



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

6739 Academy Rd. NE Suite 124, Albuquerque, NM 87109 lwvcm.org (505) 884-8441

**President's Report
by Starlyn Brown**

March is Women's History Month and February was Black History Month. Margaret S. Collins holds a place in both. I recently read an article titled "*Termite Pioneer*" about Margaret S. Collins, the first Black American female entomologist to earn a Ph.D. She was also a civil rights activist. Collins specialized in termites, yup termites. The question of how termites got by with very little water intrigued her. ***Neotermes collinsae***, a species of termite, was named after her in recognition of her significant contributions to entomology and termite research. Now you know about another remarkable woman and her accomplishments to be recognized and celebrated.

The 2025 Legislative session is rolling along. So many bills, so little time! The LWVNM Action Committee is spending an incredible amount of time tracking legislation and advocating. The bill landscape changes daily and sometimes hourly. The LWVNM Lobbyists are amazing at keeping track of everything. We have two LWVCNM members registered as Lobbyists this year. Jeanne Logsdon is focusing on environmental bills and Janie McGuigan is focusing on housing related bills. Their passion and dedication are inspiring. To track the NM League activity, go to [LWVNM: Legislative Tracking](#).

A review of the LWVNM and LWVUS positions on Housing revealed that there are gaps which have limited our ability to advocate in the housing area. A position concurrence request has been sent to LWVNM to update the LWVNM housing position. The requested changes take language from the LWVLA, LWVSNM, LWVCNM and LWWCA housing positions. If approved at the next LWVNM Board meeting, the next step is concurrence at the LWVNM Convention in April.

I have been inquiring about the National League's position on the current climate in Washington DC. LWVUS issued a press release on February 14th, which was also the Leagues 105th birthday. You can view the press release at [The League of Women Voters of the US Urges Congress to Act in New Letter | League of Women Voters](#). You can read the letter [here](#). LWVUS is asking that Congress perform their duty as the third branch of government as defined in the US Constitution.

The LWVUS new Membership System was launched February 3rd. By now you should have received an email invitation to log on and review your information. If you experience any issues or have any questions, please call the office and leave a message at (505) 884-8441 or send an email to lwvoffice@gmail.com. Be assured we are prepared to help any members who have questions and need assistance.

The LWVUS Judicial Study is off and running. Your participation in the process is encouraged. This is an opportunity to learn about the League's position development process. Please see page 5 for more information. (cont.)

Please **Save the Date** for the **LWVNM State Convention April 26th and 27th in Santa Fe.**

As always, feel free to reach out at president@lwwnm.org or call the office (505) 884-8441 and leave a message for me.

Join us for the Brown Bag Lunch and Learn Series

MARCH EDUCATIONAL MEETING Thursday March 13th, at Noon



WHERE: In person (members and guests only), Conference room, 6739 Academy Rd. NE, ample parking available; Zoom (members and general public)

TOPIC: Is Our Democracy Seeing Less (or More) Sunshine?

SPEAKER: Amanda Lavin, J.D., Legal Director, New Mexico Foundation for Open Government

At all levels, the League of Women Voters has for decades taken emphatic stances on transparency. The LWVUS national public policy position on *Citizen's Right to Know/Public Participation* states: **"Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate informed understanding and public participation in government decision-making."**

LWVUS confirms its support for open government in its *Impact on Issues 2024-2026*:

"The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible."

LWVNM has a comprehensive position on *Transparency in State and Local Governments* that was adopted in 2011 after significant input from and discussion among League members.

In 2002, Federal Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith warned: "Democracies die behind closed doors.... When government begins closing doors, it selectively controls information rightfully belonging to the people. Selective information is misinformation."



To that end, our Sunshine Month speaker will provide us with information about what has been happening in the open government world in New Mexico, and how League members can help ensure that transparency exists throughout our government.

Amanda Lavin is an attorney and legal director for the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (NMFOG). NMFOG is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization committed to helping citizens, students, educators, public officials, media and legal professionals understand, obtain and exercise their right to know. In her role as legal director, Amanda advocates to uphold New Mexico's freedom of information laws and the First Amendment through litigation, education, and outreach.

