



League of Women Voters of Montezuma County

VOTER

Montezuma County, Colorado

www.lwvmontezuma.org Total Membership: 26

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

General Meetings

Thur Mar 26, General Meeting,
Visitor’s Center 2:00 p.m. - 4:0
National Public Vote for Presidency
– Consensus Discussion of LWVUS
white papers

Thursday, April 30 – May 1, Teen
Maze

Board Meetings

Mon, April 13, Visitor’s Center
9:30am

Join the League!

Anyone of voting age may join the League. Discounted household memberships are available. Call Llois Stein at 564-9565 or Marcia Boon at 565-7668 for more information.

President's Message

The snow has melted from the landscape and the birds are welcoming spring with song. Spring is planning time for our League: the Nominating Committee is meeting to fill Board positions for next year. I would encourage each of you to consider serving on the Board: it's a wonderful way to get involved and to make decisions about how our League will impact our community. There are several Board positions ideal for new members. Phone me and let's talk about opportunity!

Our times require us to continually focus on collaborative and comprehensive systematic solutions to our problems. As an organization, let's commit to demonstrating a belief that are solutions do exist and also an empowered attitude of responsibility.

Much interest in our legislators and the legislative process was evident to those who attended the Legislative Lowdown meeting we hosted. We received many thanks for the meeting. Thanks to all who came and helped with the arrangements. Thanks to Eleanor Kuhn especially!

Air Quality is a strong focus of our League, and we are collaborating with other groups in the area on issues of sustainability of environmental quality. The strong participation of our local league in the 4Corners Air Quality Task Force led to the installation of the present air monitoring equipment on the Montezuma County Courthouse Annex by the Colorado Department of Public Health. Eric Janes and I are working with the LWV of LaPlata County and San Juan Citizens Alliance specifically to work toward a stronger EPA focus for the Four Corners. As you know this area is presently overseen by three

separate EPA Regional Centers, Dallas, Denver and San Francisco making it difficult for our area to receive appropriate oversight.

LWVCO Board voted to propose at convention that program study include an update and of Climate Change. It is anticipated that this will be in conjunction with the national study leveraging the many LWVUS white papers.

Our meeting planned for March 26 will be interesting. We'll be discussing the National Public Vote Compact and how it can change the process of the Electoral College in determining the President. Until I attended the national convention last June, I was not aware of the NPV initiative. In less than a year, local leagues that chose to participate will have studied, discussed and arrived at a consensus about the initiative. The results of the local Leagues consensus will drive the decision of LWVUS position statement and subsequent advocacy actions. The present indirect method of presidential election is consistently shown in polls to be unpopular, with up to 70% of the population in favor of eliminating the Electoral College. There have been numerous attempts to get a Constitutional amendment through Congress to effect this, but none of them have been able to even get out of Congress and have never been presented to the State Legislatures. Participate in our local discussion after reading the white papers I'll be emailing you.

April 30 and May 1, our League will again staff a booth in the experiential learning offered by Teen Maze to local middle school students who travel from as far as Silverton to attend the event held at the County Fairgrounds. Please consider volunteering a couple of hours of your time to this unusual learning experience. Consider Teen Maze

to be our April meeting.

Our Annual Meeting will be held Monday, May 11 at 10:00 A.M. Special guests will be LWVCO President, Marjory Beal and President-elect Patty Cordova! The program is an informal interaction with these two interesting women. They will learn how interesting the members of our League are also. They don't make it to Southwest Colorado often, and they will be visiting our League as well as the Montrose, LaPlata County and Archuleta County Leagues.

LWVCO State Convention will be held May 15 -16 in Golden. The Jeffco League has opened their homes to Leaguers who want to hold down costs. My appreciation and understanding of the state and national leagues and their processes has grown by attending conventions, and I encourage you to consider attending!

Of even greater importance is attendance at the Leadership Retreat to be held in Frisco June 18-19. This meeting is financially supported by donors to decrease attendance costs.. Instead of conducting training at each separate local league, LWVCO puts together a very effective training experience once a year in Frisco. Please consider attending this year. Let's have a car full!

— *Jodi Foran*

LWVMZC Comments to EPA re-Desert Rock PSD

Thanks to Eric Janes for his work to write our League's comments that were submitted to EPA's Region 9 Office in San Francisco regarding Prevention of Significant Deterioration Permit, (PSD) for the Desert Rock Coal Fired Power Plant (PSD) permit, AZP 04-01.

