



League of Women Voters  
Of La Plata County

VOTER

Volume 8, Issue 9

Sixty-two Years Serving La Plata County  
94 members

May, 2009

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

www.lwvcolorado.org

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**Insert:  
Annual Meeting flyer  
and agenda**

*Your newsletter will be on  
vacation until August!  
Please check out our  
website for news  
www.lwvlaplata.org*



*Mark your calendars!*

**May-June Meetings**

**LWV of La Plata County Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, May 9**

**9 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Pot luck lunch 11:30 on...**

**Stephanie Huss’s home, Falls Creek**

**RSVP by May 7: Sue Herbst, 382-9446 or sue\_herbst@frontier.net**

**Carpool from Miller Middle School at 8:30**

**Directions to venue to be distributed via email**

Please bring pages 3-5 from the April newsletter (the section on annual meeting business) with you!

**LWVCO Convention**

**May 16-17**

**The Golden Hotel, Golden**

Delegates: Stephanie Huss, Trish Pegram, Deanna Collins,  
Sally Bellerue and Marilyn Brown

Be prepared to give direction to your delegates at the annual meeting

**Leadership Retreat**

**Friday – Saturday, June 19-20**

**Holiday Inn, Frisco**

This retreat is one of the most valuable opportunities LWVCO offers.

Call/email Stephanie Huss if you can consider attending:

259-7263 or stephanie@frontier.net .

### Coordinator's Message

It has been a fine ride this **2008-2009 Year for League**. We started in the **summer** with the Forum for the District Attorney Election. In addition, the Voter Service Committee put into action their voter registration program.

**September** brought Greg Mortenson here to FLC College. We met at Jane Marentette's home for a preview and discussion and to launch our year. Sue Herbst our Membership Chair led our membership drive.

**October:** Candidate and Ballot Issue Forums were held in Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio lead by Marilyn Sandstrom, Voter Service Chair. Many Leaguers were involved. League co-sponsored the Life Long Learning program with Dr. Kristen Averyt speaking on Climate Change. She was brought here through the work of Marilyn Brown.

**November:** Paula Huntley and her husband Edwin Villmoare gave us first person accounts of Kosovo. They lived there after the war, he working to set up their new legal system and she teaching English as a second language and later writing the book, The Hemingway Book Club of Kosovo.

**December:** Holiday party at Ann Flatten's. Honors were given to Ellen and Ross Park for their amazing work on the Greg Mortenson event; Marilyn Sandstrom as outstanding Voter Service Chair and Suzanne Becker, for becoming our newest United States Citizen! Beginning in 08 and through 09, Deanna Collins and I have been and are continuing to be involved in the Climate Change Preparation Work Group, part of the effort in the county to address climate change.

**January:** Health care update with Jill Patton and Missy Rodey. Health care is one of our top concerns. Two committees formed to work through the winter. One culminated in April: National Popular Vote Compact on a consensus for our National League. The other, LWV La Plata Mail-in, Early and Provisional Ballot Process Committee, came out of local concerns. Their work is presented elsewhere in this Voter. Ellen Park most ably chaired.

Great Decisions started with Pat Chatfield at the helm.

**February:** Legislative Lowdown, with Representative Ellen Roberts. She was open and direct and showed her fine sense of humor. Senator Jim Isgar couldn't get home in time from Denver so missed it.

**March:** Kids, kids, kids. We had a wonderful panel of Vicki Coe, Barbara Dodds, Marsha Porter-Norton and Jaynee Fontecchio-Spradling discussing "Building a

Community for Children and Youth in La Plata County. We learned lots and found many areas of shared concerns. We also had one more Voter Service Forum with the candidates for the Durango City Council.

**April:** NPVC consensus. This has been sent to National to see what our LWVUS policy will be. Watch for announcements from LWVUS.

**May:** Annual Meeting: May 9<sup>th</sup> at the home of Stephanie and Phil Huss. Come hear our new Mayor and League member, Leigh Meigs, and celebrate the terrific new Board that's high energy and ready! We'll socialize too!

