

Subject: Notes from the LWV-LPC Annual Planning Meeting held January 22, 2019



Trish Pegram, Spokesperson and Co-President of the League of Women Voters of La Plata County, welcomed 20 attendees to our soup luncheon and annual planning meeting held in Bowman Hall at the Universalist Unitarian Church in Durango, CO. Trish welcomed both longtime and new members to the local league event.

Although this is normally the time for our league to reflect on local, state and national policy statements and to suggest recommendations for policy amendments as well as future studies, Trish stated that our local League had been recently advised by both the State and National League that this was not an appropriate time for new policy and studies but rather a time to focus our 2019 League energies on the theme, "Making Democracy Work". She stated that now is the time in our nation and in our various leagues to concentrate our efforts on the election process, it's non-discriminating applicability to all current and qualified potential voters, and to encourage our members and citizens to vote. The LWV-LPC attendees were unanimous in their support of this position.

Trish also explained the various policy directions of the League include the responsibility to educate but also to advocate for change given the League's supported positions at all levels of LWV. Although this dual role may appear conflictive, she stated that the League will never support a specific candidate thus remaining non-partisan in its advocacy of an adopted position.

Attendees registered their pleasure with the recently revamped LWV – Colorado website (www.lwvco.org) and in particular with the increased transparency of their LWVCO Board Briefs including the report of the new Executive Director and the approval of 2019 Legislative and Operational Goals. These comments will be passed on to the LWVCO Board. This LWVCO information is now currently available on our local website (www.lwvlaplata.org).

Trish introduced Martha Mason, Executive Director of the Southwest Center for Independence, as a new LWV-LPC Board Member. Kathleen Adams, current LWV-LPC Board Member, voiced a request to replace her in 2019 as the LWV-LPC Membership Chair. No further League business was heard from the attendees thus the business portion of the meeting was adjourned.

Trish introduced the speaker for the day, Lisa Pool, Southwest Field Organizer, Conservation Colorado. Lisa has been resident in Denver but recently she and her family have relocated to Durango. Lisa gave an introduction to Conservation Colorado and her work in Durango, and what the organization will be supporting in the Legislature this session. Her organization is the largest advocacy group focusing directly on the environment in Colorado. Lisa spoke passionately of the urgency for direction and plans for coping with the climate change effects that we are increasingly seeing today in our state.

Lisa outlined four areas for Conservation Colorado concentration in 2019. In all of these areas state legislation is in proposal preparation or actual bill form for statute approval in the 2019 legislative cycle. These areas include:

1. A focus directly on climate change at the Colorado State level (the "carbon bill"): to set graduated goals for carbon emission and to approve actual policy changes specific to our state's health and environmental issues. Lisa stated that specific procedures and roadmaps to attain

these emission goals will be left to the state experts to define. Note that this legislation has not yet received a Bill Number.

2. Legislation to clean-up the transportation sector: this is not intended specifically to the elements of “roads and bridges” but more to modernize the transportation approach with support of multi-modal elements designed for urban areas as well as for enhanced infrastructure for EVs (Low Emission Vehicles with the goal of the accelerated emergence of Zero-Emission vehicles). The resulting support will rapidly increase EV charging structure state-wide availability as well as to reauthorize tax credit for purchase of ZeroEVs. Finally, state-wide utilities will be incentivized to provide charging stations across Colorado. As previous, note that this legislation has not yet received a Bill Number.
3. Water bills: Conservation Colorado in 2019 will focus directly on the Colorado Mining Industry with the requested reforms applied to eliminating the policy of “self-bonding”. Additional changes will require actual dates for mine activity completion and required water treatment related to mine closure. Additional elements of “best practices”, as regarding the mining industry, will be introduced in the requested legislation. Additional focus in 2019 by Conservation Colorado will make revisions in the area of in-stream flow rights for waterways in Colorado. This request allows water to remain in a stream to help protect the natural environment. Note that this bill is identified as HB19-1113.
4. The last area of Conservation Colorado legislative focus in 2019 will be related to Oil and Gas Safety concerns. First, the request will be for increased transparency related to all facets of Colorado State oil and gas regulations and control. Second, Conservation Colorado will revisit the failed setback rule from the 2018 election (2017-2018 #163). Lisa said that she believes that a compromise over the actual setback and how its measurements are determined can be proposed and resolved with statutory changes. Lisa concluded that this legislation will primarily be focused on the Colorado Front Range where oil & gas drilling and coexistence conflicts with private housing are more pressing issues today. This legislation has not yet received a Bill Number.

Lisa concluded by hinting that we can soon expect a new U.S. Congress Public Lands Bill concerning Colorado and supported by Senator Bennet.

A comment from an attendee (Jean Walter) noted that there are presently a large number of Colorado environmentally focused organizations that are trying to influence legislation in 2019. She suggested that major groups, such as Conservation Colorado, should explore the forming of coalitions, of like minds, to increase the state-wide focus and numbers advocating major issues.

We offer our thanks and appreciation to Lisa Pool for her enlightening presentation and we welcome her and her family to Durango. Thanks, are extended to all LWVLPC attendees and particularly to those providing the delicious luncheon items. This concluded the 2019 LWV-LPC Annual Planning Meeting.

Scribe: Ross Park, LWV-LPC webmaster (1/22/19)