

LWVCNM Observer's Report

Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

September 13, 2023

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

Present: David Heil (Chair), Michael Meek (Vice Chair, video), Katherine Bruch, Jay Block, Joshua Jones

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Gun Safety

As background, the LWV holds the following advocacy positions regarding gun safety:

- LWVUS: "Protect the health and safety of citizens by limiting accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety."
- LWVNM: "LWVNM supports regulation of firearms for public safety."

Of the Governor's 30-day ban on open and concealed carry laws in Bernalillo County with certain exceptions, Sheriff Jesse James Casaus remarked, "...we don't entertain that nonsense here in Sandoval County... I encourage you guys, when you're passing through Bernalillo County, Albuquerque, be armed...law enforcement police are not there in the moment for your safety. You need to be responsible for...your own safety."

(<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 04:00-5:05)

Also on the topic of gun safety, a bond obligation question on the November 2023 ballot would provide funds, to install an Evolve weapons detection system (or similar) and related infrastructure upgrades at Rio Rancho High, Cleveland High and Lincoln Middle Schools.

Education

In October, the Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS) will break ground on a joint RRPS/CNM Career Technical Education Center to open in 2025.

Health Care

Last year, UNM Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) received federal funding in the form of a SAMHSA grant to develop, implement and test a model of tele-health substance use disorder treatment to reach underserved rural Hispanic and Native American populations in Sandoval and other counties. The hospital received an extension of this grant for the following year.

Voting Rights and Health Care

A Resolution Supporting Referendum Petitions on Bills Passed by the 2023 Legislature passed by a vote of 3 to 1 along party lines. (See link at https://destinyhosted.com/agenda_publish.cfm?id=72636&mt=ALL&vl=true&get_month=9&get_year=2023&dsp=agm&seq=2788&rev=0&ag=397&ln=12426&nseq=2791&nrev=0&pseq=&prev=&vl=true# for full text of the Resolution.)

As background, state bills listed for referendum include

- HB 4 – Voting Rights Protections
- HB 7 – Reproductive and Gender-Affirming HealthCare Freedom Act
- HB 207 – Expand Human Rights Act
- SB 13 – Reproductive Health Provider Protections
- SB 180 – Election Changes
- SB 397 – School-based Health Centers

The New Mexico Secretary of State has published a *Notice on Referendum Petitions* (<https://www.sos.nm.gov/legislation-and-lobbying/legal-resources/notice-on-referendum-petitions/>) to help voters spot differences between valid and invalid referendum petitions. It also identifies valid petitions currently in circulation.

The Resolution, brought by the Chair, was presented as showing Commission support for constituents participating in a referendum process guaranteed by the state constitution. After stating this, the Resolution continues with the following language:

“The Board recognizes, applauds and supports the participation and efforts of Sandoval County residents in the petitions (known as the Referendum Project), which is comprised of six (6), separate pieces of legislation, that were passed without voice of the electorate, and are determined to be clear and direct usurpations of parental rights over their minor children, threats to the integrity of election outcomes and violations of individual rights to free speech.”

Two commissioners then framed the vote as a yes favoring state constitutional rights, and a no as opposing constitutional rights.

In comments, one commissioner asserted that “children are under attack” by one bill in the referendum, and claimed that New Mexico schools surveyed fourth graders using inappropriate questions and told students not to show the survey to parents. He then commented on government activity in other states and concluded with reports of boys raping girls in bathrooms and locker rooms, also in other states or countries.

(<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:44:25-1:50:00)

Another commissioner asserted that the legislators who passed the bills on the referendum were “duly elected by a majority of the people they serve.” While not denying that there should be an opportunity for referendum, she would not support the role of the County Commission to weigh in on the matter, since the majority of her constituents do not share the

views in the above paragraph from the Resolution. After concluding, the commissioner left the chamber, returning after the vote was taken.

(<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:50:10-1:52:51)

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Five of 12 speakers commented on the Governor's gun ban, and three on conditions at SRMC and the unionization of nurses.

In addition, the District 44 state representative commented that HB 7 was passed to provide a safe place for our state's transgender youth to be heard in a medical or school setting. She pointed out that the bill does not affect parental consent and that minors cannot access insurance or fund medical treatment without parental involvement. She urged commissioners to lead by ensuring transgender youth are safe and feel heard as self-harm and suicide rates rise. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:13:00-1:17:15)

Commissioners Discussion

One commissioner accused two fellow commissioners who did not vote yes on the referendum resolution of violating their oath of office to uphold the constitution and directly asked them never to do that again. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 3:44:00-3:47:00)

Sandoval County Commission Website

<https://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/commission/>