



League of Women Voters of Montezuma County

VOTER

Montezuma County, Colorado

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, promotes informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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Mark Your Calendars

February General Meetings

- February 16 (Sat) 9:30am Program Planning, Cortez, Visitor Center
- February 28 (Thur) 11am Teen Maze Planning, Cortez, Visitor Center

Board Meetings:

- February 11 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center

**Use your previously mailed
Caucus Info Sheet.**

Go Caucus!

**Happy 88th Birthday
League of Women Voters !**



February 14

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 Llois Stein at 564-9565 or Marcia Boon at 565-7668 for more information.

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President's Message

Congratulations to all members!! Our application for full charter status to both the state and national Leagues was approved by both Boards! Marilyn Brown, our MAL advisor, and I were both surprised how quickly our application was approved. Our "adolescent" stage of League development passed quickly and wasn't an ordeal. We'll now be more autonomous: we'll maintain the national membership database; we'll be able to vote at national convention and determine dues. We'll even be able to keep some of the dues locally. Kudos to all who have and who are participating in the LWVMZC journey! We are definitely an interesting group.

Who would have thought that the two Immigration Study Consensus meetings we planned in September would be cancelled by January snow and ice! Had we been able to meet we'd have had interesting discussions as the material and study meetings broadened our understanding of the issues of the present US Immigration Policy. Thanks to all who participated in the Study.

There is much to do in the coming months, and plenty of opportunities to prove that we merit our new status.

At the February 16 meeting we'll be determining our "Program for 2008 – 2009". In League lingo the word "Program" has a larger context than just the agenda for a given meeting. Determining our "Program" sets our strategic efforts in terms of studies, advocacy and budget. We'll adopt governmental issues (national, state or local) for study and action. An "Issue" is a specific topic on a "Program's" list: local, state or national. The Study Process often results in a "Position / Stand" – a body of opinion expressed in consensus upon which Action can be taken. "Action" is the means used for stimulating interest in, giving information about, and urging support for League positions: press conferences, lobbying, letters, etc.

Eleanor Kuhl has organized an interesting discussion of the Cortez hospital by members of the various boards affiliated with it for the March 20 general meeting. Eleanor is also organizing a May 15 forum to discuss the issues of delivering health

care in rural areas. The Colorado 208 Commission on Health Care Reform delivered its report January 31. A summary and full report are available at

<http://www.colorado.gov/208commission/>

I've reserved the Fairgrounds classroom during the Four Corners Ag Expo Saturday, March 8 from 11am – 2pm for LWVMZC to host our representatives who will share with us and the public a report on Legislative process and the progress of various bills. Stay tuned! As we go to press there is no firm commitment by our Representatives. When former State Representative Mark Larsen lived in Cortez we were fortunate to have him several times a year give our League an update on legislation. Its more difficult now to connect as frequently with our legislators since they live further away – in Durango and Montrose.

The LWV LPC is holding a general meeting February 23, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. in Durango at the Durango Rec Center where Senator Jim Isgar and State Representative Ellen Roberts will speak about what's going on at the Legislature.

At the February 16 general meeting we will vote to approve by-law changes suggested by LWVCO in early January. The changes are minor and will be indicated in the file that I'll email to you. Please bring a copy of the proposed changes to the February general meeting. It takes approval of the general membership to change the by-laws.

In February we'll also be electing three members to the Nominating Committee one of whom can be a Board member. We will elect officers at our Annual Meeting in May.

LWVCO will hold its Council business meeting May 16 -17 in Durango at the Strater Hotel. LWV LPC will be hosting the event and has asked us to help with details. LWVMZC will be actively participating with two delegates. The Council meetings are rarely held on the Western Slope and this event is a great opportunity for LWVMZC members to interact with state leaders and to observe how the League operates at the state level. Plan to attend! LWVCO Board members are looking forward to meeting LWVMZC members. More information about the Council gathering is in the February issue of the Colorado Voter.

