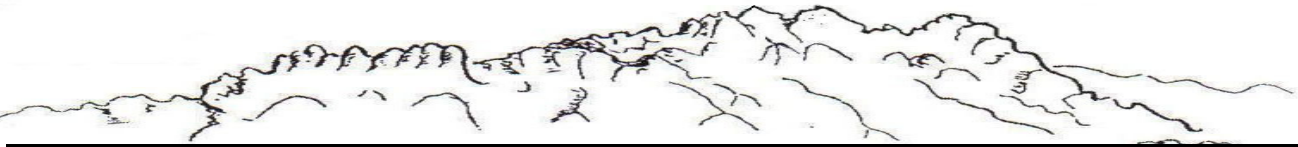


# The VOTER

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



## *Lunch with a Leader*

### **The Economy and Its Development in Doña Ana County**

*State Representative Bill McCamley (D-District 33)*

Monday, May 12, 2014, 11:30 a.m.

Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

The economy in the State of New Mexico was an issue raised in the short 30-day legislative session, and the lack of job creation was noted. State Representative McCamley will be discussing our economy in Doña Ana County, current issues in the economy, and what we might do to make it better.

Bill McCamley represents District 33, the area encompassing Southern Las Cruces, Mesilla, Mesilla Park, and Tortugas. His primary employment is ROJO Ink, a clothing and promotional goods company that provides meals to hungry kids in Africa and Haiti. He previously served as a Doña Ana County Commissioner. He was President of the Associated Students of New Mexico State University. He has a BA in Government from NMSU, and a Masters in Public Policy from Harvard University.

*We invite you to start the new League year by joining us for lunch!*

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## CALENDAR

**May 5 (Monday) - Deadline for making reservations Lunch with a Leader**, RSVP: Roberta Gran, Tel: 373-8490, Email: [robertagran@q.com](mailto:robertagran@q.com).

**May 12 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Lunch with a Leader, State Representative Bill McCamley, The Economy and Its Development in Doña Ana County.** Good Samaritan Social Center Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. \$10. Reservations Required: Roberta Gran, Tel: 373-8490, Email: [robertagran@q.com](mailto:robertagran@q.com). If reservations are not cancelled, you will be charged for lunch.

**May 15 (Thursday) - 2:00-4:00 p.m., Third Thursday Book Club, Meatonomics** by David Robinson Simon, at the home of Marjorie Burr, 522-2528.

**May 17 (Saturday) - LWVNM Council**, hosted by LWV of Santa Fe (See Registration Form Email Attachment).

**May 17 (Saturday) - 1:00-3:30 p.m., Exploring Equity, Community & Hope in New Mexico, Part 3: Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: An Afternoon with Dr. Paul Gorski**, NMSU, College of Education, O'Donnell Hall, Lecture Room 111. A closed and reserved event. RSVP: Azadeh Osanloo, Ph.D., 646-5976 or email: [azadeh@ad.nmsu.edu](mailto:azadeh@ad.nmsu.edu) if you wish to attend.

### **Notable Dates**

May 11 - Mother's Day

June 6-10 - LWVUS Convention, Dallas

**The VOTER**

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

P.O. Box 8322  
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burnb@comcast.net*President's Message*

We have had a pretty nice winter (unlike most of the Midwest and the East). Now the weather has finally turned spectacular, and the flowers, especially the roses, are blooming – it makes me feel good!

May is full of new beginnings. This includes the League that starts its fiscal year on May 1. We have had our Annual Meeting, have established the strategic plans for making the League a more “user-friendly” organization, and we have our new Board of Directors who are energized to make the League shine in community involvement, in studying community issues and applying what we learned to community actions. We are also starting our detailed planning efforts for the upcoming general election--multiple candidate forums are likely for this fall!

Several interesting events took place in April that involved League participation. The first was a series of three Great Conversations about the Minimum Wage issue as seen from the Las Cruces perspective. These Conversations were initiated at the behest of the Las Cruces City Council and were managed and moderated by Randy Harris, founder of the Great Conversations and a League member. The League was asked to participate by providing screeners for audience questions just as we do for candidate forums. These three Great Conversations focused on what was doable and acceptable regarding raising the minimum wage in the city of Las Cruces. The panel participants, representing both businesses and workers, did not hesitate to express their opinions (sometimes strongly) about the subject. See the Special Report Email Attachment.

