

# The VOTER

League of Women Voters  
of Greater Las Cruces  
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)  
Web Site: [www.lwvglc.org](http://www.lwvglc.org)  
December 2014



*Legislative Breakfast*  
*Saturday, December 6, 2014*  
*9:00 - 11:00 a.m.*  
*Good Samaritan Social Center*  
*Creative Arts Room*  
*3011 Buena Vida Circle*

The 2014 General Election is over, and you are invited to attend the annual Legislative Breakfast to welcome newly elected NM Representatives and returning local state legislators representing Doña Ana County.

We are trying something different this year. Members of the Board have identified four legislative priorities--affordable housing, education, health, and water-- for advocacy during the upcoming 2015 NM legislative session. We have prepared information packets containing fact sheets about each of these issues that will be distributed to legislators, members and guests who attend. Those legislators who are unable to attend may have a packet mailed to them or receive a personal visit.

After breakfast, members and legislators will engage in a dialogue about the League's advocacy priorities. Following this dialogue, legislators will have time to share what they hope to accomplish in the upcoming legislative session and to comment on some of the major issues to be resolved during the 60-day session that begins on January 20. The meeting then will be open to questions from League members and their guests.

**RSVP before Nov. 28** Ruth Benjamins  
Tel.: 527-0204, Email: [benjpa@q.com](mailto:benjpa@q.com)

As in past years, the Action Committee, League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM), will be holding telephone conference calls updating us about bills under consideration. LWVNM also will be holding its League Day at the Legislature in Santa Fe, an annual event that starts with a reception the evening before and continues the next day with visits to the Roundhouse to observe legislative committee hearings or chamber votes. **Save the dates, February 9 and 10.**

## *Calendar*

**November 28 (Friday)**  
**Deadline for reservations**  
**for Legislative Breakfast**

RSVP Ruth Benjamins  
Tel.: 527-0204, [benjpa@q.com](mailto:benjpa@q.com)

**December 4 (Thursday)**  
**Board Meeting - 1:30-3:30pm**  
1:City Hall Conference Room 2007A.

**December 6 (Saturday)**  
**Legislative Breakfast - 9-11am**  
Good Samaritan Social Center  
Creative Arts Room

**December 10 - (Wednesday) - 12 Noon**  
**Healthcare Committee Meeting**  
El Calvario Methodist Church  
300 N. Campo St.

**December 15 (Monday) - 10-12 N**  
**Unit Meeting: Voting Impediments**  
Good Samaritan Social Center  
Conference Room  
Lower level - Next to Auditorium

**December 18 Thursday) - 2-4 pm**  
**Book Club: Uncertain Justice: The**  
**Roberts Court and the Constitution**  
by Laurence Tribe and Joshua Matz  
At the home of Vicki Simons  
522-4813, [vrsimons@comcast.net](mailto:vrsimons@comcast.net)



## *Note These Dates*

**NM Legislature Meets**  
January 20 - March 21, 2015

**LEAGUE Day at the Legislature**  
February 9-10, 2015

**LWVNM 2015 Biennial Convention**  
May 15-16, 2015 Albuquerque

**The VOTER**

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**The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces**

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**Vice President & Program for Study and Action**  
Gwen Hanson

**Secretary** - Sadie Valverde

**Treasurer** - Ruth Benjamins

**Director, Membership**  
Johnnie Aldrich

**Co-Directors, Voter Services**  
Marcia Anderson & Dale Yeo

**Director Events and Speakers**  
Roberta Gran

**Nominating Committee**  
Chair: Ardyth Norem  
Elected Member: Sue Cain

**Program for Study & Action**

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

**Education**  
Ruth Benjamins - 527-0204

**Election Procedures**  
Erika Graf-Webster

**Health Care**  
Vicki Simons - 522-4813

**Mental Health Services**  
(Vacant)

**Quality of Life (Happiness)**  
Cynthia Pelak - (575) 496-3170

**Voting Impediments**  
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**Water Issues**  
Win Jacobs - 521-9331

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Barbara Goedecke - 522-0323

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**Newsletter Editor**  
Bonnie Burn—526-0013  
burnb@comcast.net

**Board Meeting Highlights**

November 6, 2014, City Hall Conference Room 2007A

Kudos were expressed to the Voter Services Directors and all the League volunteers for a job very well done for this election cycle. Both the Voters Guide and the Candidates Forums received many positive compliments from the community.