First in the letter, our League expressed concern that the EPA has withdrawn its comments on carbon dioxide in the PSD permit. The EPA clearly has legal authority and the moral responsibility to regulate greenhouse gases, and the EPA should require reasonable controls on the 12.7 million tons/year of carbon dioxide emissions from the proposed project. Our letter stressed that the PSD permit should not be approved and issued until it addresses control of carbon dioxide emissions. If the EPA national rulemaking process for regulation of greenhouse gases has not yet advanced to a point where carbon dioxide regulatory requirements can be communicated to the Desert Rock Energy Company, then the atmosphere of the Four Corners, and the people and natural resources of the Four Corners area who so depend upon that atmosphere should be given the benefit of the doubt. In view of what we now know about climate change, and the recent recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it should be a high priority with EPA to not allow another 12.7 million tons/year of carbon dioxide to enter the skies of the southwestern U.S.

Our review concluded that the complexity and lack of transparency in EPA's processing is unfair to both sides of the Desert Rock Energy Project: to the applicant for the PSD Permit and those who oppose it. President Obama in his first few weeks in office promised transparency and clarity by the Federal Government. However, the EPA Region 9 handling of this PSD permit has been anything but transparent and clear. It is a contorted, overly legalistic, and far too lengthy a process. In the letter, we requested that EPA's work to date on the Desert Rock PSD permit be reviewed and

completely reworked into a more straightforward channel, according to a timetable that allows the incorporating of new EPA regulatory policy on greenhouse gases. Emissions of carbon dioxide by Desert Rock in tremendous quantities are a major reality of this project, and the residents of the Four Corners will continue to fight sweeping this reality under the rug.

The letter submitted to EPA is available on our web site www.lwvmontezuma.org

Thanks again to Eric Janes for composing our League's letter! You can Read about Eric's background in our [November/December, 2007, newsletter](#) on our website (www.lwvmontezuma.org)

Teen Maze

Thursday, April 30 and Friday, May 1 our League will be helping again with Teen Maze, a unique educational experience for middle school students who travel from as far as Silverton to attend the event held at the Montezuma County Fairgrounds. The League sets up and staffs a room in the maze where the teen participants use ballots to take pre- and post- tests that will indicate changes in attitudes resulting from their participation in the Teen Maze experience. Teen Maze provides experiential learning regarding life decisions that will have major impact on a person. Teen Maze journeys that the participants can experience include smoking, pregnancy, law enforcement, nutrition counseling, etc.

Participating in a Teen Maze booth is a unique experience for adults, too, as anyone who has helped will tell you – ask Marcia Boon. Please consider volunteering a couple of hours of your time to help with the LWV booth. You can do so by phoning Judy Schuenemeyer at 565-0179.

Join Us!

Join the League of Women Voters to help make your community a strong, safe and vibrant place to live. Help shape the important issues that affect you and your family.

Memberships are \$50 per individual; \$80 for households. For more information call Marcia Boon or LLois Stein, our co-membership chairpersons or go to our website and print the membership form. <http://www.lwvmontezuma.org/Join.html>

The League is extremely grateful to all of its members whatever their participation!

Electing the U.S. President

Electing The President will be our main topic in March 26 with a consensus vote taken. What do you think about the Electoral College process? Is it effective? Is it representative? Have you thought about the possibility of using a different method?

What is the National Popular Vote Compact?

It proposes to elect the U.S. President and Vice President by popular vote. This could lead to the ultimate dissolution of the electoral college.

National Compact In The Colorado Legislature

By Christine Watson, LWVCO Lobbyist, from LWVCO Legislative Letter 5

For several years, former Sen. Ken Gordon carried a bill to allow Colorado to join a compact with other states as a step to electing the president by popular vote. Now, Rep. A. Kerr and Sen. Romer have taken up the fight with HB 1299, National Popular Vote Agreement (FYI). States joining the compact pledge to cast their electoral votes for the presidential candidate who wins the popular vote, regardless of the how the majority of voters in the state voted. This pledge becomes effective ONLY when the number of states that join the compact represent a majority of the electoral votes.