The League also held its first “Talk About” session, thanks to Win Jacobs, on the subject of Water (or rather the lack thereof) in this region. Win invited League members and experts on water matters to her home on April 8 for an informal discussion about water issues. We do have a position on water; however, it was last revised in 2001 during a time of a relatively plentiful water supply for the region. Additional “Talk About” sessions on this topic are planned, and it is likely that these discussions will eventually lead to a review and possible revision of our water position.

Also on April 8, Doña Ana County conducted an election regarding the proposal by the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District to slightly raise the county property tax to support future conservation projects. Frustrations about this election led to my emailing the head of the Doña Ana Elections Bureau, and that resulted in a face-to-face meeting with its staff. Page 4-describes what happened.

So welcome to the start of a new year for the League, and enjoy May!

*Erika*

**ANNUAL MEETING**

*Note the Date Change*

**Saturday, April 26, 2014**  
**9:00 a.m. - Noon**

**Good Samaritan Social Center**  
**Creative Arts Room**  
**3011 Buena Vida Circle**

Members need to attend and participate in the local League Annual Meeting. It is the time when members adopt:

- A budget
- Bylaws amendments
- A Program for Study and Action

It also is the meeting at which members set the direction that the local League will follow during the new League year, 2014-2015.

**PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND**

*League Friends*

Robert Buggert  
 Sharon Burbano  
 Reed R. Burn  
 Roberta Gran  
 Nancy & Ken Hall  
 Win Jacobs  
 Al Kissling  
 Pat Kratz  
 Marlene Lavettis  
 Louise P. Lockhart  
 Barbara Myers  
 Jean Ossorio  
 Clifford Pelton  
 Nancy Phillips  
 Kathryn Schultz  
 Shirley Soules  
 Marie Sutter-Sinden  
 Donna Tate

*Thank You*

**TIME TO PAY YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP DUES**

(Renewal period May 1 thru June 30)

\$60 - Individual  
 \$90 - Household  
 \$30 - Student

Dues payment and donations to the operating fund are payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces.

Donations to the LWV Education Fund are payable to League of Women Voters Education Fund. (Tax deductible)

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

**MEMBERSHIP  
DIRECTORY  
2014-2015**

**HAVE YOU  
Moved?**

**Changed Telephone Number  
Changed Email Address**

Please check your listing and send any changes to  
 Johnnie Aldrich, Director,  
 Membership  
 Tel: 522-1544 or  
 Email: [jraldrich@earthlink.net](mailto:jraldrich@earthlink.net)

## Meeting with the County's Bureau of Elections

*Reported by Erika Graf-Webster*

On April 8, Doña Ana County conducted a special election regarding a proposal by the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District to slightly raise the county property tax, a mil levy, for future conservation projects. The proposal was soundly defeated, but the election shone a bright spotlight on inadequate and outdated New Mexico election procedures. The Doña Ana County Bureau of Elections could not be blamed for the short voting hours and the long lines of frustrated voters. It turns out that election procedures for New Mexico operational entities such as the Soil and Water Conservation District are actually embedded in the New Mexico constitution and leave the specifics for conducting the election up to the operational entity. So it was the Conservation District that defined the number of polling places and the voting hours, and our County's Bureau of Elections was simply tasked with the operational execution of the election.

The subject of the election motivated a much larger number of voters to go to the polls than had been expected. Nothing about this election was "standard" or what the local community has been used to in terms of voting. There was no early voting. The voting hours were only from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (instead of the typical 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.). Voting Convenience Centers were allocated to three Las Cruces locations. That number was woefully inadequate and resulted in long lines and irritated voters.

I ended up not being able to vote. Due to my currently reduced ability to walk any significant distance or to stand for any extended period of time, I simply could not deal with the long wait lines. I tried both the County Building and Good Samaritan locations, but the lines were just too long, probably well over an hour wait. So I went home and composed an email to Scott Krahling, supervisor of the Bureau of Elections, that started with the sentence "You were probably as frustrated with today's election as I was..."

Scott actually called me the next day, and we arranged to meet in his office. I asked Gwen Hanson to join me.

