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The Voter

League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
October 2014

LWVCNM homepage: <http://www.lwvcnm.org>

October Meeting Topics to Cover APD Forward and Fracking

October meetings will focus on APD Forward and fracking.

Luncheon Unit -- Oct. 9 at 11:45 a.m.

Peter Simonson, Executive Director for the ACLU of New Mexico, will be the guest speaker at the Oct. 9 LWVCNM luncheon unit meeting. The meeting will be at 11:45 a.m. During his tenure, Simonson has led the organization through a period of dramatic growth, tripling staff to 15 and opening a new office in Las Cruces devoted to immigrant

and border affairs. Recently the ACLU-NM has enjoyed tremendous success, securing the right of same-sex couples to marry, defeating an Albuquerque ballot measure banning abortions after 20 weeks and winning the right of terminally ill patients to seek a physician's aid in dying.



Peter Simonson

Simonson earned his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Michigan and worked for several years in sustainable development and ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. Prior to joining the ACLU, he directed a project to improve immigrants' access to health care in Albuquerque.

Simonson's presentation will be "Moving APD Forward: Challenges for Police Reform and Reasons for Optimism."

LWVCNM has joined a coalition of organizations and individuals from across the ideological scale.

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Candidates for the State Secretary of State and State Auditor sparred during the Sept. 23 forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico and the African American Performing Arts Center Foundation. In the upper photo Diana Duran, right, addresses the audience. Beside her is fellow-candidate Maggie Toulouse Oliver. They are candidates for Secretary of State. In the lower photo candidate for State Auditor Hector Balderas, left, and Susan Riedel answer audience questions.

-- Photo by Brenda McKenna

October Calendar

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Oct. 5 | Voter deadline |
| Oct. 2 | Board meeting, 5:30 p.m. |
| Oct 9 | Luncheon Unit, 11.45 a.m. |
| Oct. 14 | Evening Unit, 6 p.m. |
| Oct. 21 | Westside Unit, 5 p.m. |
| Oct. 22 | NE Heights Unit, 10 a.m. |

**League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
Board Meeting**

**1st Thursday of each month
Offices of Sutin, Thayer & Browne,
6565 Americas Parkway NE**

Program Committees

Mental Health Study

Jan Bray & Shelly Shepherd

All League members are invited to all unit meetings, committee and board meetings.

The *Voter* is published on partially-recycled paper each month by the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico. It is also distributed via email and can be accessed online at our website www.lwvcnm.org.

Ideas, Experiences Welcomed by Newly Formed Education Group

Love of learning and sparking curiosity about our natural environment, planning a budget or enjoying a good read along with critical thinking, on-the-job-training, access to health care, music, theatre and dance are all at the heart of providing the basic education our children will need to face their future. But how can a very large educational system assure such an environment exists for the children and communities it serves?

With too large a class, the teacher is denied access and thus the ability to reach out to support an individual child. An ignored or abandoned student may withdraw or, perhaps, become unrestrained. This is certainly true when people in authority have presented us with a culture that appears to be counter to keeping our youth connected and to help them stay in school.

The Education Group seeks to find a common thread and to provide thoughtful directions for reaching those in authority. Please join us. All are welcome!

-- Judith Binder, 265-4336

President's Corner

By Andrea Targhetta

As you read this *Voter*, we should have or almost have our 2014 General Election *Voters' Guides* printed and ready for distribution to the public. It's up to us to spread the information to every part of the city. We worked hard to publish this 56-page document. The public libraries, senior centers and community centers will be given issues to distribute, but each member needs to take at least one bundle of *Guides* and give an issue to everyone you know -- neighbors, friends and stores you frequent. I intentionally take a couple of *Guides* and read one while I wait in line at the polls. All citizens may take something into the polls with him/her to vote. If someone in that line sees my *Guide*, I gladly share an unmarked copy.

We have a responsibility to educate ourselves on the issues and on each candidate before we vote. It can be difficult due to very busy schedules in these hectic times. The *Guide* is really a time saver and makes it easier to decide with this unbiased information about the candidates and issues on the ballot. I can't tell you how many times I have been asked when the *Voters' Guide* will be available and where it can be found.

Mid-term elections generally have low turn outs. That doesn't mean we have to abide by that unwritten logic. It's not just a mid-term election -- it's a Congressional election. It's vital to get citizens out the door to vote. This election determines the makeup of our Congress. We are fortunate that we have early voting and absentee voting available. It's an opportunity to vote at our convenience. It's also an opportunity to have our voice heard and take an active part in shaping our future. Thomas Jefferson had it right---"We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." Who is electing the people who will be making decisions for you? As a current radio ads states, "If you're not voting, who are you electing?"

