



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

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Sixty-two Years Serving La Plata County
82 members

February, 2008

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

www.lwvcolorado.org

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Montezuma County LWV
has received word from
LWVUS that their
application for local LWV
recognition was approved
on January 25th!
Congratulations to
President Jodi Foran and all
24 charter members!!



Mark your calendars!

February Meetings

Democratic and Republican Party Caucuses!

Tuesday, February 5, 7 p.m.

Check www.lwvlaplata.org and click on Elections for the location of your
precinct’s caucus or call your party office.

Legislative Lowdown!

Saturday, February 23, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

**State Senator Jim Isgar and State Representative Ellen Roberts
The Peaks, Durango Recreation Center, 2700 Main Avenue**

Learn what’s going on in Denver this legislative session
and ask your questions...
Refreshments will be served...

National Program Planning

Thursday, February 14, 12:45 -1:45

Unitarian Fellowship Hall, 419 San Juan Drive

See message from the Vice-President, and driving directions on p.2

‘They Take Our Jobs’:

Looking Backward at Contemporary Immigration Debates

Thursday, February 28, 7 p.m.

**Dr. John Baranski, professor of history, Fort Lewis College
130 Noble Hall, FLC**

Part of the Life Long Learning Series sponsored by FLC Professional
Associates and co-sponsored by the LWV of La Plata County

The 2008 Great Decisions Series has started!

Note time change for Thursday sessions: 12:30-2:30 p.m.

See calendar for details and contact Pat Chatfield at 247-1692
if you haven't already purchased your briefing book!

Vice-President's Message on Program Planning

I wrote last month about the importance of the League program planning process. We are a grass roots organization and this is one of the ways in which we, the grass roots, can make our ideas known to the National League and help determine the direction in which we should move to be the most effective organization possible.

I've been following the postings on the Program Planning listserv where members from around the country talk about what subjects they deem most important to study or review and the program planning process in general. There have been some misgivings expressed that each League can recommend only ONE position for review and/or another ONE new subject for study. Their point is that a list of, say, three items, prioritized, would give a better indication of how the majority of members feel. However, this is not the way the form for input has been designed, and we have no choice at this point but to go along with that format (see the one emailed to you last week or the form inserted in this newsletter.). Some people on the listserv think that a new national study, following right behind the considerable effort expended on the immigration study, would not be a good idea.

Our League decided a little over a year ago that our most important concerns were the *environment*, *health care* and *global outreach*. You, the membership, may or may not still rate those as most important, and you should fill out the form based on your own priorities. Of the three, health care is the only one that seems to be of wide concern, from what I read on the listserv. We already have a national health care position, and the feelings expressed are that it should be reviewed and updated. There is a group of LWV members working towards that end, and if you are interested, you can find a link to them on our website.

The completed forms you send in, together with input from members attending our meeting on February 14th, will be compiled so that we send

ONE completed form to the National League. They, in turn, will compile these forms from all over the U.S. and present the results to the National Convention in Oregon this June. The delegates at the Convention will vote to determine what will be the League's major focus in the next two years at a national level. Obviously, as this is a presidential election year, it is even more important for us, as League members, to be able to advocate from a strong program. Background material is available under "*Action and Advocacy*" on our website www.lwvlaplata.org. Please spend some time, fill out the form and return it by February 11 to me (my email or snail mail address is on the form), and help us move forward together.

-Jill Patton

[Directions to Universal Unitarian Fellowship from Main Street: Turn WEST onto W. 22ND ST. Turn RIGHT onto W. 3RD AVE. Turn LEFT onto W. 23RD ST. (W. 23RD ST becomes COLUMBINE DR.) Drive past the corner of SAN JUAN DRIVE and enter the UU parking Lot off Columbine on the LEFT. The Fellowship is on the corner opposite Needham Elementary School. The Fellowship Hall is on the west (right) side of the parking lot.]