We met on Thursday, April 10, at the County Clerk's office, and we were surprised to find that the meeting was not just with Scott Krahling, but also was attended by Lynn Ellins, County Clerk, and Mario Jimenez, Chief Deputy Clerk. After some rehashing of the problems with the election, we presented the League's election procedures position as well as recommendations for future elections:

- Develop and use a standard, well-defined elections process at EVERY election;
- Develop a consistent, standard elections calendar that identifies a FEW (maybe three or four) dates on which elections can be held. Combine small elections that deal with only a few items such as this mil levy and hold them on the standard election dates; and
- Always use Voting Convenience Centers.

The County Clerk's staff said that they agreed with us on each point. In fact, the staff is already in the process of developing an amendment for the New Mexico Constitution that eliminates the ability for small state and regional organizational entities to define election procedures for counties. The staff also is researching legislation that would require school board elections to take place on one of the standard voting dates.

Speaking for the League, I offered our help in whatever voter registration and voter education efforts the Bureau is planning in the fall. We recommended that a strong, very well publicized registration effort take place countywide over several days. We suggested calling it a "Registration Fiesta." We offered our help with that as well.

Our recommendations were very well received, and we look forward to a closer working relationship with the County Clerk's office and the Bureau of Elections.

**Talk About: Water in Dona Ana County, Reported by Win Jacobs**

The first session of a newly developed League activity, Talk About, was convened at the home of Win Jacobs on April 8. Eight of the ten people who had indicated an interest attended. Mr. Eric Fuchs, who is with Elephant Butte Irrigation District and is a widely known water consultant, joined us. We also were fortunate to have in attendance our own League member, William Little, a professional hydrologist of some experience, and Dr. Kurt Anderson, a professor of astronomy, a former Board member of the Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Association, and also a League member.

As we focused on our purpose, it quickly became clear that the conversation would focus on the old news of drought now in its fourth year and new news of court action involving New Mexico, Texas, and the federal government. Texas has petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court for permission to sue New Mexico and Colorado, claiming that groundwater withdrawals in New Mexico are impairing the river flow owed to Texas under the Rio Grande Compact. The U.S. solicitor General has requested permission to join the suit as an intervenor and also has filed a brief in support of the Texas position. The Supreme Court has granted permission, but gave the parties an extra 60 days to file additional arguments. New Mexico still has a little time to appeal for dismissal, which is not expected.

Southern New Mexico is part of Texas when it comes to Rio Grande River matters. Drought makes drilling for ground water even more essential to our valley's agriculture. The inter-connections of aquifer (ground water) and river need to be understood, as does the water law of New Mexico: first in time, first in right (to use); for many more familiar, from farther east, with right of capture (if it flows over my land I can capture and use it). This is a difficult concept.

In short, when it comes to water, there is much to talk about. How far and in what fashion does LWVGLC wish to proceed?

**Christina Little**

is recognized by the Mayor and City Council for her community service.



The above plaque read:

**City of Las Cruces  
Mayor's Citation for Community  
Service Presented to  
Christina Little**  
"In recognition for your service in leadership and public relations with endless commitment and dedication in helping to make Las Cruces a better community."

Dated this 17<sup>th</sup> Day of March 2014

**Ken D. Miyagishima, Mayor**

The League of Women Voters is proud to acknowledge Christina as a valued, long-time member, having served in many leadership roles during her membership. We congratulate her on this achievement.

**We make a living by what we get,  
but we make a life by what we give.  
Winston Churchill.**

## Exploring Equity, Community & Hope in New Mexico

*Reported by Bonnie Burn*

Professor Azadeh Osanloo, MPA, Ph.D., Stan Fulton Endowed Chair for Education, New Mexico State University, has been presenting a three-part series about equity, community and hope.

Part 3 of the series will be presented on Saturday, May 17. The guest speaker is Paul C. Gorski, Associate Professor, George Mason University, and founder of EdChange.org. He is one of the preeminent scholars in the U.S. involved with teaching children who live in poverty. His professional website is <http://paulgorski.efolionm.com>.

Part 2, Juntos! Working together Working as One was held on Saturday, March 22, 1-4 p.m., in the Auditorium at Doña Ana Community College, East Mesa. A panel discussion about creating community, university, and educational partnerships featured Gabriel R. Sanchez, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science, University of New Mexico; Diana Bustamante, Ph.D., Executive Director, Colonias Development Council; and Enrique Alemán, Jr., Ph.D., Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy,

University of Utah. Creating collaborations between the university and the community and how to break down barriers between research universities and the community were discussed by the panel members.

