



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

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Sixty-two Years Serving La Plata County
100 members!!!

January, 2009

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Insert:

**LWVCO Positions
and
Life Long Learning
Winter-Spring Series
(email recipients only)**

*P.S. It’s okay to print out your
electronic newsletter if it’s
easier to read that way! Or
print out just the first or last
page for your calendar.*



Mark your calendars!

January Meetings

**Health Care Update
And State Program Planning**

**Tuesday, January 13
11:30-1:45**

Room 3, Durango Public Library

Jill Patton will present the latest thinking on health care reform at the local, state and national levels, including the recent Health Care Community Discussion (see page 3). We will complement this with state program planning.

* * *

**The U.S. and Rising Global Powers
– First Great Decisions Topic**

**Thursday, January 22 or Tuesday, January 27
Program Room, main floor
Durango Public Library**

Briefing books still available \$20 from Nadine Ancel, 259-3675
(Note date change for first Tuesday session only due to Inauguration)

**Save the date: Saturday, February 7
Legislative Lowdown with Jim Isgar and Ellen Roberts
9:30-11:30 a.m.
Program Room 2, Durango Public Library**

Coordinator's Message

Welcome to the New Year! We got a head start before the end 2008 with the health care hearing co-sponsored by our League and chaired by Jill Patton on December 29th at the County Court House. This meeting was designed to give information to Senator Tom Daschle, leader of the Transition's Health Policy Team. With League's keen interest in health care we jumped on it.

Our first meeting of the year will be at the **NEW Durango Library in Room #3, upstairs at 11:30 on January 13th. Bring your brown bag lunch as we do for Great Decisions.** We'll be hearing from Jill Patton to bring us up to date on the health care issues. We'll also review our state level program positions and suggest potential new studies, since this is the year of the biennial state convention in May. These are some of the positions we use to take our stands on issues and therefore are very important to us. Let's let them know what we want emphasized! You'll find the positions in abbreviated form as an insert in this Voter. And, we want to discuss reaffirming our support for our favorite issue, health care, for National. Do we still feel the same as we did last year?

We're busy with **three committees** as we start the new year. One is looking at the national scene: **how we elect our President.** A second is Voter Service not only planning for the Durango City Council election in the spring but also considering looking at **how absentee ballots are counted** here in La Plata County. And, our Environment/Natural Resources Committee is expanding into and taking on **climate change** as a member of the 4CORE effort here in our county. Members have done work on the proposed new coal power plant in New Mexico, attending hearings and speaking on the EIS. You'll find reports on all three of these working committees elsewhere in this Voter. We'd love to have any of you join any of these and be involved to a greater or lesser degree. The first two will have their first meeting in January. —Sally Bellerue

Electing Our President

How DO we elect our president and how CAN we elect the president that has the most popular votes? There's a NY Times editorial in this Voter on the subject (page 4). Take a look at it! Our question is: How can we deal with this conundrum? Of course, this involves the Electoral College! Consider joining the committee, cumbersome called the NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT COMMITTEE. Trish Pegram, Mary Barter, Julie Ward and Beverly Wells have joined. Marilyn Brown and I are involved. Please come along!

Our first meeting will be at the Common Sense Café upstairs, on **Monday, January 19, at 2 p.m.** Come; stop in for a cup of coffee or smoothie or whatever you like and come on up to their conference room. Please send me an email (bellerue@frontier.net) or give me a call if you're interested (385-0848). This promises to be intriguing. We have lots of help and information coming from National.

—Sally Bellerue



LWV health care director, Jill Patton, right, assisted by Joanne Spina, assistant La Plata County manager, facilitated the recent Community Health Care Discussion. The ideas distilled from the copious notes taken will be forwarded to the Presidential Transition Health Policy Team. See article on page 3.

Legislative Lowdown - Save the Date!

Saturday, February 7, LWVLC will hold its annual Legislative Lowdown. State Senator Jim Isgar and State Representative Ellen Roberts will talk of what is occurring in Denver during the 2009 Legislative Session and will answer questions from the public. The event, co-sponsored by the Durango Library, will be held in Program Rm. 2 (main floor) of the new library building from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. More details will be in the February Voter. Please plan on attending. And tell your friends. —Marilyn Sandstrom

Health Care Community Discussion

On Monday morning (December 29th), around 80 people took time out from their holiday festivities and braved the ice to attend a Health Care Community Discussion, one of many held around the country at the request of the Presidential Transition Health Policy Team. The purpose was to obtain “your help in designing a system that provides quality, affordable health care for all Americans.” Our League was one of the cosponsors of the event, and more than a dozen of our members attended. Though the group was liberally sprinkled with “senior citizens”, as Dr. Grossman pointed out, there was a greater diversity of people represented than in many such meetings in the past. Five of our elected officials were there in person or sent their representatives.