Much of the discussion at the meeting centered on the Legislative Breakfast scheduled for December 6. Vice President Gwen Hanson has taken the lead on this event. We are planning for approximately 50 attendees. The room will be set up in an arrangement that facilitates the ability of the attending members to interact with the legislators. The Breakfast will be a major mechanism for us to tell our legislators about our major priorities: Education, Affordable Housing, Water and Health. Fact sheets for each of these issues have been prepared and will be distributed to the legislators as well as the attending members.

Two unit meetings will be held during the next two months (the Education Committee held its on November 17): The Voting Impediments Study Unit Meeting is scheduled for December 15, and the Quality of Life Committee will be scheduling one for January.

Roberta Gran requested that the planned “Making Democracy Work” award that is part of the Membership & Leadership Development (MLD) program be discussed in detail. Roberta, who chairs this award committee, felt that there was not enough participation in the committee. She said that discussion was needed to define exactly what this award should be and determine if there was enough interest among our membership to pursue it. In addition to honoring someone in the community, the award would be a way of bringing visibility to the League. Ardyth Norem, in her relatively new role as MLD Lead, said that she would like to do some research to determine the League's activities that already create visibility in the community, determine where League member recruitment efforts are successful, and assess the relevance of an award as opposed to some other League activity to achieve the same goals. Following this research, she will come back to the Board with a recommendation about how to proceed.

Migration of production of the VOTER from Bonnie Burn to Jane Carter is proceeding. They will work jointly on the December issue, and Jane will take over completely for the January issue.

**UNIT MEETING - VOTING IMPEDIMENTS STUDY**  
Monday, December 15, 2015, 10:00 a.m. - Noon  
Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference Room

## President's Message

Election Day has come and gone. Many things had gone right with our pre-election day activities, but there were certainly areas in which we might benefit from changing our procedures.



A major area that warrants looking into is our ability – or lack thereof – of attracting participation of the Hispanic community in our voter education efforts. In order to improve this situation, Sue Cain and I met with Rose Ann Vasquez of CAFé and Marisol Diaz of the Ocotillo Institute's Empowerment Congress. We reviewed our voter services activities – registration, Voters Guide, Candidate Forums – and many recommendations were made by Rose Ann and Marisol on how these activities can be made more accessible for the Hispanic community. We will continue to work on this collaborative effort for the foreseeable future, and hope to have a much better Hispanic outreach program in place before the 2016 elections.

Back in September, the Board met with the chairs/heads of our committees. At that time, four issues were identified as LWVGLC's "top priority" issues: Affordable Housing, Education, Water and Health. Since then, the committees in these areas prepared fact sheets about these issues. The League has decided to make up packets of these fact sheets for all of our local legislators. These packets will be handed out both to our local legislators and our members at our Legislative Breakfast on December 6. Be sure to come to this Breakfast so that you can hear the discussion of these issues with the legislators. The packet will be sent to legislators who do not attend the Breakfast, but we hope that most of them will be there.

A 2014 Voter Services post mortem meeting, attended by Marcia Anderson, Dale Yeo, Bonnie Burn and me, was held on November 21. The purpose of this meeting was to review the Voter Services processes used during the 2014 General Election cycle, and to identify areas where improvements might be made and what lessons were learned. While the Voter Services team did an excellent job using the existing procedures (e.g., how we have done this work in the past), the attendees agreed that certain improvements could be made. We have formed a small ad hoc committee for this work (anybody who would like to participate, let me know). We will address each Voter Service function individually, first concentrating on the Voters Guide. The results of our work will be reported in the VOTER.

