

Unity Project

The Unity Project is a coalition of organizations and interested community members who have received a \$310,000 grant from The Colorado Trust to support immigrant integration. The group has received \$10,000 for planning and will receive \$75,000 in each of the next four years for gathering information about the needs of the diverse groups in our community, fostering intercultural dialog and identifying and implementing action steps to create a healthy and united community.

A survey conducted during the planning phase of the project indicated that the 'community was on the brink of crisis and needs community-wide solutions'. When the speaker was asked what this meant the impression was given that the social service agencies are overwhelmed and unable to adequately address the needs of many of the immigrants in our community.

A La Plata County Community Forum, held in early October and attended by about 75 people, including League members Vicki Coe, Joelle Riddle, Marilyn Sandstrom and Marilyn Brown, was organized to encourage attendees, working in groups to come up with their 'group dreams' for our community in five years. When the forum started, each participant received a headset for his particular language and all proceedings were simultaneously translated into the other language (Spanish or English). One of the approximately nine groups worked only in Spanish.

Several general themes, some of which the League and the community are already working on, were cited as urgent needs. Affordable housing, access to health care and the desire to 'become legal' were mentioned as was the need for fluent Spanish-English translators. At our table was the only member of the police force who is fluent in Spanish. He is so

busy translating for Spanish-only speakers that he can't get his regular work done. Translators are needed at the hospital and at many of the social service agencies, schools, etc.

A list of seven priorities became the focus of seven workgroups set up to work on those items: education; language and translation services; cultural, cross-cultural and social relations; civic engagement and participation; judicial and law enforcement; access to basic needs (transportation, housing, livable wage, economics) and health care. The Project is seeking volunteers to serve on these workgroups. We are especially interested in the civic engagement group. Call me, 259-3593, if you can attend the session Friday, November 2, 5-8 p.m. to represent us.

-Marilyn Brown



**This multi-fuel capable truck (including hydrogen fuel), featured at DMEA Renewable Energy Seminar, has driven higher than any other similarly fueled vehicle – Cottonwood Pass, 12126'.
(see article on page opposite page)**

Thanks to Our New and Renewing Members!

Judith Aitken (bulletin)
Nadine Ancel
Helen Bair (bulletin)
Morley Ballantine
Suzanne Becker
Sally Bellerue
Carol Blatnick
Mary Ruth Bowman
Bonnie Boyle
Enid Brodsky
Marilyn Brown
Lois Carpenter
Pat Chatfield
Vicki Coe
Joe Colgan
Deanne Collins
Lee Conger

Ernie/Margot Cotton (bulletin)
Barbara Cristol
Edina Cullipher
Tom Darnell
Grace Deltscheff
Lou Falkenstein
Ann Flatten
Virginia Graham
Sue Griffith
Mary Alice Hearn
Sue Herbst
Donna Hugg
Doreen Hunter
Stephanie and Phil Huss
Connie Imig
Lynn Kitch
Betty Lazo

Julie Levy
Jennifer Lopez
John and Nancy Loftis
John Lyons/ and Susan Koonce
Jane Marentette
Dan and Polly Morgenstern
Lynda Morris
Dorothy Newell
Kim Martin and Steve Phillips
Phyllis Max
Dorothy McGill
Leigh Meigs
Tekla Miller
Barbara Paeth-Haas
Ellen and Ross Park
Jill Patton

Pam Patton
Tiare Pitts-Flora
Judith Reynolds
David Rich
Joelle Riddle
Ellen Roberts
Missy Rodey
Marilyn Sandstrom
Elaine Slade
Elizabeth Testa
Gail Ann Thomas
Shaila Van Sickle
Julie Ward
Robert Yearout
Suzanne Zerbe
Sidny Zink

We want you!!! If your name isn't on this list, call our membership chair, Sue Herbst, 382-9446.

Immigration Study Consensus Questions

Here are the questions we will be considering at our immigration study consensus sessions, January 16 and 23th. We will be asked to prioritize the criteria under each question, so give them plenty of thought!!

Question 1: Federal immigration laws should take into consideration criteria such as the following:

- a. Ethnic and Cultural Diversity
- b. Economic, Business and Service Employment Needs
- c. Environmental Impact/Sustainability
- d. Family Reunification of Authorized Immigrants and Citizens with Spouses and Minor Children
- e. History of Criminal Activity
- f. Humanitarian Crises/ Political Persecution in Home Countries
- g. Immigrant Characteristics (health and age)
- h. Rights of All Workers to Safe Working Conditions and Livable Wage
- i. Rights of Families to Remain Together
- j. Rights of all Individuals in U.S. to Fair Treatment Under the Law (Fair Hearing, Right to Counsel, Right of Appeal, and Humane Treatment)
- k. Education and Training