There were seven questions given for discussion by the Transition Team, and participants were asked to complete survey questions, as well as give their stories of the need for reform. Missy Rodey, one of the organizers, is compiling the results of the discussion and the survey, and I hope to report on this in a later issue. But I can say that although a wide range of suggestions was made, the majority came down solidly in favor of a single-payer system.

-Jill Patton

Kosovo: From the Ashes . . . Democracy?

On November 15th, about 40 of our members and guests were treated to an unusually evocative, instructive and sobering presentation on Kosovo given by new members Paula Huntley, and her husband Ed Villmoare, who both spent time in Pristina soon after the hostilities between the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority ended there in 2000, as any of you who have read Paula’s book, *The Hemingway Book Club of Kosovo* will know lots about.

Their joint presentation (they said this is the first time they’ve done this together – believe me, it worked) was up to the minute, including a copy of a state department email they’d received the day before warning US residents in Pristina of the gravity of the current situation. Paula and Ed showed photos from their visits and discussed the difficulties inherent in attempts to resolve a conflict whose origins date back hundreds of years. Problems such as the location inside Kosovo of several of the most revered Serbian churches and monasteries, and the fact that ethnic Albanian women raped by the Serbs during the war become defiled outcasts as far as their families are concerned, make it difficult for even the best intentioned outsiders to develop a solution which would either effectively divide the country into two, or allow the Serbs and Albanians to live peaceably together in one. I, for one, felt extremely privileged to have been able to come close to an understanding of this region and its problems that few who haven’t spent time there could possibly obtain.

-Jill Patton

Durango Health Care Clinics

Are you confused about the Health Service Clinic and the Durango Urgent Care clinic, both of which are in the medical office building on the west side of the old Mercy Medical Center parking lot? I was asked to try to resolve some of this confusion.

Health Service Clinic

This is the clinic established as a “stop-gap” clinic after Valley Wide left town, and the one now funded primarily by Mercy, the County, and the City. This clinic will accept all patients, Medicare, Medicaid, insured and uninsured. They will bill Medicare and the private insurance companies on behalf of patients; an uninsured patient must pay for care on the spot (and receive a 20% discount for so doing), or go out to Mercy Medical to set up a payment plan.

The clinic is designed as a “medical home” for patients where they can receive on-going preventive and routine care.

Appointments are required, and currently there is quite a wait for appointments. The clinic is open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm, closed for lunch from 12 to 1 pm, and they no longer answer the phones after 4:30 pm. The clinic is located in Suite 110. The phone number is 764-1790.

Durango Urgent Care Clinic

This is a privately owned clinic designed to deliver urgent care; no appointments are necessary. They will accept all patients. Medicare patients must pay for their care at the time, and the clinic will bill Medicare (and any supplemental insurance) which will then reimburse the patient. For most privately insured patients, the clinic will charge the co-pay and bill the company. Uninsured patients must pay for their care on the spot to be accepted. If they can’t, they are referred to the Health Service Clinic or to Mercy.

Only non-life or -limb threatening conditions are treated. For more serious cases, the clinic will call an ambulance and have the patient transferred to Mercy. It is designed for immediate assistance only and provides no follow-up care.

The clinic is open 7 days a week, from 9 am to 7 pm. It is located in Suite 112, and the phone number is 247-8382.

Flunking the Electoral College

(reprinted from the New York Times,
November 20, 2008)

[Ed. Note: This month our League begins our study of the National Popular Vote Compact. We introduce this topic, which is a way to skirt the Electoral College, with this recent editorial.]

On Dec. 15, the United States will endure a quadrennial ritual born in the economics and politics of slavery and the quill-pen era. Members of the Electoral College are scheduled to meet in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to formally choose the next president.

