroadcast on CLC-TV after the forums are over.

Here is a tentative **SAVE THE DATE** schedule:

Tuesday, September 9: LWVGLC will be hosting candidates for State Attorney General, Hector Balderas (D) and Susan Riedel (R), and candidates for Public Regulation Commission, Sandy Jones (D) and Ben Hall (R). In an effort to introduce voters to the other candidates running for state office, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico invited candidates for Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Auditor, and State Treasurer to forums in Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Because of scheduling conflicts, none of these candidates are available to attend the September 9 Las Cruces Candidates Forum.

Tuesday, October 7 will be for candidates for the Magistrate Court, County Commission and Sheriff.

Tuesday, October 14 will feature candidates for the NM House of Representatives.

All forums will be in the City Council Chambers from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. We will need

League volunteers to act as greeters, runners to collect audience questions, and question screeners. To volunteer, please contact Marcia Anderson, tel: 523-1317 or email: maanders211@yahoo.com.

Get Out The VOTE - Marjorie Burr

Did you catch the Rachel Maddow Show on July 11 featuring Deidre MacNab, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVFL), on the court decision on Congressional redistricting in Florida in a suit which LWVFL brought and in which the League prevailed? It was a proud moment for me; I hope it was for all League members.

LWVGLC has not sued anyone, but we have worked year after year to promote citizen participation in the election process, and to ensure that every person's vote counts in that process. Many of our members volunteer as voter registrars and spend hours at tables in front of Walmart and other public places to encourage people to register to vote so that on election day they are able to exercise their civic right and duty. This is important work.

Our strongest voter registration efforts will be in September to get people registered before **registration closes on October 7**. We will be setting up tables at stores and supermarkets on weekends, at public events where people are congregating, and at the university, community college, and high schools. Some of us will be going door to door in neighborhoods.

At the suggestion of our League leaders, the Bureau of Elections this year is conducting a **Voter Registration Fair on Saturday, September 20, in Young Park**. There will be free food, music, candidates to mix and mingle with, and opportunities to register to vote. LWVGLC will have a table and we will need to staff it with our voter registrars. Mark your calendar and plan to be there. September 23 has been designated as National Voter Registration Day.

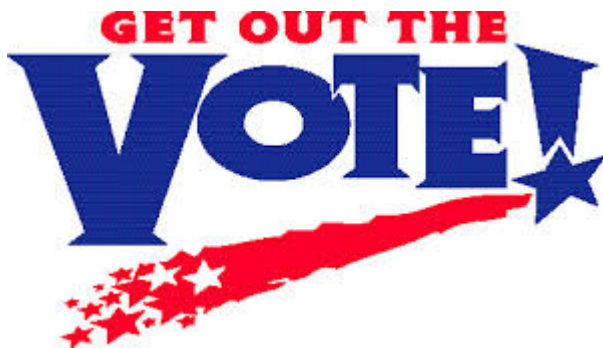
(Continued on page 8)

Get Out the Vote *(Continued from page 7)*

LWVGLC has 12 people certified to register voters in Doña Ana County. We can use more. Becoming certified requires a trip to the Bureau of Elections in the County Clerk's office located in the Doña Ana County Government Center, 845 N. Motel Blvd. A brief orientation is offered, and the applicant signs statements and is issued voter registration applications. Completed registration forms must be turned in at the County Clerk's office within 48 hours of the voter applicant's signing the forms which may involve another trip by the voter registrar to the Doña Ana County Government on Motel Boulevard (or mailing them immediately with a post mark showing the 48 hours). Please consider whether this is a service you as a League member can do for our organization and for the fellow members of your community. Contact Marcia Anderson (523-1317 or email: maanders211@yahoo.com) or Johnnie Aldrich (522-1544 or email: jraldrich@earthlink.net) if you can perform this service.

The general election this year on November 4 is considered an off-year one, and doesn't attract the voters that a presidential election does. But, on many levels, no election can be considered "off-year."

In New Mexico we will be electing a U.S. Senator, a U.S. Representative, and all our state elected executives, as well as state legislators and county commissioners and officials. Quite a slate with which to become familiar. In addition, there are several ballot issues to be decided. Let's help our fellow citizens with this task.



New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, June 11-13, 2014, NMSU Barbara Hubbard Room, *Reported by Win Jacobs*

Water questions were the first order of business (after the committee's closed executive session). In terms of intent, that sounded promising. In reality, there are so many issues in the air, all unresolved, we can report facts given as status reports and say, "stay tuned."

The overarching issue is the Lower Rio Grande litigation: will the U.S. Supreme Court allow the Texas counter-suit against New Mexico to go forward? That should be answered by late summer. Dismissal is not anticipated, thus we probably face years and layers of lawyering, considerable monies expended, and not an extra drop of water for either side.

On the matter of Lower Rio Grande adjudication, progress is real but slow. Numbers tell the story: 222 consent orders achieved in 2013, about the same number so far in 2014; 18,000 sub-filings, with 60% of sub-filers contacted, 42% of claims settled.