***And I wish you all a very wonderful holiday season!***

***Erika***



## Membership Directory

### New Members

Bea Garrett  
 P.O. Box 6688  
 Las Cruces, NM 88006  
 Tel: (575) 382-0010  
 Email: bea-garrett@yahoo.com

Christine & Gil Sorg  
 1140 Hermosillo Dr.  
 Las Cruces, NM 88005  
 Tel: (575) 358-3773  
 Email: christiesorg@gmail.com

Yvonne Magdalena Flores  
 1173 Cave Springs Trail  
 Las Cruces, NM 88011  
 Tel: (575) 521-3980  
 Cell: (818) 458-7480  
 Email: yvonnvavoom@aol.com

### League Friends

Sharon Burbano  
 Bob Burn  
 Joseph Camunez, D.D.S.  
 Don Dresp  
 Joy Goldbaum  
 Ken & Nancy Hall  
 Pat Kratz  
 Louise Lockhart  
 Barbara Myers  
 Clifford Pelton  
 Nancy Phillips  
 Betty Pool  
 Judith Scott  
 Sunspot Solar Energy  
 Donna Tate

*Thank you*

## Behavioral Health Update

*Bonnie Burn Reporting*

The dilemma for 15 NM behavioral health providers who had allegedly committed overbilling fraud continues to be unresolved by the NM Attorney General. Several new developments have arisen and are summarized in this article.

The Las Cruces Sun-News (October 30) reported that the auditing firm, Public Consulting Group Inc. (PCG), had not followed its own procedure of normally giving companies a chance to respond before issuing official findings. Although PCG would not comment on why NM providers were not given an opportunity to reply, PCG did confirm that it is the company's standard procedure. NM Human Services Department (HSD) initiated the investigation by the NM Attorney General's office. Medicaid federal regulations indicate it is the state's Medicaid agency, HSD, that must find "credible allegation of fraud" before asking a law enforcement agency to launch an investigation. To date the Attorney General's Office has cleared only two, Counseling Center of Alamogordo and Northern New Mexico's Easter Seals El Mirado, of the 15 agencies involved, which indicates it was able to find documentation that refuted the charges. Easter Seals investigation is back with the Attorney General after HSD requested further investigation. Both providers had greatly reduced amounts of suspicious charges: Counseling Center's questionable claims were reduced to \$375 from \$1,800, and Easter Seals went to \$368 from \$1,990. Presbyterian Medical Services paid a \$4 million repayment fee to preserve its Medicaid funding in order to stay in business. PCG was open to review the documentation that may have disproved the alleged charges; HSD was not. Presbyterian had little choice but to settle.

The Las Cruces Sun-News (October 25) reported that Southwest Counseling in Las Cruces was suing HSD and the Attorney General's Office for violating its due process rights. HSD indefinitely suspended Medicaid payments in June 2013 to Southwest Counseling alleging overbilling for provider services. This action caused Southwest

Counseling to close. More than a year later, the Attorney General's office has not completed its investigation that is projected to take as long as six years. In the opinion of Southwest Counseling this lengthy investigation without an opportunity to respond violates its due process. Southwest Counseling seeks a hearing about HSD's payment suspension and unspecified damages, costs and attorney fees. Southwest Counseling has been serving the community since 1963 and depended on the contract of \$1.25 million to remain in business. Bryan J. Davis is the attorney representing Southwest Counseling.

The Las Cruces Sun-News (October 22) reported that New Mexico Senate President Pro Tem Mary Kay Papen introduced legislation at the hearing of members of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee that would require the state to prove wrongdoing before cutting off government dollars to health-care organizations suspected of committing fraud or overbilling Medicaid. This proposal comes on the heels of the HSD's decision in 2013 to stop Medicaid payments while auditing 15 NM behavioral health providers. This action caused the NM providers to close and be replaced by providers from Arizona. The legislation would avoid the limbo in which the providers find themselves as a lengthily investigation by the Attorney General's office has ensued.

As further research into this issue continues, New Mexico In-Depth uncovered an October 25, 2012, an email that raises concerns about contact between OptumHealth New Mexico, contractor for the State of New Mexico, and Arizona behavioral health providers to help out if overbilling problems are uncovered. A full copy of the email is available at [nmindepth.com](http://nmindepth.com).

