



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

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Sixty-one Years Serving La Plata County
84 members

November-December, 2007

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

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and Safer, More
Compassionate World Forum



Mark your calendars!

November and December Meetings



**A Safer, More Compassionate World
Community Forum**

Saturday, November 10

9:45 – 4 p.m.

**Ballroom, College Union Building
Fort Lewis College**

**Hosted by LWV La Plata County and Fort Lewis College Common
Reading Experience
Sponsored by Our Voices Together and LWVUS**

Featuring:

**Diane Wilson, activist and author
Tom Grams, dentist to the Afghans
John Mahan, Engineering Professor, CSU, Fulbright Scholar
and a panel of local individuals who are making a difference**

**Lunch provided if RSVP received by November 7 to
lwvlpcaol@aol.com or (970) 247-8116**

(See Presidents’ Message, page 2, and inserted flyer and agenda)

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:

History and Foreign Policy Options

Tuesday, December 4, 5-7 p.m., Durango Rec Center

Don’t miss it!! See article on page 2



President's Message

Three Cups of Tea, Mountains Beyond Mountains, Giving, Leaving Microsoft to Change the World- these books and more chronicle the actions of a mountain climber to a former President in their passion to connect with a world in need of schools and education, libraries, disease eradication, clean water, food....

Bookshelves are filling up with these empowering stories, and if you feel the passion in you to make a difference, now is the time. We have moved far beyond the model of relying upon ineffective traditional foreign aid and ultra rich philanthropists to one where thousands of people like us can and should contribute in hundreds of ways.

Last June, our League applied for and was one of 20 leagues nationwide to receive a grant from the LWV US and "Our Voices Together" (www.OurVoicesTogether.org) to host a forum on the topic "A Safer More Compassionate World". The purpose of these forums is to highlight ways we can engage constructively in what the 9/11 Commission termed the Agenda of Opportunity—education, employment, and the possibility for a brighter tomorrow-and contribute, person-to-person, to help build a future without the threat of terrorism.

In partnership with the 2007 Fort Lewis College Common Reading Experience, (*Mountains Beyond Mountains*) and sponsored by several local organizations, we will present our forum, whose major message will be the interdependence of the world and how small groups of people, working together, can make a difference in combating the sources of terrorism. We have been actively working with the College since June to create an extraordinary agenda that includes several individuals, including many local community members, who are working, each in their way, to make a difference. Our keynote speakers will be Diane Wilson, author of *An Unreasonable Woman*, Tom Grams, dentist to the Afghans and John Mahan, Lighting Nepal. A flyer and agenda for the event are inserted in the newsletter. We hope you can take the time from your busy lives to participate, and please invite your family, friends, colleagues, book club associates and others as well.

-Ellen Park

Heritage Celebration Rescheduled

Our Annual Social has been moved from December to January! This year's theme is "Celebrate your Heritage", a spin-off of the Immigration Study now underway. Your board had originally scheduled this for December 14, in between Thanksgiving and Christmas. As time unfolded, the three organizers of the event had made major travel plans rendering it impossible for them to arrange everything and participate (believe it or not, we do actually have lives!). So, we decided to move the social to January to coordinate with the last of two consensus meetings we will have on the Immigration Study, and "Celebrate our Heritage" in the New Year. The plan is still to ask everyone to prepare and bring a dish that reflects your ancestry (and, optionally, wear something that does the same – a hat, scarf, whatever. The first of the 2 consensus meetings will take place January 16 from 10-12. The date for the final meeting and our social event will be **January 23**: we will start with the final consensus questions at 10 a.m., and adjourn at 11:30 to enjoy the goodies and conversation. It will take place at Christ the King Church, and their kitchen facilities will accommodate reheating of warm dishes and refrigeration of cold.

Please mark your calendars - reminders and details will come with the January newsletter!

Great Decisions 'Bonus' Event

As Condoleezza Rice pursues shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, speculation about the possible renewal of the Israel-Palestine peace process is growing. Are you interested in learning more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Would you like an opportunity to explore the issues and talk with other interested folks about U.S. policy options and prospects for peace?