#### **Thank You Leaguers!**

Sharing the duties with Marilyn Brown this year has been a pleasure. She has been terrific to work with. Her work at state and knowledge of League policies is so valuable. A letter to write? She does it with quiet directness and grace. She also produced the Voter, calmly and efficiently turning them out each month. We've had members involved through the year through Committee work including Nominating, Natural Resource, Finance and Budget as well as those listed above,

Thank you to the whole team that so beautifully did their jobs and brought us through the year: **Suzanne Becker, Nadine Ancel, Grace Deltscheff, Marilyn Sandstrom, Jill Patton, Ellen Park, Deanna Collins, Stephanie Huss, Ross Park, Sue Herbst, Pat Chatfield, Kim Martin and Marilyn Brown.**

-Sally Bellerue



**Kudos to Stephanie Huss for recognizing this national figure, second from left, while dining at Seasons Grill recently. He was discussing a case with NM colleagues. Would you have recognized him?**

(answer on last page)

**Mail-in, Early and Provisional Ballot Research Project Recommendations**

A team commissioned by the League of Women Voters of La Plata County recently concluded a review of the way in which local officials verify and tabulate mail-in, early voting, and provisional ballots. The team consisted of Ellen Park, chair, Nadine Ancel, Maria Baker, Suzanne Becker, Enid Brodsky, Grace Deltscheff, Ann Flatten, Trish Pegram and Marilyn Sandstrom. We would like to thank all the officials who were interviewed - County Clerk and Recorder Linda Daley, County Official Donna Elder, and City Official Amy Phillips - for their cooperation, for being forthcoming and open to our questions, and for spending considerable time with the interviewers in person and via several email exchanges to collect and verify our results. Thanks also to the school district administrators who responded to our emails and phone calls.

Following is a short summary of conclusions reached by the team, a few concerns, and some recommendations. For the complete report, available after May 1, please go to our web site at [www.lwvlaplata.org](http://www.lwvlaplata.org).

**Conclusions**

Election processes in La Plata County are governed by Colorado Revised Statutes and Secretary of State Election Rules, or by Durango City Ordinances, all of which are explicit, detailed and followed by all election officials. Federal, State, County, City of Durango, and School District elections all use the voter database maintained by the county to determine voter status. City of Durango conducts its own elections, assisted by the County Clerk's office, and using the County's official voter database. Elections officials make numerous efforts to contact active and inactive voters both before and after elections. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the voter to confirm registration, and to re-register when necessary (after a move, for example). General (State and Federal), County elections are conducted by La Plata County election officials. All mail-in, early, and provisional ballots are verified and tabulated. Mail-in and Early voting ballots are processed as they are received, and provisional ballots are processed after the election. We are confident that all votes are counted as required by statutes and regulations.

**Concerns**

The team has identified four areas of concern, as follows:

**Judge selection for early and mail-in ballot processing at County, City and School District levels**

The selection of election judges for manning of the polling stations on the day of election is an open process that includes considerable community outreach via political parties and public notices. However, the public is generally unaware of how judges are selected for the verification and tabulation of early and mail-in ballots at the county, city and school district levels.

**Use of poll watchers and observers during the processing of mail-in ballots**

The purpose of poll watchers (partisan or non-partisan) is to apply oversight to the way in which ballots are counted, and, while the process allows for poll watchers, information is lacking as to how to participate. Consequently watchers are seldom, if ever, in attendance.

**Judge recruitment and training**

The issues associated with judge recruitment, training and competence apply to all aspects of voting and not just to the scope of this project. The lack of consistency in interpreting how rules are applied by election judges was cited as a serious problem by election officials. Although most voters and ballots are processed without complication, the loss of even one vote is a cause for corrective action.

**Provisional ballot processing**

Provisional ballots cast on election days are inventoried and stockpiled at the polling place in a separate, secure location, and delivered to County officials at the end of the day. They are verified and tabulated no later than 14 days after a general election, by law. Our concern is with the verification process which is generally done by a single official over a period of days. While the actions taken may be flawless, for transparency reasons it is always preferred that a second person be in attendance to prevent error and apply oversight.

(continued on following page)

**ME&P Ballot Project Report (cont.)**

**Recommendations**

- Apply the same process for recruiting mail-in and early voting judges as is used for polling place judges.
- Inform political parties and the public about the need for watchers and observers during the verification of tabulation of mail-in ballot.
- Judge recruitment and training: This action is not within the scope of this particular project, since it applies primarily to judges who officiate at polling places on Election Day. Consequently, the team will recommend to the LWVLPC board that they discuss and review any actions the LWV may be able to take to help La Plata County recruit and train election judges.
- Because of the general unease among the voting public about the disposition of provisional ballots, we recommend that a more rigorous process be put in place for verification of these ballots. At the very least, it should require two election officials be present during the verification of provisional ballots.