The Las Cruces Sun-News (October 17) published an article by New Mexico Senate

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Behavioral Health *(Continued from page 4)*

President Pro Tem Mary Kay Papen that focused on the role of OptumHealth New Mexico who has administered more than a billion dollars in behavioral health services since receiving its contract several years ago. The article raises the issue of OptumHealth's role in the replacement of NM behavioral health providers with those from Arizona:

- \* A suggestion by OptumHealth CEO Elizabeth Martin that replacing NM providers was a way for the administration to attain national recognition for pursuing Medicaid fraud.
- \* Meeting with staff of the "special executive program integrity project" held before the Public Consulting Group had begun its audit.
- \* In a hearing before the Behavioral Health Subcommittee of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee, Presbyterian Medical Services stated that OptumHealth officials were present during settlement negotiations that had Presbyterian repay \$4 million in fees to retain its Medicaid funding to stay in business. This repayment was made without giving Presbyterian the opportunity to present documentation to refute the overbilling allegations. OptumHealth also was responsible for monitoring the utilization of services, catching overbilling, and periodically auditing the providers.

The compliance manager for OptumHealth care has come under scrutiny for destroying and altering records that showed OptumHealth's failure to meet deadlines for appeals or grievances of clients for whom services were denied or reduced. The manager was indicted by a grand jury and charged with 10 counts of falsifying documents.

Arizona replacement organizations are not doing well--staffs have been reduced and requests for increased reimbursement have been initiated after \$24 million in State subsidies ran out. There is concern about

the accuracy of data that services are being provided to more residents. New data reveals that inpatient admissions have reached 2,200, admissions that may have been unnecessary if adequate community services had been available.

The hope is that a new Attorney General will take steps to recover millions in taxpayers' dollars from OptumHealth and ensures that it no longer receives State contracts.

In other action, Las Cruces Sun-News and New Mexico In-Depth also sued HSD alleging it violated the open records law by not releasing the full Public Consulting Group audit. Judge Douglas Driggers, 3rd Judicial District, ruled that HSD could keep much of the audit secret in order to protect the investigation. This suit is being appealed.

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### **Look Back: Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument William T. Childress, District Manager, Bureau of Land Management**

***Bonnie Burn, Reporting***

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the federal agency responsible for managing the newly designated national monument. On May 21, 2014, this became the second monument designated for Doña Ana County. It encompasses 496,330 acres that include the Organ, Portrillo, and Doña Ana Mountains, and the Desert Peaks. The Prehistoric Trackways was the first national monument designated in 2009.

BLM is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior and is responsible for managing 250 million acres in 13 western states including Alaska. In Doña Ana County, it is responsible for 5.4 million acres including 22 wilderness study areas.

The presentation provided reassurance that all of the new monument lands would remain open to the public and of its intention to include the public in its planning of a Resources Management Plan (RMP).

*(Continued on page 10)*



# League News

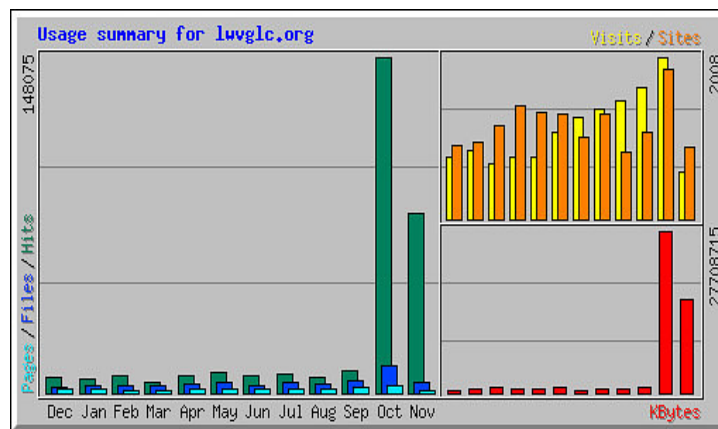


## LWVGLC on the Web in 2014

by Dale Yeo, Webmaster

The 2014 Voters Guide appeared prominently on two websites for the months of October and November during the time voters were looking for information. One site was the League's, [lwvglc.org](http://lwvglc.org), and the other was in a special section of the Las Cruces Sun-News website, [www.lcsun-news.com](http://www.lcsun-news.com). The Voters Guide is still available at these two sites. It was especially important this year to provide access to the Voters Guide in many venues, as the public seemed to be hungry for this sort of non-partisan information. The usage statistics available through our website service provider, Stormweb, seemed to bear this out.

