



League of Women Voters of Montezuma County

VOTER

Montezuma County, Colorado

www.lwvmontezuma.org Total Membership: 25

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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Page 1

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In This Issue

Mark Your Calendars.....	1
President's Message.....	2
Calendar.....	3
Annual Meeting.....	3
Member Focus: Eleanor Kuhl.....	3
New Members.....	3
SWM Hospital Forum.....	4
Rep. Ellen Roberts at Ag Expo.....	5
Looking Forward - Post Ref C.....	6
Legislative Action: Severance Taxes.....	6
LWVCO Council.....	7
LWVCO Leadership Retreat.....	7
Observer Corp Coordinator / Volunteers Needed.....	7
Wanted: PR Help.....	7
Political but Non-Partisan.....	8
Board.....	8

Mark Your Calendars

Board Meetings:

- April 14 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center
- May 12 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center

April Events

- Teen Maze Planning, April 10 (Thur) 11am Visitor Center
- Teen Maze Planning, April 24 (Thur) 11am Visitor Center
- Teen Maze Setup, April 30, Montezuma County Fair Grounds, Cortez

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.

Permanent Air Monitoring Equipment

for Montezuma County!!

We celebrate the news that permanent ozone and PM2.5 air monitors will be installed on the roof of the County Annex in Cortez.

The League played a big role in pushing for air monitoring in Montezuma Valley. When you see them please give Eric Janes, Mary Lou Asbury and Sylvia Oliva a big "Thank you!" for their efforts in regard to the monitoring.

The League will continue to emphasize the need for mercury monitoring in our county.

President's Message

Those who were able to find their way to the "Classroom" at the Ag Expo, Saturday, March 8, were treated to an informed update of the Legislature's Session by 59th District Representative Ellen Roberts. Ellen always educates us as she shares her legislative experience of representing rural areas of SW Colorado.

Ag Expo is a "happening" especially on a Saturday when it seems that half the population of Four Corners has found their way to the Montezuma County Fairgrounds. This year must have been the biggest turn out ever of the four day event. After about eight weeks of snow storms, the parting of the clouds was a signal to test the air and experience with a throng of others the event which included huge tractors, amazing trainers of horses, various agricultural exhibits, and neighbors not seen during a winter of snow and muddy roads. Ag Commissioners from four states held a forum.

Walking about the exhibits, one was reminded of how important our agricultural economy is in Montezuma County and of the rural environment we all want to preserve. What a sight to be conducted to parking spaces by folks on horseback. I rode from the parking lot to the ticket entrance in a horse drawn cart. What fun! The traffic jam made it difficult to attend Rep. Ellen Robert's update on time.

Our Board voted to have a greater presence at Ag Expo by inviting state and congressional representatives early in planning for the event.

We will have no general meeting in April, but we'll continue our study of health care with a Rural Health Care Forum, May 15 at 7 P.M. Eleanor Kuhl is again pulling together a group of interesting speakers. Thanks, Eleanor!

At the end of April and first of May we will be participating again in Teen Maze, a unique educational experience for middle school students who travel from as far as Silverton to attend the event held at the County Fairgrounds. The League sets up and mans one of many rooms in the maze. In our room, the participants use county voting machines to take pre- and post- tests which will indicate changes in attitudes resulting from participation in the Teen Maze experience. Jack

and Judy Schuenemeyer are coordinating our League's participation and will be requesting help on May 1 and 2. It is a unique experience for maze workers. Please consider volunteering a couple of hours of your time. How often do you have the opportunity to interact with so many teenagers?

I encourage you to attend the "Looking Forward" presentation which reports on Colorado fiscal policy and revenue projections. The presentation is a collaboration of the Bell Policy Center, Colorado Fiscal Institute and Colorado Children's Campaign. Our League is sponsoring the event in Cortez on May 7 at noon in conjunction with the Cortez Business Club which meets at the Elks Club. The presentation and discussion promises to be very interesting.

Circle on your calendar, Saturday, June 7 at 8:30 AM when we'll hold our annual business meeting at the Colorado Welcome Center. Food and drinks will be available.

To ensure a strong, enticing spring renewal of our League, fresh, enthusiastic thinking and participation is needed. Please consider expanding yourself with LWVMZC activities! The newsletter describes various opportunities for you. Consider: Organizational Leadership, Voter Service, Observer Corp, Health Care, Colorado Financing, and Environmental / Air Quality Committees. Our plans include you as a Board Member, Active Member helping the Board with events and activities or Member encouraging us by recognizing our achievements. Become a financial contributor, community participant by attending our information forums / meetings, collaborating with us on events / issues, creating effective coalitions. Whatever your participation, it is needed and appreciated!