'They Take Our Jobs'

Dr. John Baranski, assistant professor of history at Fort Lewis College, will present a discussion 'They Take Our Jobs', subtitled 'Looking Backward at Contemporary Immigration Debates', on Thursday, February 28 at 7 p.m. in 130 Noble Hall. Dr. Baranski has been a volunteer on local and global projects, from workers and tenant rights to ending sexual violence and war.

This historical perspective of the rhetoric of immigration during the past century is an excellent follow-on to our immigration study and we have agreed to co-sponsor the event. According to Professor Baranski, jobs, national security and Americanization have been recurring themes in the debates. He will explore the ways these themes relate to the evolution of restrictionist immigration policies and their consequences for U.S. politics and society.

-Marilyn Brown

Precinct Caucuses

Precinct caucuses will be held by the Democratic and Republican parties at 7 p.m. on February 5, 2008. Each major party will caucus in each of the thirty precincts within La Plata County.

What is a Precinct Caucus?

A precinct caucus is a meeting of members of a political party to nominate candidates, write platforms and elect delegates to county-wide party conventions. Caucuses are held in homes, schools, churches or other gathering places convenient to a voter's residence. Today, however, most are held in larger facilities to ensure the meeting place is accessible to all.

While some states conduct presidential primary elections, other states, like Colorado, conduct precinct caucuses to voice their choice for a presidential candidate. The caucus process varies by party, each with its own rules. The results of each caucus are consolidated at county level and then at state, to determine delegate votes for President at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions in the summer of 2008.

Who can participate in a caucus?

Anyone who is a registered voter in the Democratic or Republican Party can participate. The deadline for registering and affiliating with a political party was December 5, 2007. Colorado does not allow unaffiliated (independent) voters to participate in the caucus system.

Where is your caucus?

Your caucus location is different from your precinct polling place. You can find the location of your party caucus on the LWV La Plata website, www.LWVLaPlata.org/elections.html. You also can find your precinct number and your precinct polling place at this same location within the League website.

The League website www.LWVLaPlata.org includes a great deal of information on the 2008

electoral process in La Plata County. You are encouraged to check its contents from time-to-time as it will be updated when additional information is available.

It is a privilege to vote. Please take advantage of this opportunity.

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Help Register Voters

Last summer the LWVLPC registered several new voters by providing voter registration opportunities at the Farmer's Market and a few other venues. We also were fortunate to find a few new members for LWVLPC. The Farmer's Market was a very good location to meet the public and we would like to be there many times this summer.

As Voter Service chair I will be taking Voter Registration Drive (VRD) training via conference call on February 12 and become the voter registration drive agent for our LWV, a requirement to register voters. Subsequent to this training, I will be training others to help. The required training takes 60-90 minutes and will qualify you to register voters during 2008. With an ambitious goal to hold many voter registration opportunities this election season, we need your help with this important League activity. If you are interested, please contact Marilyn Sandstrom, mjschili@bresnan.net, or 970-764-4596.



LWV member, Pam Patton, surprised in jeans and long underwear, accepts the Morley Ballantine Award at Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Celebration January 17. Congratulations, Pam!!!

Legislative Conference Highlights

This year's conference at the State Capitol, put together so ably by LWVCO Legislative Director Jeannette Hillery, was the best I've attended. As possibly the lone Western Slope representative, due to uncooperative weather, I wished it were possible for Four Corners Leaguers to participate as fully as Denver area Leaguers can and do.

Highlights included greetings/remarks by House Speaker Andrew Romanoff, Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien, and Senator Peter Groff, newly elected Senate President.

Speaker Romanoff was the first of the morning to bring up the problem of our **Constitutional mess**. Numerous conflicting amendments to the constitution or statutes now deemed not changeable except by vote of the people (such as the Arveschoug-Bird 6% annual growth limit on budget line items) have caused us not to be able to bring state budget back to its previous level prior to the 'recession' early this decade. Basically, the formula for growth in TABOR, inflation plus population growth, does not work for the services the state provides. Costs of state services rise much faster than the formula. With the current strictures in the constitution, the 2007 level of state services is 'as good as it's going to get.'