To aid in interpreting the site analytics, a graph for the year is included below. This bar graph includes statistics from December, 2013, through November 11, 2014. The website was "visited" 2,008 times in October and 580 in November.



The site's analytics represented by the green bars are the number of times people accessed any of the different sections of the website (known as hits). In October, the green bar represents 148,075 hits and 79,185 hits in early November.

The yellow bars in site's analytics indicate the number of different computers accessing the website. Starting in May and through to the election, there is a marked increase of visitors topping out at 2,008 in October. It is important to understand that individuals do have access to multiple computers. This data along with the number of hits on the site, indicate that the interest in the site increased for the months leading to the election, but the time navigating the site did not increase until the release of the Voters Guide in October.

This suggests it is important to keep our website and Facebook page looking current and the information up-to-date. Our Facebook page may be accessed by:

Google: "**League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces Facebook**". You do not have to have a Facebook account.

**OR**

Go to your Browser and key in:

**<http://www.facebook.com/LeagueofWomenVotersofGreaterLasCruces>** (all run together)

### **Education Committee: Bonnie Burn**

League members listened to the latest study completed by the committee during a Unit Meeting conducted on Monday, November 17.

A special report on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) was presented by Ruth Benjamins. Two book reviews, "The One World School House," by Salman Khan and "The Reign of Error," by Diane Ravitch were presented by Bonnie Burn and Sue Cain, respectively.

The study paper, "For Profit Virtual Charter Schools," was reviewed. Bonnie Burn focused on background information about charter schools and the emergence of for-profit businesses in the public education system. Sue Cain discussed current attempts to privatize the public school system. Jane Asche focused on the politicization of the teacher evaluation system and its effects.

Finally, the League's current education position was reviewed. Those present made recommendations for changes to some of the bullets in the (1) Evaluation of Teachers, Students, and School Performance and (2) Finances and Funding sections. Final wording is being developed and will be submitted to the Board for approval and to members for approval at the Annual Meeting.

All of the papers developed in this update study are available on the League's website, [www.lwvglc.org](http://www.lwvglc.org), click on the Program Tab, and then on the Education Study

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### **League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS):**

**LWVUS Money in Politics Committee Announced:** The 2014-2016 League Program on Key Structures of Democracy includes a review and update of the LWVUS campaign finance position. The Committee is chaired by Barbara Zia, Chair (LWVUS Board) and has members from Leagues in

California, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and our own Jeanne Logsdon from the Central New Mexico League. LWVUS Board member Peggy Appler and Senior Lobbyist Betsy Lawson will provide support to the committee. The Committee will provide educational materials and activities to inform members and citizenry about complex issues around money in politics. The Committee will conduct an update of the League's position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement as to whether financing a political campaign is protected speech under the First Amendment. The campaign finance position will be updated through a study and consensus process to consider: (1) the rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and (2) how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position.

### **LWV Constitutional Amendment Committee Announced**

The 2014-2016 League Program on Key Structures of Democracy includes a study about the process of amending the U.S. Constitution. Committee members of the new Constitutional Amendment Committee include Patricia Donath, Chair (LWVUS Board), and has members from Leagues in South Carolina, Indiana, Maine, California and Tennessee. LWVUS Board member Anne Schink and Sr. Director of Advocacy Lloyd Leonard will provide support to the committee. The committee will study the process by which the U.S. Constitution can be amended, including the constitutional convention method, and identifying the gaps and challenges in those methods.