There is no real doubt about how the electors will vote, but it is disturbing that they have any role at all in making this vital choice in the 21st century. The Electoral College is more than just an antiquated institution: it actively disenfranchises voters and occasionally (think 2000) makes the candidate with fewer popular votes president. American democracy would be far stronger without it.

There is no reason to feel sentimental about the Electoral College. One of the main reasons the founders created it was slavery. The southern states liked the fact that their slaves, who would be excluded from a direct vote, would be counted — as three-fifths of a white person — when Electoral College votes were apportioned.

The founders also were concerned, in the day of the wooden printing press, that voters would not have enough information to choose among presidential candidates. It was believed that it would be easier for them to vote for local officials, whom they knew more about, to be electors. It is hard to imagine that significant numbers of voters thought they did not know enough about Barack Obama and John McCain by Election Day this year.

And, while these reasons for the Electoral College have lost all relevance, its disadvantages loom ever larger. To start, the system excludes many voters from a meaningful role in presidential elections. If you live in New York or Texas, for example, it is generally a foregone conclusion which party will win your state's electoral votes, so your vote has less meaning — and it can feel especially meaningless if you vote on the losing side. On the other hand, if you live in Florida or Ohio, where the outcome is less clear, your vote has a greatly magnified importance.

Voters in small states are favored because Electoral College votes are based on the number of senators and representatives a state has. Wyoming's roughly 500,000 people get three electoral votes. California, which has about 70 times Wyoming's population, gets only 55 electoral votes.

The Electoral College also makes America seem more divided along blue-red lines than it actually is. If you look at an Electoral College map, California appears solidly blue and Alabama solidly red. But if you look at a map of the popular votes, you see a more nuanced picture. More than 4.5 million Californians voted for Mr. McCain (roughly as many votes as he got in Texas), while about 40 percent of voters in Alabama cast a ballot for Mr. Obama.

One of the biggest problems with the Electoral College, of course, is that three times since the Civil War — most recently, with George W. Bush in 2000 — it has awarded the presidency to the loser of the popular vote. The president should be the candidate who wins the votes of the most Americans.

The best way to abolish the Electoral College is to amend the Constitution. Until that happens, a national popular vote movement is working to get states representing a majority of the electoral votes to agree to award their votes to the candidate who has the most votes nationally. That would effectively end the Electoral College. Several states, including New Jersey and Illinois, have already enacted popular vote laws, and others are considering it.

When the 2012 presidential election approaches, efforts to reform the electoral system will be viewed through a partisan prism, with a focus on which party they would help or hurt. With the next election still four years away, now is an ideal time to get serious about abolishing the Electoral College.



Marilyn Sandstrom, voter service chair, receives award from Marilyn Brown for extraordinary service during the summer and fall organizing voter registration drives and candidate and ballot issue forums, among other things. Suzanne Becker also received an award as a new citizen at our holiday celebration and was written up in the Neighbors column of the Durango Herald.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY!

The Earth's atmosphere is being altered, causing changes to global climate that will affect our environment and communities for centuries to come. Temperatures are increasing, snow pack is disappearing, spring is arriving earlier, and the ranges of plants and animals are shifting. On October 23, 2008, Dr. Kristen Averyt, sponsored by the LWV of La Plata County, helped kickoff the development of a **Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP)** for the county. The Four Corners Office of Resource Efficiency (4CORE) is leading the development of the CEAP to improve our air quality and public health that is being impacted by climate change. At the meeting, Joelle Riddle, La Plata County Commissioner, emphasized that both the county and City of Durango are supportive of the plan.

4CORE is facilitating a public process that will result in a plan within approximately one year. Local representatives from multiple sectors such as water resources, agriculture, forest, recreation, health, energy, transportation, oil and gas, and city and county government are participating. At a meeting on November 12th, over 50 community members signed up for work groups.

The work groups will provide information on emissions inventory; reduction targets; climate change preparation; scientific, technical and analysis data; agriculture, forestry and water management mitigation; energy supply mitigation; residential, commercial and industrial mitigation; and transportation and land use. An overall steering committee will provide a consolidated plan to the county.

Both LWVUS and LWVCO have positions on air quality, environmental planning and management, land use and water resources which are impacted by climate change and will be addressed in the CEAP. In support of the League's positions and policy implementation, LWV members Sally Bellerue and Deanna Collins are participating on the Climate Change Preparation Work Group. That work group will assess climate change vulnerability and associated risks in La Plata County and develop a climate change preparedness plan.