New Mexico is a participant in the 2006 Arizona Water Rights Settlement. There are some 15 proposals submitted to deal with stream system issues. Of closest interest to us are those dealing with the Gila River--to divert or not, and if so how--and are the federal monies, which must be used soon or forfeited, worth the local expenditures necessary for maintenance.

Finally, agriculture supplies 10% of the state's economy, yet often seems seated at the foot of the table, if there at all.

The main presenters included: Gary King, NM Attorney General; Scott Verhines, State Engineer; Estevan Lopez, Director, Interstate Stream Commission. Also presenting were Steve Hernandez, Attorney, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and Dino Cervantes, Board Member, New Mexico First.

Ongoing Debate and Action Regarding the Minimum Wage in Las Cruces

By Erika Graf-Webster and Sharon Thomas

In *The VOTER*, June, 2014, we had reported on the Great Conversation that was sponsored by the Las Cruces City Council about the minimum wage. The information gathered and opinions expressed during that meeting were reported to a subsequent city council meeting on April 21 by Randy Harris, a League member, who had conducted the Great Conversation.

At this same city council meeting on April 21, in a surprise to the public attendees, Councilor Miguel Silva proposed a new draft ordinance that had been developed by him and Councilor Ceil Levatino to raise the minimum wage to \$8.50 in two steps. After some refining of the wording, this proposal was put to a vote at the June 2 Council meeting.

During the public input part of the June 2 meeting, a substantial number (around 20 or so) individuals asked to speak on the issue – comments that opposed this proposed ordinance seemed to outnumber the ones in favor, but there was no formal tally. Following the public input segment, the council took up the issue, and some of the comments were quite contentious. A competing proposal had been submitted at an earlier council meeting by CAFé, a local faith-based organization, that called for raising the minimum wage to \$10.10, the number proposed by President Obama, in several steps. Some of the council members felt that the Silva-Levatino proposal was an obvious end-run to stifle the effort aimed at the \$10.10 minimum wage.

In spite of the large number of individuals who spoke for and against either of the proposals at this meeting, some of the councilors said that they had heard nothing new. Each councilor then expressed his or her opinion on the Silva-Levatino proposed ordinance, and it became quickly clear that the council was deeply divided, with Councilors Pedroza, Small and Sorg strongly opposing it, while Silva, Levatino, Smith and Mayor Miyagishima supported it. And that is

how the final vote went – four in favor and three opposed, so the resolution passed.

According to this new ordinance, the minimum wage will increase to \$8 in July 2015, \$8.50 in January 2016, and then be adjusted according to the cost of living in succeeding years.

Based on the Great Conversation discussions and opinions expressed in the newspapers, there appears to be substantial public support for the higher \$10.10 minimum wage. CAFé launched a petition drive to put the issue to the voters. They had to obtain at least 2,257 signatures to force the issue to come before the city council again, with the objective that it be placed on the ballot in the upcoming election.

In early July, CAFé delivered 6,000 signatures to the city clerk on this petition. This number represents about 10% of the voters registered in the city. The proposed wording for the ballot question has been worked out between CAFé and the city attorney.

The number of signatures on the CAFé petition is sufficiently large that the city council is obligated to address this proposed ballot question formally. The next step for CAFé then is to submit the proposal to the council for a hearing and vote. Even if the council votes it down, the council is required to hold a public election on the matter within 60 days. At that point, the issue is whether the city holds its own election just on the minimum wage or whether it is put on the ballot for the November general election. Lynn Ellins, county clerk, is fine with adding it to the general election ballot. There may be some efforts by some on the city council to hold a separate election or to try to hold the minimum wage election concurrent with the general election but in the next room or some other adjacent facility. These efforts would be another end run to try to diminish the turnout for the minimum wage vote.

**Water Town Hall Implementation Kick-Off Meeting,
Sponsored by New Mexico First**
Albuquerque Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, July 11, 2014
Win Jacobs, Observer

John D'Antonio, formerly NM State Engineer now employed by the Army Corps of Engineers, hosted the meeting, and he is serving as the chair of the implementation team. This meeting's agenda reviewed the 15 recommendations agreed to by 80% or more of the participants in the town hall convened by New Mexico First on April 15-16, 2014, that weighed the need for input to legislators and to citizens.

Important to note: New Mexico First is a membership organization made up of businesses, non-profits, and individuals statewide, producing non-partisan public policy reports on critical issues facing New Mexico.

***Water** was this year's issue of choice. Staff and members of New Mexico First will devote 12-18 months to advance the town hall's recommendations, utilizing strategies suggested by the participants.*

The recommendations in brief: Improve state and regional water plans; make our water supply resilient and flexible; plan for extreme droughts; restore watersheds; protect against wildfire and water source

loss; reduce endangered species conflicts; advance shortage sharing agreements; improve water rights management; improve the adjudication process; capture precipitation; assess brackish water sources; clarify brackish and produced water process; invest water dollars wisely; expand water funding sources; and conserve water and protect against contamination. Go to www.nmfirst.org to see the full final report and focus on the suggested strategies, that will lead to actions and results.