The Legislature and many other organizations are proposing methodology to correct it. Romanoff does not favor a constitutional convention because that process would take longer (three elections) than asking the voters for a one-time release from the one-subject rule on ballot initiatives. With voter approval all the changes could be made at one time in one ballot initiative at a subsequent general election. Everyone is in agreement that something needs to be done but the mechanism is far from agreed upon, as is the content of the changes themselves.

What Happens after the **TABOR Time-out** in 2010? A presentation of representatives of a

coalition of The Bell Policy Center, the CO Fiscal Policy Institute and the CO Children's Campaign, moderated by LWVCO's Toni Larson, clearly spelled out that passage of Ref C did not solve the problem and we will all have a job at least as large as the effort put forth to pass Ref C in the next couple of years if we are to straighten out our financial mess. The coalition has delivered 60 talks already and professes willingness to go 'anywhere' to deliver this message. (See related article on page 5.)

Lt. Gov. O'Brien, whose background is with CO Children's Campaign, discussed the administration's plans on behalf of **children**, including full day kindergarten for the neediest kids, expansion of pre-school opportunities and addition of secondary school counselors to encourage young people to follow the college track.

Bill Lindsay, chair, 208 Commission on **Health Care**, described the five proposals they will give to the Legislature, including one single-payer proposal and a proposal put together by the commission itself, combining the best features of the other proposals not put forward in their entirety. Lindsay made clear that the fifth proposal, not a single-payer plan, was not the proposal the commission would recommend. He also pointed out that large portions of our health care system cannot be changed at the state level. Unfortunately, the sense of the other speakers of the day was that nothing major would happen this year on the health care scene.

Senator Gail Schwartz reported on her committee's investigation of **the severance tax**, which is assessed to industry on resources 'severed' from the land and does not apply to renewable resources, which are not 'severed'.

Tom Plante, of the governor's **renewable energy** office, extolled the progress on the governor's renewable energy project, citing the decision of Vestas Wind Systems, a Danish company which produces blades for wind turbines, to site their only

Legislative Conf. cont.

North American production facility in CO.

Chris Watson, LWVCO lobbyist, gave her usual colorful predictions for the **current legislative session**; however, she was somewhat pessimistic about some of the LWV’s favorite issues due to lack of state funds.

Handouts:

- Membership Recruitment Initiative Report (available electronically from LWVCO office)
- Report of SB 07-091 Renewable Resource Generation Development Areas Task Force
- Looking Forward, CO’s fiscal prospects after Ref C
- What is a Precinct Caucus?
- Flexible Policy on Candidate Forums for Local Elections
- LWV Forum/moderator training (by Chaffee County LWV) – CD

-Marilyn Brown



Megan and Willie Krischke, right, sign the first loan in the Regional Housing Alliance’s mortgage assistance program. The Krischkes completed the RHA’s Home Grown: Planting Seeds for Homeownership class this fall.

‘Looking Forward’...after Ref C!

The Bell Policy Center has just released its new report examining CO’s fiscal prospects after the Referendum C timeout, which ends after 2010. The full report, a collaboration with two other groups, CO Fiscal Policy Institute and the CO Children’s Campaign, is available on the Bell Center’s website, www.thebell.org.

Four key observations are important: First, CO state services have only partially recovered from the economic downturn. Second 2007 is probably as good as it is going to get, meaning it will be a challenge to maintain 2007 levels of service into the future. Third, it is the Arveschoug-Bird formula that will mostly determine how revenues are allocated in the future. This statutory formula limits general fund appropriations to operating budgets to 6% growth annually. Fourth, budgets for the major areas of state government are interrelated. None of the critical issues can be addressed in isolation.

The basic problem, generally speaking, is that the costs of the services that the state provides rise at a higher rate than the formula in the TABOR legislation (inflation plus population growth) and the 6% growth limit in the Arveschoug-Bird formula. Unless we understand and correct this, the state is doomed to retain its place close to the bottom of all states in per capita expenditures on k-12 education, Medicaid, higher education and highways, varying from 34th to 48th among the states and overall for total expenditures, 44th.