The second part of the program focused on a documentary film, "Stolen Education," developed by Dr. Alemán when he learned about a lawsuit that involved his mother when she was an Hispanic elementary student. When public education was desegregated, the state of Texas closed its Spanish-speaking schools and integrated students into the public school system. A system was devised to have Spanish-speakers remain in first grade for three years. The focus of this three-year program was to teach English to Spanish speakers; however, Spanish surnamed children were directed to the first grade even when they spoke English. A lawsuit, *Hernandez v. Driscoll* (1957), successfully changed this system. Nine children, including Dr. Alaman's mother, testified at the trial. Six of the nine students were interviewed for Dr. Alaman's documentary. His mother persevered with her public education and graduated from high school seven months shy of her 21st birthday.

Part 1 of the series explored a reconciliation between two individuals who encountered each other during the civil rights movement. "The Last Knight Standing," a documentary, explored the possibility of reconciliation between Paul Saltzman and Delay De La Beckwith. Mr. Saltzman traveled to Greenwood, Mississippi, to register voters as part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Mr. Beckwith was the son of Bryon De La Beckwith, a white supremacist and Ku Klux Klansman who worked to stop voter registration and the civil rights movement as it was unfolding. Meeting as older adults, their dialogue and thoughts were captured in the film about those times and the years after the movement.

### Exploring Equity, Community, & Hope in New Mexico

#### Part 3: Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: An Afternoon with Dr. Paul Gorski

Saturday, May 17, 2014, 1:00-3:30 p.m.  
NMSU, College of Education  
O'Donnell Hall, Lecture Room 111

A closed and reserved event.

**RSVP:** Azadeh Osanloo, Ph.D., 646-5976  
or email: [azadeh@ad.nmsu.edu](mailto:azadeh@ad.nmsu.edu)



**Sunshine and Shadows**  
**Public Records & the New Mexico Mental Health Provider Audit**  
**Thursday, March 20, 2014, Zuhl Library, NMSU**  
*Reported by Roberta Gran*

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Guest Panelists: NM State Senator Mary Kay Papen, Heath Haussamen of New Mexico In-Depth, Walt Rubel of the *Las Cruces Sun-News*, and Ruth Burkhart, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, NMSU.

The program began with a tribute to medical journalist and community activist Margaret Markham, with Todd Dickson, News Editor of the *Las Cruces Bulletin*, and Diana Washington Valdez, Reporter for the *El Paso Times*, presenting. They spoke of her life-long work as a proponent of government's responsibility for disclosure to the public and to promote public awareness as critical in holding the government accountable.

A summary of the results of the NM mental health providers claims audit, conducted by Public Consulting Group (PCP), a Boston-based firm, was given by Professor Burkhart. The scope of the program was for the panelists to review the law on access to public records in New Mexico and to discuss the controversy surrounding the audit. One problem was an alleged overpayment from Medicaid of more than \$15 million to providers for a period of three years for which repayment was demanded. Two other problems noted were conflict-of-interest issues and billing.

Initial actions taken were freezing of all Medicaid payments and confiscation of computers and files. These actions disrupted patient care immeasurably, leaving a majority of clients without care at all, and a majority of providers without sufficient funds to keep their doors open. There was no outflow of information from the NM Human Services Department (HSD). Agencies were not informed of the charges even after they had requested this information. As time passed, lawsuits were filed to learn if these

actions were justified, and two judges ruled that the audit should remain confidential until after the investigation was completed. Attorney General Gary King has the power to release the audit results, but has chosen not to do so and has not informed the public as to when he will do so.

State Senator Papen said the situation at the Roundhouse is a nightmare. She is sure there may be accounting mistakes, but not fraud. One question she raised was why the state got new providers even before the audit. Apparently, before the start of this event, the providers still had not been paid as much as \$600,000 for the work they had done. Another panelist shook his head and stated with chagrin that this action took place so suddenly there was no opportunity to find out what was going on.

Senator Papen said that every new administration plays with the behavioral healthcare system, making changes without fully understanding the ramifications. These clients are the most fragile in the community. Among the 15 agencies, there are 30,000 clients. The disruptions were chaotic and clients have suffered.