-Jodi Foran

Calendar

View our calendar on-line on our website (www.lwvmontezuma.org) as well as at the Cortez Area Chamber of Commerce website (www.cortezchamber.com)

General Meetings

- May 7 (Wed) 12pm LWVMZC sponsors "Looking Forward" presentation by Colorado Children's Campaign, Business Club meeting at Elks Club.
- May 15 (Thur) 7pm LWVMZC sponsors Health Care Forum on Rural Healthcare Issues, Calvin Denton Room of Empire Electric

Board Meetings

- April 14 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center
- May 12 (Mon) 10am Visitor Center

Other Events

- Teen Maze Planning, April 10 (Thur) 11am Visitor Center
- Teen Maze Planning, April 24 (Thur) 11am Visitor Center
- Teen Maze Setup, April 30, Montezuma County Fair Grounds, Cortez
- Teen Maze, May 1, 2, Montezuma County Fair Grounds

Annual Meeting

Circle Saturday, June 7, 8:30 AM on your calendar as the date the Board voted to hold our League's annual business meeting at the CO Welcome Center. At the meeting the membership will elect officers and vote to approve the annual budget, and proposed program, (strategic programs/issues to study, advocate). Materials specific to the meeting will be emailed later. Let's not make it all business, but a time to gather in friendship and celebration. Eric Janes is heading up the Nominating Committee with two non-Board members. In addition to names submitted by the Committee, nominations are welcomed from the floor. Various breakfast items will be served.

Member Focus: Eleanor Kuhl

LWVMZC Board member Eleanor Kuhl is originally from West Virginia where her family was involved in politics. She was named after Eleanor Roosevelt because her parents had great respect for the Roosevelts and especially the settlements started in West Virginia under the government policies to improve the economy of the area.

Eleanor graduated from West Virginia University, Syracuse University School of Information Science, and later she picked up another masters from Inter American University of Puerto Rico while working at the university. Eleanor has made a career of college librarianship and has worked at Duke University (NC), Furman University (SC), Millsaps College (MS), Bluefield College (VA), and ended her career at the Navajo college in Shiprock (NM).

Eleanor and her family moved to Montezuma County in 1992. Her son Chris graduated from the San Juan Vocational Technical College and now works in Denver. Her husband, a German-born artist, died in 2002.

Currently Eleanor is active in a number of local non-profits. She is on the board of the Cortez Cultural Center, Southwest Colorado Concerts, Renew, and Friends of Recreation.

This past winter she volunteered as the food coordinator for The Bridge – the homeless shelter. Eleanor is active in United Methodist Women and holds the position of treasurer for a three-state area (the Rocky Mountain Conference). She has been on the Pacific Regional Planning Team for three years and this year is a voting delegate to the Western Jurisdiction quadrennial meeting in Honolulu for United Methodist Women.

New Members

LWVMZC is pleased to welcome two new members, Terri Helm and Nina Hogue.

SWM Hospital Forum



Health Care Committee Chair, Eleanor Kuhl introduced the forum participants.

On Thursday, March 20, members of both boards of directors of Southwest Memorial Hospital (MCHD Board and SHS, Inc., Board) as well as hospital management staff presented a public forum which included explanations of and justification for the dual-board arrangement and contract management of our community hospital as well as actual hospital organization and facilities.



Forum presenters were, left to right, Del Borrelli, Liz Sellers, Susan Hatter, Jodi Foran.

Excellent presentations by Del Borrelli of the Montezuma County Health District Board, by Susan Hatter, Chair, and Jodi Foran of the Southwest Hospital Systems Board, and by Liz Sellers, the Chief Clinical Officer of Southwest Memorial Hospital, resulted in lively questions and discussion with the audience. Comments by other members of both Boards and the hospital staff who attended as audience served to clarify the presentations.

Jodi Foran and Susan Hatter explained the usefulness of the dual board arrangement including responsibility, funding and legal considerations. Among the topics they presented was the role of Quorum Hospital Management, the company under contract to provide SWMH its CEO and CFO. Susan Hatter confirmed that the Hospital's present CEO, Chuck Bill, had resigned.

Del Borrelli outlined the "Planned Unit Development" (PUD) strategy for the land surrounding the hospital where a medical office park is being developed. Construction is well underway on the new Vista Grande nursing home in the PUD and utilities are in place for the entire development.

Ms. Sellers briefly discussed each of the many departments within the hospital, including their functions and features. Among many points made was the following: Southwest Memorial Hospital was routinely testing for MRSA (the dangerous antibiotic-resistant staph infection making headlines lately) and had a program in place to control it long before the nationally famous hospitals that are now in the news for recently starting their testing programs. That's just an example of how our hospital is providing us effective leading-edge service.

This was a great opportunity for all those interested in our hospital to get a clear picture of how it all works and what is planned for the future.