Question 2: Unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated as follows:

- a. Deport Unauthorized Immigrants
- b. Some Deported/Some Allowed To Earn Legal Adjustment of Status Based on Length of Residence in U.S.
- c. Some Deported/Some Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status Based on Needs of US Employers
- d. All Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status by Doing Things Such as Paying Taxes, Learning English, Studying Civics, Etc.
- e. If Deported, Assess Fines Before Possible Re-Entry
- f. Assess Fines Before Allowed To Earn Legal Adjustment Of Status

Question 3: Federal immigration law should provide an efficient, expeditious system for legal entry into the U.S. for immigrants who are:

- a. Immediate Family Members Joining Family Member Already Admitted for Legal Permanent Residence in the U.S
- b. Entering the U.S. to Meet Labor Needs
- c. Entering the U.S. as Students
- d. Entering the U.S. because of Persecution in Home Country

Question 4a: In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, Federal immigration law should include a Social Security Card or Other National Identification Card with Secure Identifiers for *All* Persons Residing in the U.S.

Question 4b: Federal immigration law dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced by including:

- i. Physical Barriers (such as Fences) and Surveillance at Borders
- ii. Increased Personnel at Land, Air, and Sea Entry Points
- iii. More Effective Tracking of Persons with Non-Immigrant Visas Until They Leave the Country
- iv. Verification Documents, such as Green Cards and Work Permits with Secure Identifiers.
- v. Improved Technology to Facilitate Employer Verification of Employee Visa Status
- vi. Improved Technology for Sharing Information Among Federal Agencies
- vii. A Program to Allow Immigrant Workers to Go in and Out of the U.S. to Meet Seasonal and Sporadic Labor Needs
- viii. Significant Fines Pro-Propionate to Revenue for Employers Who Fail to Take Adequate Steps to Verify Work Authorization of Employees

Question 5: Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term federal financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Question 6: Federal immigration law should be coordinated with U.S. foreign policy to proactively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions of nations with large emigrating populations.

Question 7 (Comments) will allow us to register our comments with the national committee.



Ellen Park defining 'globalization' at our immigration meeting October 25th. Speakers from left: Doreen Hunter, Nadine Ancel, Pat Chatfield, Marilyn Brown

Immigration Information Session

Twelve LWV members and two guests heard Doris Meissner, director of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), and former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service offer (via video) six compelling facts related to the immigration issue on October 25. Her remarks were followed by committee members Ellen Park, Pat Chatfield and Marilyn Brown presenting aspects of the issue as we see it: globalization, U.S. demographics, current visa regulations, and enforcement in the workplace and at the borders. Suggestions for reform, presented by Doreen Hunter, were based on the report of the Independent Task Force on Immigration and America's Future, convened by the MPI and co-chaired by Lee H. Hamilton and Spencer Abraham.

Highlights of Meissner's remarks:

1. We are a nation of immigrants, including four major periods of large immigration, the peopling of the country, the westward expansion, the industrial revolution and growth of cities and now.
2. We are an aging society. We are no longer producing enough new workers for jobs created. Last major group (females) has already entered workforce. Potential source: those over 55 and foreigners.
3. We have a skills gap at both ends of scale, an hourglass shape. We need more low skilled workers with less than a high school education and more high end skills: engineering, math, etc. We do not produce enough indigenous workers to fill these slots; immigration is serving a competitive need.
4. Overall effect of immigration is positive. There is inconclusive evidence as to whether immigrants take jobs away from natives, some localities and job types, yes. The macro effect is success for economy and nation, it lowers prices of goods, services, housing and they do pay taxes.
5. As for the undocumented population, the southwest border is important but overemphasized. 40% of illegals came here on valid visas and overstayed them.
6. New growth states: in the past 60-70% immigrants went to six states, CA, FL, TX, IL, NY, NJ, and these states learned to cope. From mid-90s on immigrants are going everywhere, to states that haven't seen immigrants for 60 years, such as GA, NC, IA, NV, SC. This impact is causing great tension.

To watch video of Doris Meissner's remarks, go to www.lwvlaplata.org and click on Current Studies.

Copies of our reports, including the summary of Meissner's six points, as well as links to the position papers and articles prepared by the LWVUS immigration committee, are on our website. www.lwvlaplata.org. We hope you will find time between now and January to review as much as you can, think about what's best for our nation and come to our consensus sessions in January. Call a committee member if you need hard copies of the documents on the website.

-Marilyn Brown

Agriculture in the Uncompahgre Valley

[Editor's Note: This article is part of the summary of a meeting the LWV of Montrose County held in October, reproduced with permission because of its relevance to our immigration study.]