Senator Papen said that HSD could and should have sought another approach: while the Affordable Care Act gave the NM Administration the impetus to do what they did, the actual wording of the legislation says that, in the case of suspected fraud, Medicaid funds **may** be frozen--not **must**—and several exceptions are listed. HSD claimed it had no choice but to freeze all funds. Not only did the senator wonder, "Why was this done in the first place?" but also, "If the Arizona company (La Frontera) leaves, can the original agencies pick up the pieces?"

*(Continued on page 8)*

## NM Mental Health Providers *(Continued from page 7)*

OptumHealth was paid \$40 million to oversee NM behavior health providers and correct any problems it found with them. Billing procedures and practices have changed at least four to six times during the past few years, and new computers were brought in without adequately training staff. She said for all it was paid, OptumHealth should have gone in and helped providers to fix any problems. That's what it was hired to do. Another question raised was, since none of the provider CEOs were allowed to see and respond to allegations, was it possible that the providers were neglected purposely so as to put them out of business?

OptumHealth has seen problems of its own over the years, having been fined \$5 million three years ago for illegal practices in one instance. La Frontera didn't even know that it needed a NM state pharmaceutical license, indicating lack of preparation for the takeover and the speed with which it happened.

One audience participant asked if Senator Papen thought this might have been a hostile takeover. Her answer was that we won't know until the audit is released. Auditing practices were not followed in this case. An auditor's job is to go into a company, research its documents and financials, find any problems, inform the company, show it how to fix them, give it a deadline, and report back to see that changes have been implemented. None of this was done.

Another question raised was: what is the role of HSD Secretary Sedonie Squires? It was her decision to fire the providers. Senator Papen said that HSD's practice of not following due process is seriously questionable. She said that getting help for clients if Frontera leaves because it does not get the increases in payments it wants will result in even higher costs to bring clients back to a level of normalcy. The atmosphere is very combative between the NM legislators

and Secretary Squires. She simply walked out of a committee hearing when they started asking her questions. Senator Papen reiterated that it is our responsibility as citizens to hold our government accountable.

Walt Rubel and Heath Haussman, the two journalists on the panel, focused on the lawsuit itself: the lack of due process regarding the affected providers and the lack of governmental transparency from beginning to present with no end in sight.

Where do we go from here? A judge has set in motion consideration to allow for a judicial review vs. making it a law enforcement issue. Although a six-month deadline was set for that decision, if the decision reached is for law enforcement jurisdiction, all the questions could be headed for limbo.

The October 2013 *Voter* carried a full report of the proceedings of the NM Legislative Behavioral Health Subcommittee meeting on September 3, 2013. Upon reviewing that report and comparing it with the Sunshine Week panel discussion here described, the gulf between state appointees and folks on the ground is illustrated. Surely HSD meant to speak truth to the legislators, describing its view of the process and its hoped-for outcomes. Just as sincerely, five months later, the journalists believe in their obligation to pursue actual reality and bring their findings to the public. To date, the sunny picture of September remains darkened by obfuscation.

*Editor's Note: This panel discussion was presented in observation of Sunshine Week, March 10-16, 2013.*

*Sunshine Week, held the week of James Madison's birthday (March 16) is a nationwide effort to open up dialogue on the importance of transparency in government and freedom of information. During this week, the League of Women Voters of the United States and other members of the Sunshine Week coalition encourage citizens to play an active role in promoting open government at all levels.*



## 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**, March 18, 2014, 6:30-8:30 p.m. - *Jane Asche, Observer*

All Board members were present except for Dr. Bonnie Votaw. The school board meeting opened with its regular recognitions of teacher and student excellence in performance in a variety of academic and extra-curricular areas that is always heartwarming and commendable as a very positive practice to encourage both students and staff. One bit of recognition that was somewhat unusual was the recognition of State Senator Joseph Cervantes for his sponsorship of a successful bill that was signed into law by the Governor that ensures that students enrolled in band and ROTC will continue to get credit for physical education. This represents a reversal of new state policy implemented by the Department of Education earlier this year that had eliminated this long standing practice and was causing concern among students, especially those about to graduate from high school.