*[Editor's Note: In the 2014-2016 League Program on Key Structures of Democracy, the third study is the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress. This study committee already has been established (see The VOTER, September, 2014, page 10.)]*

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## *Doña Ana County Regional News Updates*

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### **Crisis Triage Center Moves Toward Opening**

Bonnie Burn, Reporting

At its meeting on October 28, Doña Ana County Commissioners approved awarding a contract to La Frontera New Mexico, Inc., for operation of the Doña Ana County Crisis Triage Center. The building, funded by the county, has lain empty for the past two years while a managing company was sought. The center was built to provide a place for law enforcement to take residents, who are in protective custody because they are experiencing a psychiatric crisis. Here they can be evaluated by a behavioral health specialist and directed for further care rather than being incarcerated in the Detention Center or referred to an emergency room. This continues to be the mission of the center.

A Confidential Descriptive Memorandum solicited responses from behavioral health care providers. Through an evaluation process, eight responders were reduced to six when two did not meet minimum qualifications. One of the top two being considered withdrew when it decided that individuals in protective custody were the responsibility of law enforcement. La Frontera New Mexico was the recommendation of the Doña Ana County's Health and Human Services Department. In a 5-0 vote, the county commissioners approved awarding the contract.

Many questions were raised by the commissioners and the public who provided comments before the vote was taken. The total amount of the award could be as much as \$1.4 million, depending on the final negotiations. Shared funding among the users of the facility was raised as possible funding sources for the program.

Enforcement of the contract was another issue. La Frontera will have to establish agreements with other community facilities that will provide referral service, including in-patient service, to the center's residents.

The reliability of La Frontera's service was questioned. Brought in from Arizona to replace NM behavioral health providers because of a recent audit that alleged overbilling Medicaid service by the NM providers, La Frontera has reduced staff. The commissioners raised questions about La Frontera's ability to provide adequate service to the number of individuals who need it. As a result, the county commissioners will meet in a future work session to discuss all of the issues before the final contract is signed. Jamie Michaels, director, Health and Human Services Department, and Mary Jo Silcox, executive director, La Frontera New Mexico, were on hand to provide information and answer questions.

The goal is to have the contract in place by the end of the year, and have it operational by early 2015.

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### **Spaceport Tax and Education Allocation** - *Bonnie Burn, Reporting*

The Spaceport Gross Receipts Tax (GRT), especially the 25% allocated to education in Doña Ana and Sierra Counties, has come into question in recent months.

First, NM Representative Sheryl Williams Stapleton, (D), Bernalillo District 19, sponsored legislation during the 2014 legislative session that created significant concern. HB 13 would have shrunk the spaceport GRT dollars for education by 75%, an amount that would greatly reduce funding for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs. The argument was that the special tax undermined the public schools funding formula designed to equalize dollars among affluent and poor districts. The bill passed the NM House but not the Senate.

More recently, the Doña Ana County Commissioners discussed repurposing these education funds. Commissioner Billy Garrett proposed allocating a larger share to higher

*(Continued on page 9)*



**Spaceport Tax** *(Continued from page 8)*

education in a effort to address further attacks by legislators on this special revenue. Although HB 13 was defeated, it received more support than expected, and further action could be taken in future legislative sessions. No action was taken at the August 12, 2014, commission meeting, and Commissioner Garrett assured the public that there would be two public meetings before a final vote.

Concern was raised among some community members that if voters approved a spaceport GRT initiative specifically to support education in our counties, how did legislation or repurposing affect the integrity of the voting process. To answer this concern, Commissioner Garrett provided a PowerPoint presentation that details the path to education.

To refresh our memories, here is the original ballot measure on which we voted on April 3, 2007:

Shall the Board of County Commissioners of Doña Ana County, New Mexico, impose a County Regional Spaceport Gross Receipts Tax at the rate of one-fourth of one percent (.25%) of the gross receipts reported or required to be reported on persons engaged in business in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Doña Ana County for the privilege of engaging in business in this County?  
 FOR, YES                      AGAINST, NO

Before the election in February of 2007, the County passed **Ordinance 227A-07** which states,

“75% of the proceeds of this tax can go to the financing, planning, design, engineering and construction for the project...and the Governing Body may dedicate 25% to spaceport-related projects.”