John Harold doesn't share Steve Hale's [a previous speaker] optimism about agriculture's role in our area. His pessimism is based on his experience as owner and manager of his Olathe sweet corn operation where he feels government bureaucracy relating to immigrant labor force is stifling his effort to be efficient and, thus, profitable. He spoke about the hoops and hurdles he had to finagle this year in order to secure 110 workers via the [guest worker] program which has now expired. Labor is vital to farmers and growers due to the size of local farms, which are too small for mechanization and produce has to be hand-picked. The work is strenuous. John has been unable to find local workers, even though he advertises every year and pays wages between \$11.40 and \$12.76 per hour. Local high school and college students are involved in summer camps of various kinds or have other jobs available to them. At harvest time, workers pick two million ears of corn per day. Mexican and other Latino workers are available during our harvesting season because it does not interfere with their own countries' seasons, which terminate at the end of April. John said in his experience the Mexican workers add value to the community during their stay and then return home. He was generous with his compliments of their work ethic.

Regulations require that businesses requesting immigrant workers cannot apply for them more than 120 days prior to the time their labor is required. This year the workers arrived 46 days late because applications took too much time to be processed. John is concerned that the government is now placing the burden of proving workers' legality on the shoulders of the business community and enforces that dictum by high dollar fines. He and other small business people don't have time or resources necessary to handle the issue.

An interesting slant on niche markets and buying local produce come from the statement that only about 1,000 acres of land are needed to feed the 40,000+ residents of the Valley, so distant markets are vital for the continuation of local agriculture. Transportation costs have always put us at a disadvantage, so if labor is not available to plant and harvest crops, land prices will decline precipitously and farmers will be forced to sell their lands to developers.

John admits the immigrant issue is complex, and there is no easy answer. But as an efficient system is needed to ensure labor will be available when crops are ready to be harvested, "Mr. Tuxedo Corn" hopes Congress will do something - make some changes even if they are don't bring about the end-all answer - and not just table the issue.



Jill Patton, left, of our LWV, and Jodi Foran, of Montezuma County MAL, testifying at 208 Commission hearing

[Ed. Note: The following is the testimony of the LWVCO presented at each 208 Commission hearing across the state.]

I am speaking for the League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWVCO). The League of Women Voters (LWV) has promoted social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans since its inception in 1920. Health care reform has been a major goal of the last 15 years. The LWV favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the US moves toward a national plan we urge Colorado to take a bold leadership role in adopting a proposal that will demonstrate systemic reform and serve as a model for the country. The work of your Commission and the prospect of real reform to provide comprehensive, quality health care at an affordable cost to all Coloradoans is encouraging.

LWVCO believes any proposal for health care reform in Colorado should include the following:

1. Coverage for everyone, guaranteed issue with no barriers for pre-existing conditions or denial of services based on ability to pay.
2. Comprehensive benefits to include prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care, acute care, long-term care, and mental health care, (with dental, vision and hearing care next in priority).

3. Strong cost-containment measures such as minimizing administrative costs, the use of information technology and regional planning for allocation of personnel, facilities and equipment.

4. Health care resources distributed equitably so that no region is underserved.

5. Provision for health care professionals to be trained to fill gaps in understaffed fields of expertise.

The League believes that government, individuals, employers and providers should share responsibility for assuring the health of residents. Providers should continually strive to improve their relationships with their patients and the effectiveness of their treatment. Individuals should be encouraged to partner with their provider, take responsibility for healthy behavior and be held accountable. Employers are the single largest beneficiary of a healthy workforce and should therefore support healthy behaviors in their employees.

Since the task of providing comprehensive, quality care for all is larger than individuals, employers and providers can accomplish alone, we believe there is a role for government in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare. Because the private market in health care has failed to provide affordable insurance for 792,000 people in Colorado (and figures show an equal number are under-insured) increased government involvement is the solution to achieving universal health care access.

Of the 5 proposals, the Colorado Health Services Plan solely meets the LWV concept of true health care reform. The administrative savings realized across many segments of health care will enable universal coverage and a comprehensive health care program for our residents. The strong cost containment measures help to insure affordability and sustainability for the future. Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the public dialogue and share in the solution of a pressing social and economic problem facing our state.

Note the correct address for our redesigned website: www.lwvlaplata.org

(It was misspelled in one place in our October newsletter.)