The LWVCO Leadership Retreat will be held in Frisco, June 20-21. This is a great leadership training venue. Training will be offered in voter

service, membership, development and various League operations. Save the date and let's have a couple of car loads driving to Frisco!

Dick Hoover has reserved dates for LWVMZC to hold Candidate Forums in Empire Electric's Calvin Denton Room. He can use help in planning and organizing these events that will highlight candidates for county positions and for Colorado's 58th District.

There are several items in LWVCO's January 28 Legislative Newsletter that relate to Voting in Colorado. I suggest you read the lead article "Colorado's Election Woes" written by Leaguer Carol Tone, LWVCO Voting Lobbyist. Also in the same newsletter are details about Legislative bills specifying accepted photo identification standards and certification standards for voting machine systems, as well as online voter registration.

Thanks to Chris Foran who is creating our LWVMZC website. It will be evolving in the next couple of months.

-Jodi Foran

Our New Website

Now that we are a full League, we have our own website. You can't yet find it by searching Google, but you can click in the address field at the top of your browser (Internet Explorer or...). It's the white space that usually has something in it like <http://www.msn.com>. After clicking in that space, type over everything there with the following; www.lwvmontezuma.org then press enter. This should take you to our new website.

Keep in mind that the site is "under construction". You can contribute to the site. Email your ideas or information to Chris Foran (chris@foran.net).

Calendar

Our calendar can now be viewed on-line on our website as well as at the Cortez Area Chamber of Commerce website (www.cortezchamber.com)

General Meetings

- February 16 (Sat) 9:30am Program Planning, Cortez, Visitor Center
- February 23 (Sat) 9:30am LaPlata LWV Hosts Isgar and Roberts, Durango Rec Center
- February 28 (Thur) 11am Teen Maze Planning, Cortez, Visitor Center
- March 8 (Sat) 11am – 2pm LWVMCZ Hosts Roberts and Rose, Ag. Expo. No Firm Commitment at press time.
- March 20 (Thur) 7pm Health Care Forum, Calvin Denton Room of Empire Electric

Board Meetings

- February 11 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center
 - March 10 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center
-

Alternatives to DREP

(Editors note: this article is taken from the the LaPlata League Voter of this month.)

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 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.

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

-Marilyn Brown, editor of LWVLP Voter

208 Commission Recommendations

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Health Care Reform in Colorado reported to the State Legislature January 31 and released its report and recommendations.

Key features of the committee's recommendations for health care reform in Colorado include the following.

1. Require all legal residents of Colorado to have minimum insurance coverage ('individual mandate'). Make the mandate feasible by:
 - Expanding eligibility for public programs
 - Providing sliding-scale subsidies for low-income workers to purchase private coverage
 - Reforming the individual insurance market by requiring health plans to cover everyone who is not eligible for a restructured Cover Colorado program due to a highcost pre-existing condition
 - Enforce the mandate through the income tax system.

2. Require employers to offer pre-tax premium-only plans to facilitate employee purchase of health coverage.
3. Create a "Connector" to assist individuals and small employers to understand and choose among insurance options
4. Restructure, combine and expand eligibility for Medicaid and the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)
5. Reduce administrative costs by streamlining processes and combining functions.
6. Promote consumer choice and direction and encourage cost-consciousness by improving access to cost and quality information.
7. Implement measures to enhance quality and improve coordination of care.
8. Encourage individual responsibility for health, wellness and preventive behavior.
9. Improve delivery of services to vulnerable and underserved populations through program expansions, reimbursement for telemedicine and other mechanisms.
10. Fund safety net providers and public health delivery systems appropriately.

There are 32 specific recommendations that are summarized in the Executive Summary of the Commission's Report at <http://www.colorado.gov/208commission/>

Durango's Legislative Lowdown!

Saturday, February 23, 9:30- 11:30 a.m.
The Peaks, Durango Recreation Center,
2700 Main Avenue

State Senator, Jim Isgar and State Representative Ellen Roberts will speak about what's going on in Denver this Legislative Session. Attend and ask your questions.