Taxpayer expectations were raised through promotional fliers and included:

- \* 25% of new tax dedicated to local schools & programs

- \* Supports aerospace education at NMSU
- \* Creates better paying jobs in Doña Ana County
- \* Educates local students & increases local employment for them
- \* Improves local economy with growth of secondary jobs to support commercial space industry

Thereafter, the commissioners passed **Resolution 2007-56** that further delineated allocation of the education GRT:

- \* *Whereas, the funds directed to the school districts would be earmarked for rigorous academic programs to support a strong, technically literate workforce; and*
- \* *Whereas, by providing an educational foundation in literacy, math, science, and technology and teaching students about the space industry will prepare high school graduates for post-secondary education without remediation and/or immediate entry into the workforce in the aerospace and other high-tech industries; and*
- \* *Whereas, the local school districts would ensure such funds would support expansion and improvement of existing science, engineering, technical and mathematics programs; and*
- \* *Whereas, funds would support articulated 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade programs aligned to college readiness standards and correspond to state and regional workforce development initiatives.*

Some misconceptions by the voters are:

- \* Voters may have thought that limiting the use of the 25% for education programs that focused on STEM was required by state law or stipulated by language on the Spaceport Ballot measure. **It was not.**
- \* Many voters may have thought that they were voting for use of the 25% to support STEM programs administered by the three local school districts.
- \* Some voters may have been influenced by promotional materials that promised economic opportunity as a result of the Spaceport, space-related industries and support businesses.

*(Continued on page 10)*

### Spaceport Tax *(Continued from page 9)*

The above information at least answers the question of how we arrived where we are. Passage of the ballot issue approved collecting GRT for the Spaceport, and government action in the form of ordinances established how 25% of the GRT became designated for education.

Options for use of the 25% for education were proposed by the County Commission. The current program allocates 100% of funding to STEM programs in the county school districts. In suggested options, the percentage of allocation could be used for school enrichment programs, scholarships, stipends, fellowships, and economic development. Educational enrichment, the

current use, benefits local students interested in STEM and may lead to erosion of New Mexico's education "equalization" policy. In considering economic development, the focus may be on preparing students for a variety of space-related careers. It could require financial assistance for post-secondary education and support for creation of local space-related jobs.

*[Sources: PowerPoint presentation, Building a Brighter Economic future for our Children, Commissioner Billy Garrett.*

*Diana Alba Soular, "Doña Ana County Commission Delays Action on Spaceport Tax Changes," Las Cruces Sun-News, August 12, 2014.*

*Diana Alba Soular, "Spaceport Tax Bill Worries Some," Las Cruces Sun-News, February 15, 2014.]*

### Look Back *(Continued from page 5)*

Access continues to be allowed on all existing routes and for dispersed recreation activities, such as camping, biking, and horseback riding; livestock grazing; registered hunting; existing mining claims and mineral permits and leases; existing rights of way (ROW), and maintaining county roads. The Border Patrol will have all the access it had before the monument designation.

The Resource Management Plan identifies how the monument will function with respect to the objects identified in the monument proclamation. A budget and staffing plan have to be developed, an inventory made of objects within the monument, and a land use plan developed.

When asked what his three greatest concerns are, Mr. Childress responded (1) taking care of the increased influx of visitors, (2) identifying other visitation opportunities, and (3) transportation--identifying which roads to remain open and which to close.

The proclamation identifies a three-year period to complete the land use planning process; however, Mr. Childress believes it

will take a longer time. During 2015, a notice of intent to begin the Resource Management Plan will be sent to the U.S. Department of the Interior. Funding to develop the plan is expected in 2016. The planning process will include scoping meetings that will involve public input to collect ideas, concerns and criteria about managing the monument. Also, it will involve describing the existing conditions and details about conservation. As draft plans are developed, the public will be asked for further input. The final plan reflecting alternatives and compromises will be reviewed by the public.

Next steps involve presentation to community groups and organizations to publicize the planning process for the monument and to have residents sign up to receive information and attend the scoping meetings. Contact information for BLM is 1800 Marquess St., Las Cruces, NM 88005, Tel: (575) 525-4300, For maps of the areas covered by the monument, log on to [http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Las\\_Cruces\\_District\\_Office.html](http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Las_Cruces_District_Office.html) —all run together.