League of Women Voters US has consistently supported direct election of the president and abolition of the Electoral College. Because Colorado and other state leagues continue to find this proposal intriguing, LWVUS is currently undertaking a consensus on the issue. In the meantime, the State and local Leagues can neither support nor oppose.

Flunking the Electoral College

The following article appeared in The New York Times on November 20, 2008. It outlines why a National Voter Compact is being examined in many places across the country including by the LWVUS. It also gives Montezuma County League members a starting point from which to begin our own discussion.

On Dec. 15, the United States will endure a quadrennial ritual born in the economics and politics of slavery and the quill-pen era.

Members of the Electoral College are scheduled to meet in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to formally choose the next president. There is no real doubt about how the electors will vote, but it is disturbing that they have any role at all in making this vital choice in the 21st century. The Electoral College is more than just an antiquated institution: it actively disenfranchises voters and occasionally (think 2000) makes the candidate with fewer popular votes president. American democracy would be far stronger without it.

There is no reason to feel sentimental about the Electoral College. One of the main reasons the founders created it was slavery. The southern states liked the fact that their slaves, who would be excluded from a direct vote, would be counted — as three-fifths of a white person — when Electoral College votes were apportioned. The founders also were concerned, in the day of the wooden printing press, that voters would not have enough information to choose among presidential candidates. It was believed that it would be easier for them to vote for local officials, whom they knew more about, to be electors. It is hard to imagine that significant numbers of voters thought they did not know enough about Barack Obama and John McCain by Election Day this year.

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

importance. Voters in small states are favored because Electoral College votes are based on the number of senators and representatives a state has. Wyoming's roughly 500,000 people get three electoral votes. California, which has about 70 times Wyoming's population, gets only 55 electoral votes. The Electoral College also makes America seem more divided along blue-red lines than it actually is. If you look at an Electoral College map, California appears solidly blue and Alabama solidly red. But if you look at a map of the popular votes, you see a more nuanced picture. More than 4.5 million Californians voted for Mr. McCain (roughly as many votes as he got in Texas), while about 40 percent of voters in Alabama cast a ballot for Mr. Obama.

One of the biggest problems with the Electoral College, of course, is that three times since the Civil War — most recently, with George W. Bush in 2000 — it has awarded the presidency to the loser of the popular vote. The president should be the candidate who wins the votes of the most Americans. The best way to abolish the Electoral College is to amend the Constitution. Until that happens, a national popular vote movement is working to get states representing a majority of the electoral votes to agree to award their votes to the candidate who has the most votes nationally. That would effectively end the Electoral College. Several states, including New Jersey and Illinois, have already enacted popular vote laws, and others are considering it.

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

College.

LWVMZC Annual Meeting

Circle Saturday, May 11, 10:00 AM on your calendar as the date we will 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.

Marcia Boon is chairing the Nominating Committee with two non-Board members, Betty Janes and Judy Schuenemeyer. In addition to names submitted by the Committee, nominations are welcomed from the floor. A highlight of our meeting will be the visit by LWVCO's present president, Margie Beal and its president-elect Patty Cordova. They will share their league experiences and tell us why they believe so strongly in the league's mission and various activities.

Various brunch items will be served.

Arveschoug/Bird 6% General Fund Limit

What it is; What it isn't; and What is to become of it?" by Phyllis Horney, LWVCO, Fiscal Policy

This was taken from the Boulder County Voter

The Arveschoug/Bird (A/B) is a statute passed in 1991 — a year before TABOR. It requires a limit of 6% on General Fund APPROPRIATIONS. The statute limits how

the General Fund can be spent but not by how much. When TABOR passed in 1992 it included a pro-*vision* stating, "Other limits on district revenue, spending, and debt may be weakened only by future Voter approval."

Jean Dubofsky, a former Colorado Supreme Court Justice who is now on the Board of the Fiscal Policy Institute, had the following to say: After TABOR passed, a single line of a non-binding Office of Legislative Legal Services (OLLS) memo made the assumption that A/B was a SPENDING limit that had been "constitutionalized" by TABOR and could not be changed by the legislature. The OLLS also stated: "A court would PROBABLY CONCLUDE that, for purposes of (TABOR), the A/B limit is a limit on spending" because spending and appropriations are closely related concepts..."

By accepting this unnecessary restrictions on its authority, the Legislature has allowed its hands to be tied when it comes to fixing Colorado's fiscal mess. Why did this take so long? Legislators believed that the OLLS memo was a ruling not an opinion.