The LWV of La Plata County, in cooperation with the Friends of the Great Decisions program, is sponsoring a 'bonus' Great Decisions discussion session on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Tuesday, December 4, from 5 – 7 p.m., in the Windom Room at the Durango Rec Center. A briefing paper on the topic, as well as suggested readings and discussion questions will be posted on the LWV La Plata County website www.lwvlaplata.org on November 18. For further information or a hard copy of the briefing paper, call Doreen Hunter, 259-3379.



Scott Kujath answers a question while candidates (from left) Jeff Eckstein, Susan Folk, Bill Faust and Don Mooney, listen.

Bayfield School Board Candidate Forum Draws 67!

The League's School Board Candidate Forum for Bayfield, District 10-JTR, held on the evening of October 24 at the Bayfield Library drew 67 people, not including candidates and LWV members!

The first speaker was Justin Clifton, Bayfield City Manager, who described the Sanitation District ballot issue. Linda Daley, La Plata County Clerk, and Donna Elder of Linda's staff, explained the difficulty in determining eligibility of voters for this ballot issue. She recommended that people call 970-382-6280, or stop in her office if they have further questions or if they have not received ballots they believe they should have received. Ballots were sent only to active voters, i.e., voters who voted in the last general election (November, 2006).

The candidate forum included introductions by each of the five School Board candidates; Jeff Eckstein, Bill Faust, Susan J. Folk, Scott Kujath, and Donald Mooney, followed by candidate responses to written questions from the audience and final summary statements by each candidate. These five candidates are contending for three open seats on an at-large basis. Mail-in only ballots must be in the County Clerk's office by 7 p.m. Tuesday, November 6.

Thanks to Marilyn Brown, Pam Patton, Stephanie Huss, Lois Carpenter, Donna Hugg, and Marilyn Sandstrom for this successful event.

The School Board Candidate Forum for Ignacio, District 11-JT, scheduled for October was cancelled. Since there were only three candidates, Betty Jo Quintana, Chris Ribera, and Toby Roderick, for the three open School Board positions, Superintendent of 11-JT, Juvie Jones, requested that we cancel the forum.



The crowd attending our Bayfield School District candidate forum at Bayfield Library!

The School Board Candidate Forum for Durango, District 9-R, was also cancelled. Of the five open seats, only one of those was contested (District A). That seat was being sought by Mark Dold and Pdraig Lynch. Upon the tragic death of Mr. Dold the day before the scheduled forum, the LWV cancelled the forum. Subsequently, the Board of Education of 9-R cancelled the election. Mr. Lynch will represent District A; Floyd W. Patterson, Jr., District B; Dave Farkas, District D; Wendy Rice, District G; and Tammy Capdevielle, for a two year term representing District E. They will be sworn in on November 13.

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Julie Levy

New member Julie Levy was recently hired as the Programs Manager for the Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County, to oversee the creation of a \$10 million investment fund, spearhead the development of a comprehensive homebuyer services program, and advance local policy that will foster housing opportunities. The Regional Housing Alliance (RHA) is a model for cutting edge affordable housing programs in rapidly appreciating markets. Created in 2004 as a multi-jurisdictional housing authority, the RHA plans to create 100 home opportunities per year through innovative partnerships and entrepreneurial housing programs.

Previously Julie worked for the Region 9 Economic Development District of SW Colorado as the Community Development Coordinator, managed several successful political campaigns, and worked for the FLC Environmental Center. She has also been involved with community development in Europe, Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central America and East Asia. Julie is a CO native and has lived in Durango since 2001, where she is active in economic development activities, energy projects and sustaining a diverse community. Julie received her B.S. from Fort Lewis College in Political Science and Environmental Sciences and will receive her M.A. in Public Policy from CU. Julie enjoys the mountains surrounding her community, performing in a circus-theater group, and learning to play the violin.

LWVCO League Day October 6, 2007

The ambitious agenda of League Day 2007 was kicked off by LWVUS President Mary Wilson, who reiterated her trademark mantra of the three Ms: membership, media, and money. She urged Leagues everywhere to focus on these three essential elements that are the keys to achieving our mission, and offered some guidance on each. In particular she described the positive results achieved so far by the so-called MRI (Membership Recruitment Initiative), which was launched last year as a controlled experiment, and will eventually be rolled out across the country.