Ms. Lavin will discuss the work she has done as the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government's first legal director, including filing a lawsuit to enforce the Inspection of Public Records Act against Bernalillo County, advocacy at the 2025 New Mexico Legislative Session, and advocating for access to government records throughout the state.

Since joining NMFOG in January 2024, Amanda has helped New Mexicans statewide understand their rights, and public entities understand their obligations, under New Mexico's primary transparency laws, the Inspection of Public Records Act and the Open Meetings Act. Prior to joining NMFOG, Amanda worked at the Federal Public Defender's Office and the New Mexico Public Defender's office, defending the rights of people accused of crimes. She is a 2012 graduate of the University of New Mexico School of Law and has also worked in private practice.

April LWVCNM Educational Meeting

Save the Date April 10, 2025 from Noon to 1 pm

Topic: PFAs – How New Mexico can reduce exposure to “forever” chemicals

PFAs (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are pervasive in everyday products we use, such as nonstick cookware, pizza boxes, lipstick, and dental floss. PFAs exposure is linked to many cancers, thyroid disease, weakened immune systems, reproductive problems, and other health impacts. We have invited an expert from the New Mexico Environment Department to explain the dangers of PFAs, what the state can do now to educate and protect us, and how individuals can minimize exposure.

LWVCNM ANNUAL MEETING 2025 - SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, MAY 10

This year we warmly invite you to a new Annual Meeting venue, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Gateway to the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico.

Location: 2401 12th Street, NW



Registration: 9:30 - 10 AM

Business Meeting: 10 - 1:30 AM

Buffet Brunch and Native American Storyteller: 11:30 AM

LWVCNM members and guests are invited to make a day of it. League business in the morning, followed by an optional exploration of all the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center has to offer in the afternoon. We look forward to sharing this special day and location with you.

Details, including luncheon cost, to follow in the special April Annual Meeting edition of The Voter newsletter (delivered to your mailbox), upcoming email announcements, and at lwvcnm.org.

Why your attendance at the LWVCNM Annual Meeting Matters – Starlyn Brown

Each year we hold an Annual Meeting and invite all LWVCNM members to attend. Some of our new members may not be aware of the Annual Meeting on May 10th. Why do we have an Annual Meeting? The easy answer - it's in our bylaws. But the real reason is to meet your fellow members and participate in the decision making process for **your** League. The meeting consists of information about our activities for the past year, election of Board members, modification of bylaws if needed, and approval of any budget amendments for 25-26. There are opportunities to ask questions and give direction to the Board for the coming year. And then we eat and listen to a Native American Storyteller! Unfortunately, meeting attendance is not free, with the fee covering the cost of room rental and food.

NEW DATE FOR MARCH BOOK CLUB!

Mark Your Calendar for a Special Book & Author Event

Hell If We Don't Change Our Ways: A Memoir by Brittany Means

DATE: Wednesday, March 19, 2025

TIME: 5-6:30 PM Book Discussion

6:30-7:30 Potluck Dinner

WHERE: LWVCNM Office Conference Room, 6739 Academy Rd. NE

Ample Parking Available. Building locks at 6 PM.

Please note: no late entry after 6 PM.

TITLE: *Hell If We Don't Change Our Ways: A Memoir by Brittany Means*
(Publisher: Zibby Books)



The LWVCNM Book Club kicked off the 2025 season with author Deborah Jackson Taffa and a discussion of her National Book Award Finalist, *Whiskey Tender*. We asked Deborah for a recommendation for the March Book Club selection. Deborah suggested we consider a memoir by Brittany Means, which shares her traumatic childhood experiences with homelessness and family instability.



Brittany is currently an accomplished young writer and Albuquerque resident, with a long and heartbreaking path that led her here...and we are fortunate that she can join us and share her journey. With the plight of the unhoused visible to each of us as we daily drive through our city, Brittany's memoir gives us a poignant glimpse into the backstories, which can lead to a life on the streets.

Ms. Means earned an MFA from the Nonfiction Writing Program at the University of Iowa. She won the 2024 Indiana Authors Award for this memoir; and *People* magazine picked it among the Best Books Fall 2023.