Because Arveschoug/Bird is statutory, and is NOT a spending or revenue limit, Jean Dubofsky and some of Colorado's most respected legal minds have interpreted hat if the legislature sees fit, it can vote to change it. It will not need to go to a vote of the public.

Presently the General Fund (GF) is limited to a 106% increase over the previous year's base. If there is revenue over and above the 6%, it becomes GF Surplus. Presently the GF surplus (if any) is being spent on the required 4% budget reserve and for Transportation and Capital Construction. If the Legislators choose to pass a bill to eliminate Arveschoug/Bird, all GF revenue, including the GF surplus, (no matter how

much or how little—good times or bad) will be incorporated into the general fund base. The General Fund's revenue comes from Income Taxes, Sales and Use Taxes, and a few Excise Taxes such as the Cigarette Tax and is used for the operation of the State. User fees such as the gas tax and Federal Funds fund the rest of the budget. TABOR does not apply to Federal Funds.

If A/B is eliminated it will remove the GF 6% limit, but the TABOR growth plus inflation limit that covers the entire budget remains. To change this limit will require a vote of the public.

Does Eliminating the Arveschoug/Bird 6% provision raise taxes? NO, but it allows flexibility with existing taxes. With this change and economic recovery, the State will be better able to adequately fund its needs.

Will this turn into a lawsuit? There is that possibility, but if there is a challenge the interpretation of the 6% limit will be settled.

The League of Women Voters of Montezuma County

www.lwvmontezuma.org

The League of Women Voters is *the* organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Our Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Our History

Established in 1920, the League is one of the nation's most respected grassroots organizations. We explore issues from many points of view and take action on issues affecting our families and communities.

The League of Women Voters is nonpartisan. We do not support or oppose candidates. Many of League members are elected officials

Lobbyist Drive

It's not too late to donate to the LWVCO Lobbyist Drive. This fund supports our paid lobbyist Chris Watson who does such a super job at the state capitol. She knows the legislators, the issues, and is savvy on who and how to talk to them. She often gives testimony on League issues at committee hearings and contacts the legislators about our concerns.

This has been a very busy session so far and there have been numerous issues we care about, such as the elimination of the 6% limit on the General Fund from 1991 Arveschoug-Bird bill which has been considered TABOR untouchable but recent reviewing has shown to be about how funds are distributed not how much can be spent. League has also been following healthcare, government, education and more.

To donate you may call the LWVCO office at 303-863-0437 M-F 9-3 and Sandy can take your credit card number. Or you can mail a check to the office-- 1410 Grant St B-204, Denver, CO 80205-- and note that it is for the Lobbyist Fund. We came up a bit short of our goal and the work is not finished this spring. Thanks in advance for your help.

Calling All Members to ASK

The League is a different kind of organization and many folks are looking to become involved in a meaningful way; to discuss policy alternatives at local, state and national levels. Do you know a friend who might be interested in the League – just doesn't know exactly what kind of organization it is? Include in your purse League brochures and share them at appropriate times with a friend. Tell them what you've found interesting about the League and suggest that they might want to give us a try! Each of you is a membership recruiter! ASK what do you have to lose? Our League has everything to gain! Just DO it.

Calendar

March	
Thursday, Mar 26	General Meeting, Visitor's Center 2:00 p.m. - 4:0 National Public Vote for Presidency – Consensus Discussion of LWVUS white papers
April	
Wednesday, April 1	LWVCO Board Meeting in Denver
Monday, April 13	Board meeting, Visitor's Center 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, April 30 – May 1	Teen Maze
May	
Wednesday, May 6	LWVCO Board Meeting, Denver
Monday, May 11	Board Meeting, Visitor's Center 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 LWVMZC Annual Meeting & Brunch Potluck, Visitor's Center, 10:00 – noon, Margie Beal, LWVCO President and Patty Cordova, LWVCO President-elect will attend.
Friday & Saturday, May 15 - 16	LWVCO State Convention – Golden CO
June	
Monday, June 8	Board Meeting, Visitor's Center 9:30 a.m.
Friday, June 15 - 16	LWVCO Leadership Retreat in Frisco, CO

Board

Membership.....	Marcia Boon 565-7668 marciaboone@msn.com
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