Several agenda items stood out at the March 18 school board meeting:

Las Montañas Charter School - A comprehensive report was given by Herb Torres, consultant, that LCPS required the Las Montañas Charter High School to hire last spring to serve as an observer and expert consultant to assist with improvements in student academic outcomes and the effectiveness of the overall charter school operation. He reported very good progress by the charter school in five areas: financial management, the make-up of the school governance council, graduation rates, student attendance, and academic achievement. As part of their work on academics, they are using the Kahn Virtual

Online Academy which is free and has an excellent reputation for assisting teachers with online student instruction thus freeing up teachers to spend more individual time with students in the classroom. The consultant stated that "the school culture of encouragement is tremendous and the support that students give each other is amazing."

Update on the Support System for Improving Teaching Skills – The school system has put in place an online instructional program with four levels of support to prepare teachers for improved teacher evaluation outcomes. The program is provided by a private company known as Teachscape. According to the company's website ([www.teachscape.com](http://www.teachscape.com)) its mission is "to help all educators maximize their effectiveness, enabling them to ignite inspiration in every learner. At Teachscape, we believe every teacher can be great. Our passion is partnering with educators to deliver online and mobile tools, professional learning resources, talent management solutions, and expert services that result in measurable growth in teacher practice, school leadership, and student achievement."

Board Member Report by Maria Flores – As is the custom of Board members to report on the visits they make to see what is happening in the schools, Board member Flores reported on her attendance at the Great Conversations facilitated by Randy Harris with students on how to prevent and respond to bullying and the "powerful speech" delivered by a guest speaker at the student rally at Centennial High School about reducing the cycle of violence in our communities. As is her custom, Flores spoke up about her concerns over the redundancy of testing in the schools and the need to reduce this excessive testing.

**League Observer Reports (Continued)**

**South Central Solid Waste Authority (SCSWA) Board Meeting**, April 17, 2014, 9:00 a.m. - *Johnnie Aldrich, Observer*



**Glass Recycling has come to Doña Ana County!**

Beginning April 27, glass bottles and jars will be accepted at **TWO** drop-off

locations: **Recycling Center, 2855 W. Amador Ave** and **Foothills Landfill, 555 S. Sonoma Ranch Blvd.**

**YELLOW** is the color of this recycling opportunity for which many of us have waited for years. The receptacles are yellow. We can put green, blue, amber, and clear glass into them. Removing labels is not necessary, but the glass food and beverage containers should be clean and dry. Food and beverage containers **only**, please. The following are **NOT** acceptable: vases, dishes or cups, window glass, light bulbs, ceramics, and lids.

Please do **NOT** place glass in the **BLUE** bins to which we have become accustomed. **YELLOW** is the color of glass recycling.

A new Recycling Guide brochure detailing these requirements will be available at our Annual Meeting and at both City Hall and the County Government Center.

Besides announcing this addition to the Authority's recycling program, the Board approved the purchase of a glass crusher. Cost: \$149,118. Capable of processing glass at 5 tons per hour, the crusher will probably run no more than two to three days a week in the beginning. Though the crusher will not be available until July 1, glass collection will begin on April 27, 2014, Earth Day.

In making his Administrative Report, Solid Waste Authority Director Patrick Peck had more good news. The U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) recently carried out extensive inspections of all of the Authority's solid waste storage and collection facilities and of administrative operations to be sure that they conform to federal requirements. Some Authority administrators were concerned that substantial changes might be mandated. None were. The Authority has permission to operate, "business as usual," until the next inspection is required 5 years from now.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

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**Ratepayer Advisory Committee**

**Meeting**, April 17, 2014, 1:30 p.m., Las Cruces Utilities, 680 N. Motel Blvd - *Susan Schmugge, Observer*

When a utility proposes to raise rates, as the South Central Solid Waste Authority (SCSWA) is proposing for trash and recycling, Las Cruces Utilities has mandated that the Ratepayers Advisory Committee (RAC) consider and advise the Utility as to the soundness of the proposal. The committee is made up of Las Cruces residents who have job experience in public utilities and who volunteer their service.

This committee is presently considering the SCSWA proposal. It is using the advice of a consultant who has experience throughout the country with smaller cities considering proposed rate increases for services rendered.

Meetings are open to the public and information is available at [SolidWasteRAC@yahoo.com](mailto:SolidWasteRAC@yahoo.com).