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6th Judicial District Judicial Performance Commission Seeks New Members

Terms of three of the ten Commissioners on the Sixth Judicial District Judicial Performance Commission will expire this fall. The terms expiring are those of two attorneys and one non-attorney. The Sixth Judicial District includes La Plata, Archuleta, and San Juan counties. *As a Commission member I am interested in having dedicated and qualified citizens serving on the Commission, and as a woman I am interested in having some more of them be women.* We currently have 7 men and 3 women. The Commission is made up of 4 attorneys and 6 non-attorneys. Appointments are for 4-year terms and are made by state government heads as follows:

Chief Justice: 1 attorney and 2 non-attorneys
 Governor: 1 attorney and 2 non-attorneys
 Speaker of the House: 1 attorney and 1 non-attorney
 President of the Senate: 1 attorney and 1 non-attorney

The purpose of the Commission is to provide voters with fair, responsible and constructive evaluations of judges and justices seeking retention. The results also provide judges with information to help improve their professional skills as judicial officers. The Commission's evaluations appear in the blue book received by voters before each general election. The work is unpaid and voluntary.

There are only 6 judges in this district and of course their terms are staggered. There are only a handful of meetings to attend from spring to early summer every two years plus some courtroom observations to be made. The evaluations are based on questionnaire results, courtroom observation, group interview with the judge and a self-evaluation from the judge. In 2006 we evaluated the two county court judges for La Plata and Archuleta. In 2008 we will evaluate the county court judge in San Juan County and one of the 3 district judges.

Please feel free to act on this information yourself or to pass it on to others you may know in your organizations or anywhere in the district. More information is available (including the commission application) on the Colorado Judiciary website at www.courts.state.co.us. Click on Performance Commissions on the marble column on the left side. I would be glad to visit with anyone who may be interested by phone at 884-9722 or via email at Lcarpen557@aol.com. While political connections might possibly help, they are not necessary. Remember, the judiciary is strictly nonpartisan in Colorado and so are the Performance Commissions.

Lois Carpenter
 LWV member and member, 6th Judicial District Judicial Performance Commission

Letter to Editor regarding City Manager Selection Process

[Ed. Note: Councilperson and LWV member Leigh Meigs submitted a letter to the editor in response to an article in our October newsletter regarding the city manager selection process. Excerpts are reproduced here. In answer to a follow-up question, Leigh commented: 'Re the rationale for secrecy: My understanding is that the Open Records act does not require revelation of applicants. The reasoning is that the pool of applicants is greatly reduced if a community decided to reveal all inquiries and applications: it places the applicant in jeopardy of losing the confidence of their own communities if they are perceived as dissatisfied with their current positions. The executive search firm counseled us to maintain utmost care with applicant names as this was the guarantee that was made during the recruitment process.']

Hello,

I am writing as a member of the local chapter of the LWV and as a member of the Durango City Council. In regard to Mr. Darnell's opinion piece printed in this month's newsletter [October], may I provide a few facts about the City of Durango's process in hiring a new City Manager.

Mr. Darnell comments that Council "seemed to be very hesitant about exposing these candidates to a more formal public scrutiny during the selection process." The perceived hesitance is because it is not possible to reveal to the public the names and credentials of applicants until they are selected as finalists. Four finalists were selected on Tuesday night, October 2nd. *[and subsequently one candidate was offered the position]*. They are excellent candidates, each well qualified to lead the City.

Leigh Meigs,
 Durango City Council

[Detailed information regarding these candidates, including the resumes and letters of application upon which Council based its selections, was available at City Hall for public review and the public was encouraged to attend the evening open house meet-and-greet on October 18 at the Train Museum.]

Calendar



LWV La Plata County
www.lwvlaplata.org
 650 Hermosa Cliffs Road
 Durango, CO 81301

November	
6 Tues	ELECTION DAY – Mail-in only
7 Wed	Safer World Cmte mtg, 10-12, Christ the King
10 Sat	Safer, More Compassionate World Community Forum , 9:45-4, CUB Ballroom, FLC
13 Tues	Board meeting, 9-12, W-4, Christ the King Church, 495 Florida Road
December	
4 Tues	Great Decisions Bonus Program, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict , 5-7 p.m., Windom Room, Durango Rec Center
18 Tues	Board meeting, 10-12, followed by potluck lunch, Ellen’s home, 650 Hermosa Cliffs Rd.
	HAPPY HOLIDAYS !!
January	
7 Mon	LWVCO Legislative Conference , State Capitol, Denver
8 Tues	Board meeting, 9-12, Venue: TBD
16 Wed	Consensus I, Immigration Study , 10-12, Fellowship Hall, Christ the King Church
22 or 24	Great Decisions , 11:45-1:45, Twilight Room, Durango Rec Center, ‘Iraq: Endgame’
23 Wed	Consensus II, Immigration Study , 10-12, Fellowship Hall, Christ the King Church,
23 Wed	Celebrate Your Heritage Potluck, 12-1

Due to holiday travel, your newsletter will not be published in December. This issue covers both November and December.

See you after the New Year!!

League Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Join the League! Anyone of voting age may join the League of Women Voters. Others may be associate members. Discounted household memberships are available. Call Sue Herbst at 382-9446 for more information.

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