"An outstanding debut...A harrowing and soulful memoir to be read, savored, and reread." ~Kirkus Review

A Potluck Dinner Social Hour will follow the book discussion. Bring along a favorite dish to share with League members.

New members are always welcome! If you are not able to complete the book before the session, now worries...join a session and complete the book at your convenience. Great conversation and a way to better get to know LWVCNM members.

Contact Janet at 505-401-2052 for questions.

LWVUS Requests your Participation in a Critique of the Federal Judiciary

The Federal Judiciary includes the US Supreme Court, 94 District-level trial courts plus one Federal Court of Appeals and 12 regional Circuit Courts of Appeals. You may have concerns about Federal Government accountability and would like to see the Federal Judiciary better implement the checks and balances intended for this branch as established by Article III of the US Constitution.

On this topic, you have an opportunity to strengthen LWVUS advocacy and enact change by helping the League to develop a new League Position. The LWVUS initiated a 1-year study of the Federal Judiciary during the June 2024 Convention with an expedited timeline which permits approval of this new Position by the June 2025 LWVUS Council.

This is an excellent opportunity to learn more about this branch of our government. To inform you, pertinent 2024-25 Study materials are available for your review, including a primer, "Understanding Federal Courts" and other guides and briefs recommended by the LWVUS, all of which are posted on the League Management site:

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/advocacy-litigation/2024-2025-federal-judiciary-study-process-committee-and>

Events (recordings available online):

- 11/20/24 Orientation and Background
- 2/4/25 LWVUS Town Hall

Consensus

The positions the LWV takes on issues result from reports of Consensus Meeting results. Consensus questions for the Federal Judiciary Study are now available on this website and each local League will be conducting a Consensus Meeting on this matter.

**The LWVCNM will be holding our
virtual Consensus Meeting for the Federal Judiciary Study on
Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm via Zoom.**

The Zoom link will be distributed prior to the meeting via LWVCNM Topics.

This is also a great opportunity to learn more about the League's position development process. Please plan to join other LWVCNM members for this vital decision-making process to seek to improve Federal accountability.

LWVCNM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:
Starlyn Brown

1st Co-Vice Presidents/Voter Guide:
Karen Wentworth & Lani Desaulniers

2nd Vice President/Membership:
Elizabeth Shields

3rd Vice President/Program:
Karen Douglas

4th Vice President/Development:
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Jeanne Logsdon

Director/Office Manager:
Terry Quinn

Director/Historian & Special Projects:
Jennifer Black

Director/Webmaster/Zoom Host: Linda Miller

Voter Guide Distribution: Lani Desaulniers

Advocacy Team/Observer Corps:
Karen Wentworth

Volunteer Coordinator:
Linda Miller

If you need help with Zoom,
please reach out to Zoom host, Linda Miller,
lmiller@unm.edu

Please submit your articles for the monthly Voter by
the 15th of each month to Michal Mudd at:

VoterEditorMichal@gmail.com

LWVCNM CALENDAR

March 5th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm

**LWVCNM Board Meeting, ZOOM until further
notice. All members welcome.**

March 13th (Thursday) 12 Noon

**LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM**

Topic: Current and future transparency efforts
statewide honoring Sunshine Month

Speaker: Amanda Lavin, Sunshine
Attorney/Legal Director, Foundation for Open
Government

March 22nd (Saturday)

End of New Mexico Legislative Session

March 19th (Wednesday) Note Date Change

**LWVCNM Book Club
Special Book & Author Event
Hell If We Don't Change Our Ways: A Memoir
by Brittany Means
See p.4 & webpage Book Club link**

April 2nd (Wednesday) 5:30 pm

**LWVCNM Board Meeting, ZOOM until further
notice. All members welcome.**

April 5th (Saturday) 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**LWVCNM virtual Consensus Meeting for the
LWVUS Federal Judiciary Study, via ZOOM
See p. 5**

April 10th (Thursday) 12 Noon

**LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM**

Topic: How New Mexico can reduce
exposure to “forever” chemicals

Speaker: TBD

April 26th & 27th (Saturday & Sunday)

**The LWVNM State Convention, in Santa Fe.
Details coming!**

May 10th (Saturday)

**LWVCNM Annual Meeting in Albuquerque.
Details in future announcements & Voter**

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

February 2025

Karen Wentworth, Observer

Bernalillo County Commission Continues Focus on Housing

All five commissioners, Barbara Baca, Eric Olivas, Adriann Barboa, Walt Benson and Frank Sanchez attended the January 24 and February 11 meetings, either in person or via Zoom.