There will be another public forum on May 15 at 7pm in Empire Electric's Calvin Denton Room that will be focused on the challenges of providing quality health care in our rural setting. Like this forum, the next one will feature presentations by the folks actually involved in delivering our health care, including but not limited to:

- Dr. Karla Demby
In practice in Cortez, she is working to bring new doctors here.
- Dr. Ricardo Velasquez
Administrator with Valley Wide Health Systems (office in Alamosa). He will talk about the difficulties of bringing doctors to the rural area and their (VWHS) efforts in recruitment and retention.
- Dan Jessup of SWMH
will talk about hospital finances, SWMH's Rural Health Clinic (RHC) and the benefits of SWMH becoming recognized as a Critical Access Hospital (CAH).

Thanks to all who presented and who participated in this very informative forum. Thanks especially to Eleanor Kuhl, chair of the LWVMZC Healthcare Committee.

-Chris Foran

Rep. Ellen Roberts at Ag Expo



initiatives related to changing the Colorado Constitution. Ellen shared that the LWVCO was opposed to geographic distribution requirements of signatures which would ensure more effectively rural participation requirements.

Finally, Ellen commented on the recent 208 Blue Ribbon Healthcare Commission report to the Governor. She believes that Colorado does not, at present, have the economic ability or the political will, given a well-funded opposition, to pass a single payer healthcare plan. She does support Governor Ritter's recent plans to insure all children from the present state budget.

Our League sponsored the appearance of Representative Ellen Roberts of the 59th district at the Four Corners Ag Expo, Saturday, March 8.

Ellen discussed her sponsorship of legislation to broaden the authority of advanced practice nurses to help bridge the lack of adequate healthcare providers in Colorado. She also discussed her bill establishing a Colorado Youth Advisory Council with intended representation from each Senate District.



Though sparse, the audience was very interested in Rep. Roberts' legislative update.

The audience showed strong interest in the Colorado Constitutional Reform Committee, of which Ellen is one of 6 members. With the help of the University of Denver, the group is examining the future of voter

Looking Forward - Post Ref C

May 7, Cortez Business Club Luncheon Sponsored by LWVMZC

Editor's Note: Most of the following is from the LaPlata County Newsletter and was written by Marilyn Brown.

How many of us thought that with the passage of Referendum C three years ago we had solved Colorado's problems???

Mark Fermanich, CO Children's Campaign, will be in Cortez Wednesday, May 7 at noon to give Montezuma County residents a progress report. He will speak on where the state's finances are headed and ask us if that's really where we want to go.

Recalling the effort LWVs and many other organizations across the state put into the campaign to pass Referendums C and D in 2004, many of us thought Ref C's 'TABOR 5 year timeout' would solve our problems. However, as time passed, it became apparent that other statutory and constitutional constraints have contributed to a slower recovery. Now the national housing downturn has complicated the issue.

The following conclusions are painfully apparent:

- 1) State services have only partially recovered from the recession earlier in the decade.
- 2) 2007 was probably as good as it gets in terms of service levels. Looking forward it will be a challenge simply to maintain those levels of funding state services.
- 3) The Arveschoug-Bird formula (prohibiting budget items in the general fund from growing more than 6%/year) will remain a factor in how revenues will be allocated.
- 4) Extending the Ref C timeout will not result in additional revenues even though the coalition (Bell Policy, Children's Campaign, and CO Fiscal Policy Institute) projects being able to retain all projected revenues under the new cap.

State program budgets are interrelated and can only be addressed through a comprehensive and coordinated process. They cannot be addressed in isolation.

The Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR) limits annual growth of the state budget to the rate of inflation plus the population growth. Sounds reasonable; however, it has become clear that the services that the state funds, such as health-related and prison-related services, increase at a higher rate, compounding the problem. Additionally, TABOR's ratchet-down effect, which limited spending to the recessionary levels of 2002-3, makes it impossible to catch up even when the economy improves as it did in 2004.

The presentation in Cortez is sponsored by our LWVMZC. Make a point to attend the discussion so you can make educated judgments when solutions are suggested. The monthly Business Club lunch meetings are open to the public with no membership requirements. A buffet lunch is available for purchase.

Legislative Action: Severance Taxes

LWVCO has been following legislation concerning severance taxes in the state. Senate Bill 13 and House Bill 1083 were covered in the February 11th Legislative Letter. League supports both bills.

SB 13 which has no fiscal impact proposes and pertains to the following:

- Reducing the share of the account within the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission from 45 to 40 percent
- Reduces the share for programs within the Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety from 30% to 25%
- Allows appropriations of up to 5 percent for the programs within the Division of Wildlife
- Allows appropriations of up to 5 percent for programs within the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Exempts appropriations made to the Division of Wildlife from the two-year reserve requirement of the Operational Account.