The three cooperating groups, the CO Fiscal Policy Institute, the CO Children’s Campaign and The Bell Policy Center, have formed a speaker’s bureau and have made more than 60 presentations across the state. We are planning to bring them to SW CO this spring.

-Marilyn Brown

Your Voice, Your Vote

YVYV pamphlets, in English and Spanish, are now available at libraries and government offices across La Plata County. The pamphlet, printed by the LWVCO Education Fund, presents CO Voter Information for 2008 and 2009 and all important election and registration related dates

Immigration Consensus

Many thanks to all 28 of you for your participation in our two immigration consensus sessions, so ably facilitated by discussion leader Jill Patton and recorded by Suzanne Becker. We had very good (civil!) exchange of ideas and feelings, reaching consensus on most of the items. Our consensus results have been electronically submitted to national to be meshed with results of LWVs across the country into a position statement. The LWVUS board will adopt the position statement about the first of April at which point we all can begin education and advocacy based on it.

Hardworking committee members included Nadine Ancel, Suzanne Becker, Pat Chatfield, Barbara Cristol, Sue Herbst, Doreen Hunter, Ellen Park, Jill Patton, Marilyn Sandstrom, and Marilyn Brown.

Our consensus was followed by a fascinating and tasty spread of dishes representing our various heritages, from Russia and Slovenia to the Midwest and Texas! Nadine Ancel, Suzanne Becker, Grace Deltscheff, Ellen and Ross Park and Jill Patton treated us to appropriate costuming/jewelry to accompany their dishes.



Ross Park, Texas; Nadine Ancel, Slovenia

Ellen Park, Russia; Marilyn Brown, Northern Ireland, Sue Herbst, Scotland



Jill Patton's ANZAC 'biscuits' with koala (ANZAC=Australia/New Zealand Army Corps WWI)

Sue Herbst, Marilyn Sandstrom, Pat Chatfield, Marilyn McCord and others enjoying delicacies

First Call to LWVUS Convention

'Reaching New Heights Together'

June 13-17, Portland, OR

Workshops, Exhibits/Wares Market, Caucuses, Networking

First Call to LWVCO Council

Friday, May 16, 1 p.m.-

Saturday, May 17, 12 noon

Strater Hotel, Durango

Alternatives to DREP

On January 18 Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment, or Diné CARE, released its report [Energy and Economic Alternatives to the Desert Rock Energy Project](#), prepared for the group by Ecos Consulting, a Durango firm. The report is a response to the perceived deficiencies in the Draft Desert Rock Energy Project Environmental Impact Statement, prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, on which the LWV and many other organizations and individuals commented or testified at hearings. The full 168-page report is available in .pdf form on the website <http://www.box.net/shared/static/tirr6zsw0g.pdf>

The introduction to the report indicates the reasons for considering the EIS deficient and explains the underlying Navajo philosophy and law regarding stewardship of the environment and extraction of minerals, oil and gas. The report goes on to analyze one scenario using renewable energy, current natural gas sources and energy efficiency and concludes that when taking into account all revenue and costs, the benefit of the alternative proposal to the Navajo Nation in terms of revenue and jobs was greater both during the construction phase and long-term during the operations and maintenance phase.

The total annual benefit during the construction phase of the clean energy scenario, was \$1,677,549/year, whereas the total annual benefit during construction of DREP was \$832,000/year. During the operation phase, the total annual benefit for the same scenario was actually a negative, a cost of \$12-240 million/year due to carbon capture or carbon offset costs likely to be adopted sometime in the future. The total annual benefit during operation phase for the renewable energy scenario was \$81-108 million. The clean energy option also leads the DREP option in construction jobs and in permanent operation/maintenance positions by over twice as many. Page 100 of the report presents a table of these comparisons with all the appropriate footnotes.