-Ellen Park

**2009-2010 Board Retreat**

The new board, including off-board members, will meet on Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> from 9-3 at the home of Stephanie Huss. We'll determine our local priorities, establish board procedures and plan for the coming year. Positions are still available with Membership, Voter Service and Legislative committees and newsletter editor understudy. The Program committee needs volunteers for the *Air Quality and Your Health* summit in October, Census 2010 and other possible programs. Please call Stephanie at 259-7263 or email stephanie@frontier.net if you want to get involved.

**Busy Legislative Session!!**

The 2009 Legislative Session, due to conclude on or before May 6, considered quite a few bills of interest to the LWV. We responded to action alerts from LWVCO on three important bills, SB 170, which would have given in-state tuition rates for certain undocumented CO students and ultimately went down to defeat, SB 228, the bill which would do away with the Arveschoug-Byrd 6% limit on general fund growth, which has

undergone an evolution and may still pass in its revised version, and HCR 1005, which would place the redistricting process for Congressional districts under an independent commission, just as the reapportionment of state senate and house districts already are. Here is the text of our letter, written to Rep. Nancy Todd, chair of the State Affairs Committee, which is dealing with this bill right now:

'The League of Women Voters of La Plata County urges you to support HCR1005, Independent Redistricting Commission. This is something the LWV has supported for years. In addition to reducing the potential for litigation, the bill would reduce the partisan nature of the committee by having restrictions on the number of commissioners and by having commissioners selected by the general assembly leadership, the governor, and the commissioners themselves from a pool selected by the Supreme Court's nominating committee. It makes imminent sense to have the commission move on to draw boundaries for the Congressional districts, using as close to the same criteria as federal law permits, after reapportioning the state senate and representative districts.

Please exert your leadership to support this bill and encourage the other committee members to join you in supporting it.'

In addition, we also responded to one LWVUS action alert urging our Senators and Congressmen to support President Obama's budget, particularly its provisions for health care reform and climate change action.

-Marilyn Brown

**Open Meetings/Records Act**

The public session on Open Meetings and Public Records legislation, sponsored by the SW CO Women's Bar Association and The Durango Herald, held Friday, April 24, was invaluable to elected and appointed officials and to members of the public. The three sessions were videotaped and will be shown on DCAT beginning the second week of May. We will receive a DVD of the session, available for you to borrow. We also have an electronic copy of the slides of the keynote speaker, Chris Beall, attorney representing the CO Press Association and related First amendment issues. Contact Marilyn Brown, marilbrown@aol.com, for the DVD or a copy of the slide presentation.

Most violations of these acts at the local level are unintentional, due to naivete of newly elected officials or overburdened staff. It is up to the public to know when to suspect irregular actions and to call our public officials on them. We as LWV members should be as informed as possible about this legislation.

-Marilyn Brown

### **The Steady State Economy**

Rob Dietz, Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE, [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org)), was the keynote speaker at the Four Corners Green Living Expo April 18-19. His relevant talk preceded a panel discussion by local leaders, Rep. Ellen Roberts, Jack Llewellyn, Chamber of Commerce/LEAD; Erich Bussian, San Juan Bioenergy; Marcus Renner, FLC Environmental Center; Al Harper, Durango-Silverton Railroad; ably moderated by Sidney Zink, C.P.A.

According to Dietz, a prosperous dynamic economy does not have to be a growing economy. A steady state economy features stabilized population and consumption. Such stability means that the amounts of resource throughput and waste disposal remain roughly constant. The key features of a steady state economy are: (1) sustainable scale, in which economic activities fit within the capacity provided by ecosystems; (2) fair distribution of wealth; and (3) efficient allocation of resources. Conditions of a steady state economy include healthy ecosystems, sustainable extraction of renewable resources, extraction of non-renewable resources at no greater a rate than renewable substitutes can be found, stable per capita consumption, waste assimilation and minimized (and within ecological limits) energy and material flow.