HB 1083 changes the formula for direct distribution of severance tax revenue to local governments. It makes the allocation formula based on:

- The proportion of industry employees within a

given county to the total number of employees residing in the state

- The proportion of mine and well permits issued within a given county to the total number of such permits issued within the state
- The proportion of overall mineral production within the county to overall mineral production within the state.

Private sector groups have also filed ballot initiatives regarding increasing money collections from oil and gas production. Environmental groups have filed four ballot initiatives earmarking profits for open space and wildlife habitat. Higher education advocates have filed an initiative proposal that would split revenues between local governments and higher education. **TUNE IN to the LWVCO Legislative Letter** which documents Legislative activity every two weeks – **or - go to www.LWVColorado.org** and click on “**League Positions**”.

Don't forget to visit the Colorado Legislature Home Page: www.leg.state.co.us for additional up to date information on various bills.

LWVCO Council

Durango May 16-17

La Plata County LWV will be hosting the State League Council meeting at the Strater Hotel. The agenda will include State Board elections, adoption of the 2008-2009 Budget, Legislative wrap-up, and other workshops. It begins at noon on Friday and will end Saturday afternoon. Our League will have two voting representatives. However, Council offers all members of LWVMZC an opportunity to meet and network with Leaguers from throughout Colorado. Our League is being asked to help with registration tasks. Please contact Jodi if you can help.

LWVCO Leadership Retreat

Best Western, Frisco. June 20-21

This is a great opportunity to learn about League and how you can become more effective in your participation in League. Training will be offered in voter service, membership fund raising, and other aspects of League. Find out more about the League

and your place in it in a beautiful setting.

Observer Corp Coordinator / Volunteers Needed

One of the most effective means of ensuring transparency and effectiveness of elected officials is an observer corp. Volunteers are needed to initiate weekly attendance at the Board of County Commissioner meetings.

Tour of Animas/La Plata Project Wednesday, April 16, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Editors note: This item is taken directly from the LaPlata County League Newsletter

The controversial Animas/La Plata Water Project is scheduled for completion in three years. Dave Gates of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, project photographer and public outreach coordinator, will lead a 2-hour bus tour on Wednesday, April 16 at 1:30 p.m. The group is limited to 24 people, so, unless you have already signed up, please call or email Marilyn Brown, 259-3593 or

marilbrown@aol.com, before April 10 to reserve your spot. Members will be given first choice, but friends and spouses are welcome as space permits.

Wanted: PR Help

Would you like to help publicize our League's activities? Be in touch by e-mail and phone with newspaper and radio people. Write news releases for Voters Service, meetings, and other events. The more publicity, the more effective we are as an organization and the more folks will join us in the action!

We need help especially during the coming election season in organizing our PR efforts. Call or e-mail Jodi (882-2401 jodi@foran.net).

Political but Non-Partisan

The noise of this election year seems to escalate weekly. Before it all gets too loud, it's good to review our non-partisan policy.

It is important to our democracy for you to take an active part in the political party of your choice. Support the candidates you believe are best. Write checks; write letters; display yard signs, bumper stickers, buttons, or whatever. But do NOT do any of that at a League event. When you do attend a party or candidate event, leave your League badge at home.

The League is very political. The League takes positions, acts on issues and ideas. BUT the League does NOT support candidates or political parties. Aside from our League's President and Voter Service Chair, everyone else is encouraged to attend, host, donate or rally for any political candidate. But do not campaign at League meetings. However when you attend a League meeting, wear your League badge!

VOTE 411

The League of Women Voters Education Fund has funded the creation of the VOTE411.org website which has a plethora of information regarding election law and voting. This is an important election year and the site has information on the following by state: absentee balloting, ballot measures, candidate information, early voting, election dates, eligibility and ID requirements, voter registration, state contact information.

The Presidential Voter's Guide can also be downloaded from the VOTE411 home page.

Check the site at www.VOTE411.org

Board

Membership.....	Llois Stein 565-9565 llois@msn.com
	Marcia Boon 565-7668 marciaboon@msn.com
Health Care.....	Eleanor Kuhl 564-0708 ekuhl@frontier.net
Voter Services.....	Dick Hoover 565-7367 johnhoover@beyondbb.com
Environment.....	Eric Janes 533-1051 ejanes@frontier.net
President.....	Jodi Foran 882-2401 jodi@foran.net
Vice President.....	Judy Schuenemeyer 565-7837 judyswsc@q.com
Secretary.....	Eric Janes 533-1051 ejanes@frontier.net
Treasurer.....	Denis Boon 560-0404 denisboon@msn.com
Newsletter Ed.....	Chris Foran 882-2401 chris@foran.net