Ms. Wilson emphasized the incorporation of a “membership thought” in every local league program. She believes that most people join the League simply because they were asked! Ms. Wilson discussed a strengthening of the use of media at national level to focus actions that are taking place at that level. She requested that each local League have an identified Public Relations Chair to receive all press releases from LWVUS and to cultivate local media contacts to publish this information.

Ms. Wilson also informed us that LWVUS is partnering with the XM Radio POTUS Channel 130 to provide the electorate with information about election procedure, presidential and other races (basically a voter’s guide) and other non- partisan aspects of the 2008 election process. If you have XM, tune in. Finally, Ms. Wilson mentioned that the position resulting from our Immigration Study will be presented at National Convention in June 2008.

Toni Larson, Executive Director of Independent Higher Ed of Colorado, continued the program with a description of what happens after Referendum C, and pointed out that the problems are only going to get worse. Colorado has only partially recovered from the 2001-2002 economic downturn while we are currently at the highest level of Ref C payout with only two budget cycles remaining before it runs out. Ms. Larson stated that the Colorado public tends to believe that Ref C credibility is diminishing with the bulk of the financial benefits going to the transportation sector. The coalition who supported C is evolving their message towards a more positive approach: How to invest in Colorado?

When questioned about the voter priorities for 2007-2008, Ms. Larson stated that top priorities include the environment, healthcare, K-12 education, higher education, illegal immigration, traffic and mass transit as well as managing growth. She forecasts 2008 ballot issues to include affordable housing, healthcare reform, higher education, privatizing the lottery, mental health care, open space, school construction, senior tax relief and abortion. The major question involves whether these initiatives will be “silo” issues or whether the current administration will bundle many of them into a proposed overall solution.

The highlight of the day was a discussion by Colorado Senator Chris Romer (Denver District 32) of U.S. responses to Global Warming. He started out with the statement (gasp!) that democracy is not the best form of government to handle a huge crisis, and initiate immediate change. He pointed out that democracy is by its nature slow to move – and with the powerful lobby opposing any change regarding energy (as they should, Sen. Romer points out, since their goal is to maximize profits for their shareholders), politicians are to some degree unable to move. Sen. Romer did state that the Colorado public has moved forward 25 percentage points in the last 9 months regarding their interest in the subject of renewable energy. Concerning how this change will happen”, he said: “People will have to lead, and the politicians will follow...policies will need to get the economics right and then let the market solve the issue”. Sen. Romer declared that Colorado is the Saudi Arabia of wind and solar power and we have a huge opportunity ahead of U.S., with the political will to carry it out. He stated that the U.S. must cut carbon emissions by 50% just simply to counter the projected growth of China and India. Sen. Romer believes that 99% of the answer to conserving energy lies in education as people want to do the right thing.

Heidi Van Genderen (Climate Change Advisor to Gov. Ritter) followed with a lively and pithy talk about the Governor’s commitment to renewable energy, and cited the fact that XCEL Energy will meet a requirement to produce 10% of its energy from renewable sources not in 2015 as laid out in Amendment 37 but this year. Ms. Van Genderen stated that the last session of the Colorado Legislature saw at least 20 associated bills on the subject of renewable energy. She went on to say that ultimately action has to be taken at the federal level, because energy production and usage crosses state borders. The U.S. must build an economy that makes it profitable to de-carbonize (measured in “negawatts”).

Monica Greigo of the Consumer Health Initiative provided a slide presentation on the status of health care in Colorado, pointing out that 1 in 7 children in Colorado are uninsured. Her presentation described the various plans being examined by the Colorado 208 Commission and expects that their report will be presented to the legislature in January of 2008. She did state that for every \$1 spent by Colorado for Medicaid reimbursement, \$1 is refunded by the federal government and for every \$1 spent for SCHIP reimbursement, \$2 is refunded by the federal level. [*Editor’s note: \$2 for \$1 is correct!*]

Ann Allott, Attorney in Immigration Law, was the final speaker of the day. She specializes in advising clients seeking to immigrate to the U.S., and cited one example after another of the unbearable backlogs in the system. Some interesting points made by Atty. Allott are that countries generally have three different paths to citizenship: of the soil (like the U.S. (born here or naturalized after a number of years in country),

League Day (cont.)

of the blood (citizenship can be given to any individual born to a parent or ancestor who is a national or citizen of that state, true for many European countries), and of the religion (some Muslim states require that only those of the Islamic faith can be citizens).