I realize I am preaching to the choir, yet our relatives, friends and neighbors can benefit from our members spreading the word concerning this important Congressional election. A little reminder of the importance of being fully present and alert to doing our civic duty wouldn't hurt.

October Units

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Evening Unit -- Oct. 14 at 6 p.m., Erna Fergusson Library Community Room, 3700 San Mateo NE

Andrea Targhetta will give a short summary of where we are with the APD Forward campaign. She is one of three members who are attending the coalition meetings.

North East Heights Unit -- Oct. 22 at 10 a.m., La Vida Llana

Carol Tucker Trelease will relate the current progress on the ACLU campaign, APD Forward. She is one of three members who are attending the coalition meetings and will give a summary of the proceedings.

Westside Unit on Oct 21 at 5 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1771 Rio Rancho

Eleanor Bravo of the Food and Water Watch organization will speak "Fracking." She believes fracking for oil and natural gas is too dangerous: it

threatens the water we drink, the air we breathe, and our health. It also accelerates climate change.

Bravo is a Senior Organizer for Food & Water Watch based in Albuquerque. She works with local communities and groups throughout New



Eleanor Bravo

Mexico, Texas and Arizona. Bravo also works with lawmakers in New Mexico on fracking and food safety issues. With more than 30 years of experience as a social activist and political organizer, she managed the top performing field office in the nation during the 2008 presidential campaign to elect Barack Obama.

As an independent filmmaker, her crew was instrumental in creating work which helped expose and prohibit the building of the proposed coal burning Desert Rock Power Plant in the Four Corners area of New Mexico. She also contributed her efforts toward the repeal of the death penalty there. In 2010 Bravo was the county field director for the gubernatorial election campaign for women.

Book Report: *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*

Editor's Note: Book Review -- This review of an important public policy book is a regular feature in the Voter. by Olin Bray, Author of ebook, *Political Incompetence: What's Wrong With Our System and How To Fix It*

Capital in the Twenty-first Century by Thomas Piketty, 2014, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, hardcover, 577 pages (plus notes).

Piketty's book, which was reviewed in the August *Voter*, has so much data, much of it new, that it is worth a second review in more detail. His focus is on the inequality of income and capital distribution and how it has evolved. This second review summarizes some of his findings specifically for the US.

First, he talks about three types of distributions – income from labor, ownership of capital (or wealth), and total income (from both labor and capital). Although still highly skewed, income from labor is the least unequally skewed, with capital ownership having the greatest inequality, and the inequality of total income in the middle. In one chapter he looks at income from capital and finds even greater inequality than for capital ownership. Large fortunes grow much faster than smaller ones because of economies of scale, better information and management, and the fact that they can safely accept greater risk and the resulting higher returns.

Until the 20th Century there was essentially no middle class. In 1910 in the US the top 10 percent owned about 80 percent of the wealth, the bottom 90 percent owned only 20 percent, with the bottom 50 percent owning almost nothing. (In Europe the numbers were 90 for the top 10 percent and 10 percent everyone else.) Today (2012) the bottom 90 percent owns about 25 percent of the wealth. Almost all of their gains are from declines in the top 10 percent whose share dropped 80 percent to only 70. This shift occurred during the first half or three quarters of the century because of the depression and two world wars. However, since the 1970s the distribution of wealth has become more skewed with the top 10 percent's share growing from 65 percent to 70 percent. Income from labor and total income follows the same U shaped curve, but with somewhat less inequality. In terms of percent of the national income, the distribution of income from labor in the US in 1910 was that the top 10 percent got 40 percent, peaking at 50 percent in 1928 (just before the stock market crash in 1929), to a low of 30-35 percent in the 1950-1980, rising to 45-50 percent today, and projected to reach 60 percent by 2030 if current trends continue. In other words, over the last 30 years (1977-2007) the top 10 percent has extracted an

Capital in the Twenty-first Century

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additional 15 percent of the national income from the bottom 90 percent of the population. About 75 percent of the economic growth during this period went to the top 10 percent, with the majority (60 percent) of it going to the top 1 percent. In contrast, the bottom 90 percent got only 25 percent of the growth. For comparison, the total federal tax revenue is about 15-18 percent of the national income. So compared to 1977, the top 10 percent is getting almost as much more per year from bottom 90 percent as the federal government collects in taxes. For a benchmark, \$108K in income puts you in the top 10 percent, but \$352K is needed to get into the top 1 percent, which includes about 2.6 million people in the US.

Piketty contends that one of the things generating

greater income inequality in the US are the very high incomes for the top 10 and especially the top 1 percent. Contrary to many people's perceptions, he says that only about 5 percent to the top 1 percent are celebrity stars and athletes. Most are corporate executives, including 20 percent of the top 1 percent in the financial sector, which is only 10 percent of the economy.