The report's conclusion (p. 109) is reproduced here: 'By every measure, the economic development of the Navajo Nation is better served by investing in clean, sustainable technologies. As described in the Draft EIS and the Federal Register announcement, the purpose of the Desert Rock development is to produce economic development for the Navajo Nation. The Draft EIS is deficient in that the narrowly-defined purpose and need statement inappropriately limits the scope of the project to burning coal, so that it does not thoroughly analyze the other alternatives that would produce more sustainable, benign economic development for the Navajo Nation. Solar, wind, and natural gas energy projects are available, cost-effective, and lucrative for the Navajo Nation. Yet the Draft EIS discounts them in a few pages. Why does the Draft EIS discount alternatives, when they are clearly documented as superior to mining and burning coal?'


By nearly every measure—air, water, biological resources, land use, topography, visual resources, socioeconomic conditions, noise, ground vibrations, public health, environmental justice, and cumulative impacts—the alternatives documented in these comments far exceed the benefits of mining and burning coal.'

'The BIA and the proponents of the proposed Desert Rock project owe the Navajo Nation a more thorough analysis of what would produce truly sustainable economic development for the Navajo Nation, in accordance with Diné Beehazáanii, Diné Fundamental Laws (Resolution No. CN-69-02) and Nahasdzáán dóó Yádilhił Bitsaadee Beenahaz'áanii--Diné Natural Law (1 N.N.C. § 205).'

The blog on the topic of Desert Rock Energy Project: www.desert-rock-blog.com features many other articles relating to the subject.

-Marilyn Brown

[Ed. Note: Due to not having the correct fonts, the Navajo words were not all properly transcribed. Our apologies.]

| <h1>Calendar</h1> | |  | LWV La Plata County www.lwvlaplata.org 650 Hermosa Cliffs Road Durango, CO 81301 |
|---|--|---|--|
| February | | | |
| 5 Tue | Political Party Caucuses, 7 p.m. | | |
| 5 or 7 | *Great Decisions , 'EU at 50' | | |
| 6 Wed | Wild/Scenic Environ. Film Festival , 7 p.m. Noble Hall, Fort Lewis College, \$15 at door | | |
| 14 Thurs | Board meeting, 9:30-12:30, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Fellowship, 419 San Juan Drive | | |
| 14 Thurs | Nat'l Program Planning , 12:45-1:45, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Fellowship, following board mtg ALL MEMBERS WELCOME !! | | |
| 14 Thurs | LWVUS 88 th Birthday !! Our LWV is 62 ! | | |
| 19 or 21 | *Great Decisions , 'Talking to Our Enemies' | | |
| 23 Sat | Legislative Lowdown : Rep. Roberts, Sen. Isgar 9:30-11:30 a.m., Peaks, Durango Rec Center | | |
| 28 Thurs | "They Take Our Jobs", Historical View of Immigration , Speaker, John Baranski, 7 p.m. LLL Program, 130 Noble Hall, FLC | | |
| March | | | |
| 4 or 6 | *Great Decisions , 'Russia' | | |
| 13 Thurs | Board meeting, 9:30-12:30, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Fellowship, 419 San Juan Drive | | |
| 13 Thurs | Local Program Planning , 12:45-1:45 p.m. Fellowship Hall, UU Fellowship ALL MEMBERS WELCOME !! | | |
| 18 or 20 | *Great Decisions , 'U.S. Defense Security' | | |
| TBD | General meeting on an environmental topic | | |
| April | | | |
| 1 or 3 | *Great Decisions , 'Latin America' | | |
| 10 Thurs | Board meeting, 9:30-12:30, Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Fellowship, 419 San Juan Drive | | |
| 15 or 17 | *Great Decisions , 'U.S.-China Trade Policy' | | |
| TBD | Looking Forward: Post Referendum C , CO fiscal prospects after Referendum C | | |
| *Great Decisions: 11:45-1:45 Tuesdays, 12:30-2:30 Thursdays, Twilight Room., Durango Rec Center | | | |
| 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. | | | |
| | | Board of Directors | |
| | | President Ellen Park, 247-8116 gellenpark@aol.com | Vice President Jill Patton, 385-4061 jgpatton@frontier.net |
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| | | Great Decisions Pat Chatfield, 247-1692 patchwork@gobrainstorm.net | |