Take-aways from this meeting: active water resource management (AWRM) can be implemented faster than adjudication can be finished—both are essential! Several, if not all, of the recommendations are being addressed by other groups, and New Mexico First's best contribution can come through collaboration with such groups. Absolutely top priority, from the town hall, were improving state and regional water plans and restoring watersheds (97% each).

The town hall also acknowledged that many, if not all, recommendations need education and outreach. Here, the League of Women Voters is equipped to play a significant role. Is it willing to do so?

Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority (MVPHA), July 22, 2014,
Noon - 1:30 p.m., *Vicki Simons, Observer*

The meeting was convened at noon by Board Chairman Felix Cordero. Present were Commissioners Beth Bardwell, Shelley Sanders and the new Resident Commissioner, Annaliza Gourneau. Also present were Executive Director Robbie Levey, Deputy Director and Housing Manager Jesse Padilla, Accountant Sharon Hansen, and Modernization and Maintenance Manager Lee Montague.

Three resolutions about administrative matters were approved. Included was more money from NM Mortgage Finance Authority to aid with housing for the homeless with mental problems; additional funding for about 10 people was allocated. Reports from staff members were routine. The longest discussion involved the xeriscaping project planned for all MVPHA housing. This project will save at least \$30,000 per year in water charges, plus comply with HUD's new directives for conservation measures.

The meeting was adjourned so the Board could go into executive session.

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 Schools (LCPS)

Board Meeting, June 20, 2014, 3:00 p.m.,
Administration Building - *Sue Cain, Observer*

The meeting was called to order by President Bonnie Votaw with all members present.

Important items included were the following:

Superintendent Rounds' Compensation Package for the 2014-15 School Year of \$175,956 matching the 3% increase for teachers was approved by the members of the Board with one dissenting vote by Maria Flores.

White Sands Missile Range student volunteers who have given several hundred hours in volunteer services were recognized. Several students gave 300 to over 400 hours of service in the 2013/14 school year.

The superintendent's report included a request from patrons to name the new remodeled auditorium at the Court Youth Center after Irene Oliver Lewis in recognition for the dynamic leadership she has provided for many years to Alma d'arte Charter High School and now at the Court Youth Center. Many supporters voiced their support for Irene Oliver Lewis during the "Public Input." Previous policy has not allowed this type of recognition in the past, but the LCPS Board Members voted unanimously to make an exception in supporting the request to name the Auditorium in honor of Irene Oliver Lewis.

Dr. Steven Sanchez gave an update of the District's Dual Language Framework that is based on the Gomez and Gomez model. The model is to teach a mixed classroom of Hispanic and Anglo students in grades 1-3 using both Spanish and English. Teachers may alternate teaching in Spanish and

English on each day of the week or in alternate weeks. This model was implemented last year. This spring's testing results of the students showed significant growth and improvement in all testing areas and more proficiency than was expected. Test results showed that English Language Learners (ELL) and English as a First Language students were equally successful. The model will continue to be used and expanded to more elementary schools this next year. The JUMP program uses the same mix of Grades 1-3 in classrooms except that you'll hear students using both English and Spanish in the Gomez & Gomez programs.

Dr. Sanchez then shared that the district's goal for all students is to build culture and high expectations for all students, provide resources so that all teachers can effectively and successfully teach ELL students, and to expect and assist building administrators to understand the framework and how multi-age and dual language programs should operate.

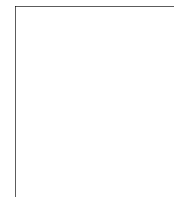
School Board approval was given for the School Resource Officer (SRO) agreement between the LCPS and the Town of Mesilla along with the School Resource Officer (SRO) agreement between the LCPS and the City of Las Cruces. Also discussed and approved was a small increase in the elementary school lunches for 2014-15.

The bond project for the Booker T. Washington Elementary front office design and the bridge overpass as a part of the remodeling for Las Cruces High School were discussed and approved. Ratification of the 2014-15 CSEC-LC (support staff) salary schedule (3-6% increase based on positions) also passed.



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces
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 Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
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FIRST CLASS



OCTOBER 7
*Voter
 Registration
 Ends*

0

EXTRA

**LWVUS 2014 CONVENTION
 DEBRIEF & DISCUSSION
 11:00 A.M. BEFORE
 LUNCH WITH A LEADER**

Membership Application

After November 1 - \$30 for Individual;
 \$15 for each additional household member
 Annually: \$60 Individual; \$30 Second
 Household; \$30 Students

Name: _____
 2nd Household: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Email: _____
 Telephone: _____

Contributions:

_____ **League of Women Voters Education
 Fund (Tax Deductible)**
 _____ **Contribute to LWV of Greater Las
 Cruces (Not tax deductible)**

Mail checks to LWV of Greater Las Cruces,
 P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006

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

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