*[Editors Note: The solid waste rate case may be found online by searching "Las Cruces Solid Waste Rate Case." A print copy of all the rate case proceedings and documentation is available at Branigan Library and at the utilities Office at 680 N. Motel Blvd - Source: Las Cruces Sun-News, April 16.]*

**League Observer Reports (Continued)****Mesilla Valley Public Housing**

**Authority (MVPHA)**, March 20, 2014,  
Noon - 1:30 p.m. - *Vicki Simons, Observer*

The meeting convened at noon in the Housing Authority Building with Felix Cordero, Chairman, presiding. Also present were Commissioners Beth Bardwell and Shelley Sanders. Commissioner Theresa Olguin-Fisher joined later in the meeting. The resident Commissioner has resigned so that vacancy is yet to be filled.

Following introduction of public participants (only the LWV Observer), roll call and approval of the agenda, was a planned conference call with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) New Mexico Field Office. HUD personnel on the call were the Program Center Coordinator Floyd Duran, Public Housing Revitalization Specialist Mandy Griego and General Engineer John Tellez. The purpose of the call was to discuss negative findings by HUD of the MVPHA submitted report on the Section Eight Management Assessment Program. The assessment process involved the Authority submitting a required report on adherence to HUD criteria. The response to each criterion is supported by a random sample of clients as to whether MVPHA had met the precise indicators of proper management. According to HUD, the report was prepared improperly with no sample results submitted. At the time of the inspection, June 2013, the Section Eight program was administered by a consultant, AMA, based in Florida. The program is very complicated and was not administered in-house by the Authority. The result of the inspection was that the MVPHA rental assistance program is classed as a "troubled" program, but HUD personnel added that the program has not failed. It is just that the report was improperly prepared. MVPHA has responded to that status by terminating AMA and is in the process of hiring personnel to administer the program in

-house. MVPHA was paying AMA \$31,000 per month, so not only will the administration be improved, but also money will be saved. HUD personnel are satisfied with these changes and will remove the "troubled" status upon submission of a proper report next year.

The Board then discussed the financial situation at the Robledo Ridge project. This is a rehabilitation of 71 individual housing units on Valley Drive, north of Picacho Ave. It was a project financially supported by the sale of tax credits. Not all the tax credits were sold, so MVPHA is responsible for more financial support than they had planned.

The last item on the agenda was staff reports from the Accountant, Modernization Manager, Deputy Director and Executive Director.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

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**Neighborhood Expo**

*Reported by Bonnie Burn*

In an effort to showcase its services and programs, the City of Las Cruces organized its first ever Neighborhood Expo event. Nonprofit organizations were invited to staff a table located in the City Hall lobby that displayed information about the organization. At its table, the League of Women Voters conducted voter registration and held conversations about updating voting information and the election process.

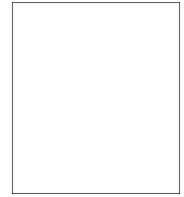
The event was held on Saturday, March 15, from 9:00 a.m. - Noon. Roberta Gran and Johnnie Aldrich represented the League. Jamey Rickman, Community Liaison, City of Las Cruces, organized the event.

Held in conjunction with the Saturday Farmers Market, the Neighborhood Expo saw lots of traffic.

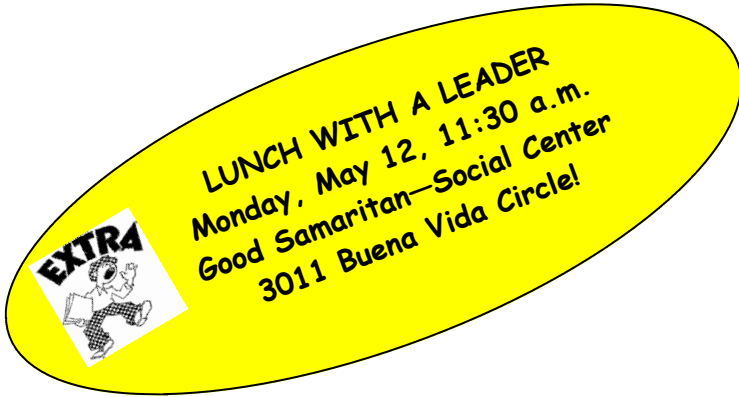


League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces  
 P.O. Box 8322  
 Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

(575) 524-VOTE (8683)  
 Web Site: www.lwvglc.org



**FIRST CLASS**



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### 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

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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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