Legislative Conference Highlights

(Editors note: No one from our League was able to attend the LWVCO Legislative Conference held in Denver, January 7. Marilyn Brown of Durango attended and reported the following article in the LWVLP Voter. There was also a good article about the session in the February Colorado Voter. Next Year!)

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.

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 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.

-Marilyn Brown, editor of LWVLPC Voter

LWVUS Website Logon

You will find an amazing array of tools and information on the national website. There are several "list servs" (email distribution lists) to which you can subscribe. These are lists of Leaguers throughout the US who are interested in particular topics.

To make full use of the National League (LWVUS) website requires logging in using your email address as your identifier.

Prior to our new status, the national League did not have our email addresses. Now our League is responsible for maintaining our names and email addresses in the national database. Keep Jodi Foran informed of email address changes.

If you have problems using the national website, call Jodi at 882-2401.

LWV Alerts Voters on Signing Petitions

"THINK BEFORE YOU INK"

(Editor's note: This comes to us from LWV of Oregon and is worth publishing.)

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is encouraging its members and the public to be cautious during this period of circulation of initiative petitions.

Voters will be asked to sign a variety of initiative petitions "just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it." The League is telling voters, "**Your signature is valuable**, more valuable than your vote, considering that far fewer signatures are required to qualify a petition for the ballot than votes to pass it on the ballot. Only sign an initiative petition that you believe belongs on the ballot."

LWVMZC lists six questions voters can ask themselves to help them determine whether or not to sign an initiative petition:

- **Is it complex?** Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. Complex issues may need to be thoroughly examined and debated in a legislative arena.

- **Is it confusing?** Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.

- **Does it belong in the Constitution?** If an initiative amends the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Is it a fundamental law that should be protected from change? Correcting a constitutional amendment later would also require amending the Constitution, is cumbersome and costly, and requires another vote of the

people.

- **How will it be funded?** Is it an "unfunded mandate" that would require the Legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative should generally create its own revenue source, and not earmark, restrict, or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.

- **Who is behind it?** You can find out who are the real sponsors and opponents of a petition Check the Colorado Secretary of State Election site <http://www.elections.colorado.gov>

- **Before you sign, ask to see identification of the signature gatherer.** Paid signature gathers are now required to carry a picture ID issued by the Secretary of State. Although a new law does not require a paid petitioner to wear or show the ID when a voter asks.

Time for Program Planning!

League members at the local, state, and national levels have all been preparing for program planning, a time when every League member has a say in the type of programs emphasized during the following year, at the local level, or for the following two years, at the national level. This is how the League remains a grassroots organization - by providing all members a chance to express their interests. In considering programs to adopt, keep in mind the following guidelines:

1. Is there widespread member and community interest?
2. Is there sufficient interest among members to form a study group?
3. Does community interest need to be developed for the issue?

4. Is this a timely Issue?
5. Is government action the most effective way to address the problem?
6. Are there already positions which can be utilized?
7. Does the issue fall within the scope of LWV principles?
8. Are there other community groups addressing the issue?

At this time, in addition to reviewing already adopted National positions, several new items may be considered that include the following proposals that have appeared on the LWV listserv email communication:

1. Review of the National position on health care
2. National study concerning the popular election of the president and vice-president of the United States
3. National study to restore civil liberties
4. National Study of public infrastructure in the US including the need for a comprehensive policy to fund and implement maintenance programs and update facilities to meet future needs.
5. National study of an Education Policy that provides opportunity for all to reach their highest potential and develop patterns of life-long learning and responsible citizenship.

Also expressed by some Leaguers on the listserv is the comment: "We had very little interest in new studies. We are concerned that the LWVUS should educate and be active in defending civil liberties, fighting global warming and health care reform." In other words, these Leaguers want more action and advocacy instead of study.

On the ***local level***, we will brainstorm and prioritize issues to determine a local program.