## 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.*

### **Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority**

October 21, 2014 - *Vicki Simmons, Observer*

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. Commissioners Bardwell, Sanders, Huguin-Fisher and Gourneau were present. Chair Cordero arrived later.

Sharon Thomas, representing the South Central Regional Transit Authority, made a presentation about the proposed Gross Receipts Tax initiative that will be on the November 4 General Election Ballot. A survey identified transportation as the highest need for Doña Ana County residents. Public transit would enable them to travel to jobs, medical appointments, and NMSU. Public housing residents depend on public transportation. It is an investment in the county.

Next on the agenda was discussion of the proposed resolutions:

- \* #2014-28 – Approval of the purchase of Villa Sereno Community Center in Anthony. After discussion of the value of the property and concern about the Department of Financial and Administration approval, they agreed to reword the contract and proceed.
- \* #2014-29 – Board approved a change to the Open Meetings Policy.
- \* Resolution #2014-30 - Approved the FSS Grant Agreement for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program.
- \* Resolution #2014-31 - Amended the policy of how many notice letters are sent to voucher applicants for rental housing units.

Routine reports were made by staff. The occupancy rates for two complexes are low because of unattractive appearance and bad neighborhoods. It was suggested that a private realtor might help.

The meeting was adjourned to go into executive session

### **South Central Solid Waste Authority (SCSWA) Board Meeting**

November 20, 2015, 9 a.m., Transfer Station Board Room - *Johnnie Aldrich, Observer*

Today's lengthy agenda was dominated by discussion of the options for additional financing of the recycling program in the City of Las Cruces (CLC). The three options presented to the SCSWA Board by the Ratepayer Advisory Committee (RAC) are the result of months of study by that group of volunteers.

The option chosen by the Board will mean that senior citizens who have been receiving a discount on solid waste pickup have applied for and been issued smaller trash bins (64-gallon containers) for non-recyclable items. Many chose to do this because the availability of curbside recycling pickup has meant that many had less trash for the large 96-gallon can.

Beginning on 1 January, the charge for collection of these smaller cans will be \$11.25 monthly (as opposed to the \$11.07 that senior residents now pay for the 96-gallon can pickup.) Seniors who elected to keep the 96-gallon containers will pay \$13.25 monthly.

Beginning November 28, non-senior city residents who want to exchange the 96-gallon container for the 64-gallon container can call Customer Service at 541-2111 to make that request. Containers will be issued as long as supplies last, and a waiting list will be established if necessary.

Beginning January 1, 2015, **ALL** residential users of CLC solid waste collection services will pay a \$5.15 monthly fee for the curbside recycle pickup. Currently, users pay \$5.69 for that service. (Of course, taxes and franchise fees are added to all of these charges.)

*(Continued on page 12)*



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces  
 P.O. Box 8322  
 Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322  
 (575) 524-VOTE (8683)



**FIRST CLASS**



**LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST**  
**Saturday, December 6**  
**9:00 - 11:00 a.m.**

**Membership Application**

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 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.

**December 2014**  
**In This Issue**

Legislative Breakfast . . . . . 1  
 Board Highlights . . . . . 2  
 President's Message . . . . . 3  
 Behavioral Health Update . . . . . 4-5  
 Look Back . . . . . 5  
 League News . . . . . 6-7  
   LWVGLC Web Activity  
   LWVGLC Education Unit Meeting  
   LWVUS Key Structures of Democracy Study  
 Doña Ana Regional News . . . . . 8-10  
   Crisis Triage Center  
   Spaceport Tax and Education Allocation  
 Observer Report . . . . . 11-12  
   Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority  
   South Central Solid Waste Authority

**Solid Waste** *(Continued from page 11)*

Board members concurred that this "volume-based charge" is more equitable than the previous revenue collection system.

Readers should note that these changes apply, for the moment, only to residents of City of Las Cruces. County residents are served by private companies who are not subject to the South Central Authority.

A consciousness-raising campaign by Friedman Recycling was outlined. Customers or potential users are invited to learn about the pickup schedules of recycling by checking in at LasCrucesRecycles.com. The "contact us" tab will take users to a switchboard where specific questions will be answered.