Our current paradigm: the growth economy, is simply a continuous increase in the production and consumption of goods and services. Economic growth provided many benefits over time, but we are beginning to recognize that it has costs, maybe more costs than benefits. It also has finite limits: water, land use and atmospheric greenhouse gas content. Economic growth has slowly become a primary threat to the environment, national security, international stability, and future generations. Yet it remains the highest priority in the domestic policy arena of the United States and most other nations, especially as we experience the current economic downturn.

A steady state economy is to a growing economy as a hovering helicopter is to an airplane. This concept deserves our serious consideration. Unfortunately, Dietz's talk and the ensuing panel discussion, which highlighted the need for political will to accomplish it, competed with several interesting sessions at the Expo so attendance and media coverage were less than it deserved.

-Marilyn Brown



**Susie Suazo-Sanchez reporting on her research on the global food crisis in Kim Martin's writing class**

### **Great Decisions 2009**

The Great Decisions discussion series for 2009 ended April 28 and 30. The final topic was Human Rights, a good way to end a very timely and challenging series of topics. Our numbers have grown, the Tuesday group is generally 20- 30 participants, and on Thursday 16 students from Kim Martin's class at FLC joins the 18-20 regular participants. As a bonus to us, Kim's students presented papers sparked by Great Decisions topics April 21 and 23.

We have really enjoyed meeting in the new Library, and want to thank the Library most sincerely for their co-sponsorship. Also a great "thank you" to all the participants and especially the wonderful moderators, Jim Callard, John Lyons (twice), Ed Villmoare, Curt Johnson, Gail Harris, Glenn Rodey, and Ross Park, who kept us on track, most of the time!

-Pat Chatfield

### **Position Papers on Health Care**

The LWVUS Health Care Task Force has developed the first two of a series of white papers on health care issues. They are titled: Quick Facts on Health Care Costs and At-Risk Americans: The Uninsured and Underinsured. They can be found on the LWV website at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and click on Health Care.

***Thanks to the Mail-in, Early and Provisional Ballot Research Project Committee for all their hard work!***

<h1>Calendar</h1>			<b>LWV La Plata County</b> <a href="http://www.lwvlaplata.org">www.lwvlaplata.org</a> 296 Highland Hill Drive Durango, CO 81301
<b>May</b>			
Sat 9	Annual Meeting, 9-11:30, potluck lunch Follows, Stephanie Huss's home		
Sat-Sun 16-17	LWVCO State Convention, 9:45 Sat - 12:45 Sunday, The Golden Hotel, Golden		
<b>June</b>			
19-20	Leadership Retreat, Holiday Inn, Frisco 12:30 Friday – 3 p.m. Saturday		
Tue 30	Board Retreat, 9-3, Stephanie Huss's home		
<i>Have a great summer! Your newsletter will return with the August issue.</i>			
<b>Identity of national figure spotted by Stephanie: <u>Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia</u> and he congratulated her for pronouncing his name correctly!</b>			
<b>League Mission Statement:</b> The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.			
<b>Join the League!</b> 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.			
		<b><u>Team Members</u></b>	
		<b>Spokesperson/Newsletter</b> Marilyn Brown, 259-3593 <a href="mailto:marilbrown@aol.com">marilbrown@aol.com</a>	<b>Team Coordinator</b> Sally Bellerue, 385-0848 <a href="mailto:bellerue@frontier.net">bellerue@frontier.net</a>
		<b>Director-at-large</b> Grace Deltscheff, 259-3040 <a href="mailto:holgnd@frontier.net">holgnd@frontier.net</a>	<b>Treasurer</b> Nadine Ancel, 259-3675 <a href="mailto:ancelnm@yahoo.com">ancelnm@yahoo.com</a>
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		<b>Director-at-large</b> Jill Patton, 385-4061 <a href="mailto:jgpatton@frontier.net">jgpatton@frontier.net</a>	<b>Director-at-large</b> Ellen Park, 247-8116 <a href="mailto:gellenpark@aol.com">gellenpark@aol.com</a>
		<b>Natural Resources Co-chair</b> Deanna Collins, 259-7845 <a href="mailto:dcdurango@msn.com">dcdurango@msn.com</a>	<b>Natural Resource Co-chair</b> Stephanie Huss, 259-7263 <a href="mailto:stephanie@frontier.net">stephanie@frontier.net</a>
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