Obviously, Piketty's data and analysis provides a lot of food for thought. What is an acceptable level of inequality, since nobody is proposing complete equality in income or wealth? What type of government policy, if any, is needed to move us in that direction? Is our economy better off today than in the 1950-1980 period with its much lower levels of inequality? We don't hear much discussion of these issues from Congress or in the campaigns.

Observer Corps Volunteers Needed

Editor's Note: Our CNM League is looking for members to observe the meetings of our city and county governments. This is truly a core mission of the League. It benefits us to hear and see the commissioners and council members in action. It keeps us informed in a timely manner. This is an opportunity to meet and get to know your local representatives. It can benefit the observers (read below) and it benefits our community. Please call Andrea Targhetta with your interest in belonging to the Observer Corps.

Thoughts of an Observer Corps Member

Observing local and state governments at work on a regular basis is a fine way to learn how our systems really work-- how problems are addressed, how laws are made and ordinances passed, who are the dominant players on the governing bodies and what citizen concerns are expressed at meetings of these bodies. And who knows what such observing might lead to!

In my case, observing the City Commission on behalf of the League of Women Voters for a couple of years in the late 1960's led quite directly to many years of involvement with city boards, commissions and ultimately, City Council.

In the 60's the city's governing body was the five-member City Commission. Pete Domenici was chairman, and Harry Kinney was a commissioner.

The audiences were typically smaller than they are now. After I attended a few meetings, Harry Kinney came down to my seat after a meeting and inquired as to who I was and why I kept attending meetings. We began to chat regularly after meetings about what transpired and why. He was pleased to see a woman interested in government (those were the old days!) and encouraged my interest. He appointed me to the 1970 Charter Revision Committee and then the Environmental Planning Commission. From then on one thing led to another. He was a great mentor -- and it all started because the LWV asked me to observe City Commission meetings!

-- Nadyne Bicknell

Membership Renewal Is Due

The membership renewal letters have been sent. Please reply by Oct. 15. You may send a check in the enclosed envelope to the office or you may renew your membership online through our website www.lwvcnm.org. Any changes in your name, address, phone number, or email should be noted so our new Member Handbook will have the correct information. Thank you for being a loyal League member.

-- Andrea Targhetta

Save the Date and A Call for Convention Volunteers

CNM is hosting the 2015 NM State Convention in Albuquerque next year, May 16 – 17. We are planning an informal evening reception on Friday, May 15 at Carol Tucker Trelease's home.

The Crowne Plaza on University Boulevard will be the convention location. Plans are starting to unfold and we need volunteers to assist in various short-term tasks. Please see the opportunities in this article to help make this a GREAT convention for all our state members. Call the LWV office and place your name on a list of volunteers.

* Assist with hotel accommodations, coordina-

tion of banquet, lunch events, exhibitors (possibly), equipment needs. (3)

* Assist Peggy Howell with credentials of membership and delegates. (2)

* Volunteers needed to coordinate the Friday evening reception (food, beverages, etc.)(2)

* Help Brenda McKenna with public relations and signage for convention (2)

* Chair and assistance needed for the silent auction (2)

Are there any ideas for sponsors to help pay for extras? We can give them PR and space in our convention packets.

Final Good-bye to Members and Friends

There are many ways in which one can lead. Some lead as the head of an organization or group, others lead by their quiet example. We mourn the loss of these leaders.

Pat Howell -- this is what his friends called him. Actually his given name was Milton L. Howell, Jr. His wife Peggy, our Membership Chair, and he came to us from Texas where they immediately settled into our community by joining this League. Pat had a rich career in the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the University of North Texas and was an excellent woodworker. Friends can enjoy the pergola which he built in their backyard.

Nancy Briggs -- Nancy was the daughter of the one-time UNM Dean of the UNM College of Fine Arts, John Donald Robb. She was quite opinionated and often spoke out, which is why we enjoyed discussing issues with her. She was quite knowledgeable on the history and culture here in New Mexico.

Dr. Robert Lofffield -- He and his wife both joined our league in 1989. He continued his membership even after Ella passed away. He was a world renowned biochemist and was one of the original faculty members at the UNM School of Medicine He was instrumental in developing the curriculum for training physicians that is still used today.

Monna Utter -- Monna was a retired school teacher. She was a dedicated 50-year plus League member who you could count on to be at League meetings and events. Her daughter, **Barbara Adkins**, brought Monna when she could no longer drive herself. Monna was a member of the Education Committee for years. She is remembered as always bringing her mother **Elsie** to the Education meetings with her.

Our sympathies go out to **Carol Steeves** on the death of her husband, Jim, known for his thirst for knowledge

We also send our condolences to our past President **Geta Gatterman** on the loss of her husband, **Dean**.

Welcome New Members

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349-8850

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