With regard to illegal immigrants, she pointed out that 82,000 workers in Colorado are using incorrect SSNs – not identity theft but fraudulent numbers. \$1 Trillion has been collected by the Social Security Administration that will never be distributed because it was collected from these fraudulent SSNs. But, she said, police power will never overwhelm economic markets. Ms. Allott stated that the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. is a point of contention, varying from 12 million (Pew Institute) to 20 million (Bear Stearns). Concerning non-immigrant visas, Ms Allot emphasized the major problems associated with temporary work permits. H2A visas, which apply to seasonal agricultural workers, are unlimited but are practically reduced by the requirements for housing by the employer. H2B visas, which apply to lower skilled non-agricultural workers, are capped at 66,000 per year and all allocations are depleted before the actual date when workers can legally arrive in the U.S.

Atty. Allott summarized by stating that we are a nation of immigrants, with many egregious actions along the way, including how we dealt with oriental immigrants (Chinese immigrants were granted citizenship for the first time in 1952) – and American Indians, whose citizenship was granted by a 1938 statute, and not the Constitution.

In all, a rather overwhelming amount of information to digest in a single, short day (we adjourned at 3:30) but not to be missed.

A DVD of her presentation is available for viewing. Call Marilyn Brown, 259-3593.

-Ellen and Ross Park

Deanna Collins

Raised in the Midwest, Deanna Collins' career began as a secondary teacher. She joined IBM in 1973, working in various engineering/scientific marketing and management positions. In 1990 she joined Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) where she worked in the Environmental Division. She continued consulting for LANL after she and her husband Bill moved to Durango in 1995.

Both Deanna and Bill are outdoor enthusiasts -- nordic and alpine skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, biking and camping. They also love to travel domestically and worldwide.

Deanna hopes the LWV will provide a forum to discuss multiple views on issues facing our community and nation as well as opportunities to give back to the community.

208 Commission Hearing – October 10th, 2007

The Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform (also called the 208 Commission from the number of the bill that created it) met with our community and others around the state recently. The purpose of the hearings was to take input on the five plans currently under consideration by the Commission for presentation to the legislature next January. Four of the plans were chosen from the 31 originally presented to the Commission, and represent four different approaches to health care reform for Colorado. One of these plans subsidizes health insurance for needy people, two mandate insurance coverage for everyone, and the fourth is a “single-payer” system. The fifth is a composite developed by Commission members, combining ideas from other plans. (For details go to www.colorado.gov/208commission)

The first four plans were evaluated by the Lewin Group for associated costs. Colorado’s health care budget is currently \$30 billion. The first three plans would increase this to between \$30.4 and \$31.3 billion. The “single-payer” plan would save over \$1.4 billion. The fifth plan is still to some degree a “work in progress”, so has not been evaluated for costs.

At the Durango hearing, which was attended by over 60 people, Commissioner Clarke Becker gave a powerpoint presentation explaining the above, and then he and the other four commissioners (Steven Summer, Lynn Westberg, Steve ErkenBrack and Mark Simon) took questions and comments from the audience.

The LWVCO had prepared a statement, based on the League position, to be presented at these hearings. Jodi Foran, president of the Montezuma County League, and myself delivered it at the meeting. The text of this statement, is on page 10 and on our website www.lwvlaplata.org .

Between 20 and 30 people spoke to the meeting; at least 15 of those (including the League) were in favor of the “single payer” model. Lynn Westberg told me later that at the hearing in Grand Junction the following evening, there was also a lot of support for “single payer”. State Rep., Ellen Roberts, attended the hearing, as did representatives of both John and Ken Salazar, county commissioner Joelle Riddle and city councilor Renee Parsons. Other communities – Cortez, Naturita and others – were represented by attendees.