To plan Program it is important to review the LWVUS publication Impact on Issues 2006 – 2008 and the Colorado publication, Program for Study and Action, Positions for Action 2007 - 2009. Copies were to be distributed at the Immigration consensus meeting, and will be available at the February 16 meeting.

The February 16 meeting is important as this planning determines League direction.

Teen Maze Program

May 1 and 2, 2008

Montezuma County Fair Ground

Teen Maze Volunteers are needed.

Our League has participated in the pre-planning of Teen Maze and by providing pre and post testing of the experience using county voting machines for last four years. Volunteers are needed to help transport equipment and to staff the “post test” voting area. Judy and Jack Schuenemeyer have coordinated the League’s participation in the past and are looking for League members who will help with that responsibility this year and be the League’s representative to the Teen Maze program next year. Any volunteers to represent the League and to help with this community program?

The Teen Maze is a life size game board where teenagers are the pawns and life’s choices are the dice. It is designed to help teens understand potential outcomes to life’s decisions concerning substance abuse, sex, and vocational/educational issues. **Realistic scenarios** help teens navigate their way through the Maze and find out about consequences of behaviors. The interactive “game” provides information on topics that could include: sexual abstinence, peer/media pressure, contraceptives, tobacco, drug & alcohol, rehabilitation, legal consequences, sexually transmitted diseases, labor &

delivery, teen parenting, HIV/AIDS and post graduation career & education choices.

The ultimate goal of the Teen Maze is to stimulate teens to think about potential ramifications of sexual involvement, drug and alcohol use, vocational choices, and how to handle potential life situations **without placing judgment on any of the Teen Maze paths**. Exposure to this information is provided by professions in the field of prevention, health, intervention, and education and helps teens make safer choices when faced with risky real-life situations. For example, after a teen participant sees photos and an actual vehicle involved in a drinking and driving accident, they will think about this outcome when faced with the decision of driving home after a party or getting into a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking.

The objectives of Teen Maze include:

- Encouraging discussion between parents and their teens regarding their values and expectations;
- Providing accurate facts and information to teens without attached value judgment;
- Providing a fun educational activity;
- Inviting adults in the community to come together to say “we value our teens”.

The first Montezuma County Teen Maze took place in March of 2002 with 450 students involved. For 2008, the seventh annual Teen Maze expects to reach more than 500 students from the Cortez, Dolores, Mancos, and Dolores County school districts. 275 volunteers and over 80 organizations will staff rooms, cook/serve food, facilitate student experiences, set-up and take down the Maze, and provide security.

Teen feedback on the event is outstanding.

“I liked the event because I learned the truth in a fun way.”

“It taught me a lot about life. It was a reality check.”

“I learned to stay off stuff that a lot of people think is cool.”

“I learned you can be Drug-Free and still have fun.”

The Teen Maze project benefits the youth as well as the community as a whole by raising awareness in the community about drug and alcohol problems while helping to decrease the prevalence of the problem. **Community members come together to serve youth in a powerful educational setting.**

“They Take Our Jobs”

“Looking Backward at Contemporary Immigration Debates”

Dr. John Baranski, assistant professor of history at Fort Lewis College, will present a discussion ‘TheyTake 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 LWVLPC is a co-sponsor of 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, editor of LWVLPC Voter

Hospital Public Meeting

LWVMZC will hold an informational public meeting about Montezuma County Hospital District and Southwest Memorial Hospital on March 20 at 7:00 PM at the Calvin Denton Room at Empire Electric. The forum presenters will include Board members of the Montezuma County Hospital District, the Southwest Hospital System, and executive administrators of the Southwest Memorial Hospital and the Physicians Organization.

The local League has had a Health Care Committee for several years. In 2006, 9 Health Fair participants in Dolores and Montezuma counties were surveyed and county statistics verified that at the time nearly twenty-five percent of those surveyed had no health insurance or were uninsured.

A second forum will be held May 15 to discuss the difficulties of health care providers in rural areas.