Some communities throughout the United States have developed similar plans so there are a few models available, but preparing for climate change is not a "one size fits all" process. Our county has a critical opportunity to start preparing today for the impacts of climate change. The CEAP will provide a preparedness plan to manage the economic and ecological consequences of climate change and help our community take advantage of any potential benefits.

-Deanna Collins



Ross and Ellen Park receiving award at our holiday celebration from Jill Patton for exceptional service in organizing Greg Mortenson's visit

Climate Change Task Force Articles

The LWVUS Climate Action Task Force continues to add position papers and articles to the website every day! Check out the following url to keep yourself up to date:
http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Climate_Change_Task_Force

The following series of short, two-page articles was prepared by Task Force member Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL):

Carbon Offsets: A Cautionary Tale. A look at the role of voluntary carbon offsets in addressing climate change plus tips for finding quality offset projects.

Curbing Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Two Approaches. A comparison of two market-based approaches to reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions: a cap-and trade system and a carbon tax.

Lighting the Way to a Greener Environment. A review of the benefits of using fluorescent lights, with tips for finding the right bulbs and disposing of them properly.

Staying Warm and Living Green. Tips for analyzing the energy efficiency of your home's heating system and improving your home's energy performance.

Water – Let's Use This Precious Resource Wisely! Steps individuals can take to reduce water usage.

U.N. Seminar: The United Nations and the United States - Restoring International Credibility

Save the date: Saturday, February 21, University of Denver. Details and brochure: Marilyn Brown, marilbrown@aol.com

<h1>Calendar</h1>			LWV La Plata County www.lwvlaplata.org 296 Highland Hill Drive Durango, CO 81301
January			
5 Mon	Legislative Conference, Old State Supreme Chambers, State Capitol, 8:30-2		
7 Wed	Voter Service Cmte Mtg., Common Sense Café 1 p.m.		
8 Thu	Team Meeting, Bellerue home, 1-4 p.m. Carpool: north side of N. City Mkt, 12:45		
13 Tues*	Health Care Update/Program Planning, Rm. 3 (upstairs), Durango Library, 11:30-1:45		
19 Mon	NPVC Cmte Mtg., Common Sense Café, 2-3:30 p.m.		
22 Thu*	Great Decisions: U.S./Rising Global Powers		
27 Tues	Great Decisions: U.S./Rising Global Powers		
February			
3 Tues*	Great Decisions: Afghanistan/Pakistan		
5 Thu*	Great Decisions: Afghanistan/Pakistan		
Sat 7	Legislative Lowdown, Rm 2, Durango Library, 9:30-11:30 a.m.		
Tue 17*	Great Decisions: Energy/Global Economy		
Thu 19*	Great Decisions: Energy/Global Economy		
Sat 21	U.N. Seminar: U.N. and U.S. - Restoring International Credibility, U. Denver, 8:30-5		
March		<u>Team Members</u>	
3 Tue*	Great Decisions: The Arctic Age	Spokesperson/Newsletter Marilyn Brown, 259-3593 marilbrown@aol.com	Team Coordinator Sally Bellerue, 385-0848 bellerue@frontier.net
5 Thu*	Great Decisions: The Arctic Age	Director-at-large Grace Deltscheff, 259-3040 holgnd@frontier.net	Treasurer Nadine Ancel, 259-3675 ancelnm@yahoo.com
17 Tue	Great Decisions: Egypt	Secretary Suzanne Becker, 375-1533 srahmberg@aol.com	Voter Service Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596 mjschilli@bresnan.net
19 Thu	Great Decisions: Egypt	Director-at-large Jill Patton, 385-4061 jgpatton@frontier.net	Director-at-large Ellen Park, 247-8116 gellenpark@aol.com
<p>*All Great Decisions programs are held in the Program Room, main floor, Durango Public Library, 11:45-1:45. Bring a brown bag lunch.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		Natural Resources Co-chair Deanna Collins, 259-7845 dcdurango@msn.com	Speakers Bureau/NR Co-chair Stephanie Huss, 259-7263 Stephanie@frontier.net
		Publicity Ross Park, 247-8116 lwvlpca@aol.com	Membership Sue Herbst, 382-9446 sue_herbst@frontier.net
		Great Decisions Pat Chatfield, 247-1692 patchwork@gobrainstorm.net	