The five commissioners (six, if you count Mark Simon’s beautiful Great Pyrenees service dog) are to be commended for their relaxed manner of conducting the meeting and for their attention to all that was said. They took lots of notes – we hope they make good use of them!

-Jill Patton



**Deanna Collins, left, and Marilyn Brown
In front of hydrogen-fueled Hummer**

Highlights of Renewable Energy Seminar

The Delta-Montrose Electric Association, a rural electric cooperative similar to our La Plata County Electric Association, organized a Renewable Energy Forum and Expo in Montrose, October 19-20. New LWV member Deanna Collins and Marilyn Brown attended the sessions focusing on topics of interest to residents; the previous day's session focused on issues of interest to utilities.

The very interesting sessions emphasized on the latest passive and active solar options for residential use, both new and retro-fit; wind energy systems for homes and small businesses; plug-in hybrid vehicles and conversion kits for Ford Escape and Toyota Prius hybrids (a kit for the Toyota Highlander will be available in 2008); bio-diesel and bio-diesel blends; hydrogen-fueled vehicles and selecting green financial investments. The session closed with talks and Q/A with both state Senators Gail Schwartz and Josh Penry, mostly reviewing the 2007 CO Legislature's energy activities.

The parking lot in front of the Montrose Pavilion was filled with far out, mostly multi-fuel ready vehicles, such as a hydrogen fueled Hummer, and a plug-in Toyota Prius hybrid.

Highlights:

Residential and small business heating/cooling:

1. Solar and wind options must be tailored to your specific site.
2. Buildings must be well-insulated with leaks minimized, prior to consideration of purchase of renewable equipment.
3. Homeowner associations and local governmental agencies are an issue with renewable applications, mainly because they are not used to dealing with them. CO has legislation prohibiting discrimination against solar equipment.

4. Three magazines, Home Power, Solar Today magazines and Mother Earth News, focus on renewable energy applications for residential use.
5. The ground under your property can be used as a heat/cooling storage mass, similar to a concrete/stone floor or tromb wall, with a ground source heat pump system.
6. Solar and wind equipment can be expensive (~\$13,000 for a 35-foot high wind generator) and payback times depend on many variables. State and federal tax credits are available.

Green vehicles:

7. Batteries are the best way to store energy for vehicles and battery technology is improving.
8. Current gas-hybrid vehicles can be converted to plug-in hybrids with doubling of gas mpg.
9. Conversion to plug-in is expensive (up to \$32,000) but state and federal credits exist.
10. Plug-in hybrids can be used to feed back power to the grid.
11. Net metering (the requirement that utilities buy excess power generated by distributed sources) is essential to increasing the cost-effectiveness of renewable energy equipment to home/business owners.
12. Rudolph Diesel ran the first diesel engine on peanut oil in 1893. The first hybrid was introduced in Tokyo in 1977. The first mass produced hybrid was offered in Japan in 1997.
13. Bio-diesel fuel takes MANY forms. The key is to use local sources.
14. One acre of algae can produce 819 U.S. gallons of bio-diesel.
15. If you're going to do more than local driving a multi-fuel-capable vehicle is a must.
16. The 25 x '25 national campaign, launched in 2004, is a effort by farmers, ranchers and foresters to produce 25% of the energy used in the U.S. by 2025 while continuing to produce safe, abundant, affordable food, feed and fiber. The University of Tennessee has conducted a study proving that this is possible. Components of the action plan would include production of 86 billion gallons of ethanol, 1.1 million gallons of diesel, 932 billion kilowatts of wind energy, 15 quads of biomass from manure, etc., including reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by increasing no-till farming, etc. By 2025 the plan would increase farm income by \$180 billion and generate \$700 billion in new economic activity, create four to five million new jobs, reduce oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels per day – 10 percent of U.S. projected consumption in 2025, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1 billion tons – two thirds of projected emissions growth by 2025.
17. When choosing an investment in renewable energy businesses, learn about the industry and look at the time-horizon of the marketability of the products.

-Marilyn Brown and Deanna Collins