Commissioner Baca has requested the county manager to develop a plan to include intermediate and long-term funding resources for creating, implementing, and staffing an Affordable Housing Development Services Division reporting to the county manager.

But Bernalillo County already partners with the City of Albuquerque for the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative, which is tasked with bringing more affordable housing to the city and county. The collaborative is asking the New Mexico legislature for \$200 million dollars to invest in housing projects, either alone or in collaboration with private developers. The county manager is scheduled to report back to the commission at the February 25th meeting on the cost of establishing a new housing department at the county.

The commission is also considering whether to establish a State Fair District Tax Improvement District. The outlines of the district include only the current Expo New Mexico property, which is owned by the state of New Mexico, so it's a little unclear why the county is involved in establishing a political taxing entity on land it neither owns nor controls.

Bernalillo County taxpayers support the operating expenses of the University of New Mexico Hospital through a mill levy on property taxes. Last year the mill levy was worth about \$124 million dollars to the hospital and is used to underwrite operating expenses.

UNMH administrators report to the county commission quarterly. UNMH Chief Executive Officer Kate Beckett told the commission the hospital is now hiring staff to work in the recent expansion, which they are calling the critical care tower. Because the expansion will have more operating rooms and facilities to train residents, the UNM Medical School is apparently planning to double in size to graduate more physicians.



Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

January 29, 2025

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

Present: Michael Meek (Chair), Jordan Juarez (Vice Chair), Joshua Jones, Katherine Bruch, Jon Herr

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Low-Income Property Tax Credit Ordinance

State law requires that each county hold a public hearing for the purpose of considering adoption of a Low-Income Property Tax Credit Ordinance every 2 years. Since the full cost of the credit would be deducted from county revenues, the county attorney recommended against taking action after inviting comment. The commission took no action toward adopting such an ordinance.

As background: The LWVUS supports programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Additional Comments

None.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

February 12, 2025

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

Present: Michael Meek (Chair), Jordan Juarez (Vice Chair), Joshua Jones(video), Katherine Bruch, Jon Herr

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

No topics for which the League has an advocacy position were taken up during this meeting.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Two of 9 speakers requested an increase in time for public speaking from 2 to 3 minutes. Two speakers expressed concerns about two bills making their way through the state legislative process.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative (MRGHC)

February 23, 2025

Janie McGuigan, observer

The MRGHC met at 3:00 pm, Thursday, January 23, 2025 at the MRCOG Board Room. All MRGHC Commissioners were present at the meeting: Talia Friedman, Dan Majewski, Lawrence Rael, Ian Robertson and Steve Anaya. Other public officials present were Marcos Gonzales, Executive Director of the Bernalillo County Economic Development Department, Ken Martinez, County Attorney and Joseph Montoya, Deputy Director of Housing, City of Albuquerque.

Agenda Item Updates: The minutes for December 19, 2024 were reviewed and approved. The Collaborative approved the Annual Open Meetings Act Resolution for MRGHC as an action item. Commissioners were informed that the MRGHC's account set up via MRCOG as fiscal agent will be set up by the end of January so that the allocations for the MRGHC's administrative costs [\$500,000 from the City of Albuquerque and \$500,000 from Bernalillo County] can be accepted and deposited.

MRGHC Chair Friedman said that one new application was received for the MRGHC Executive Director position. She stated that their resume will be sent out to Commissioners and the interview with the candidate will be set up in the first week of February.

A contract for Legislative Consultant Services during the upcoming 2025 NM Legislative Session will be executed by Bernalillo County as stewarded by Commissioner Baca on behalf of the MRGHC. The consultant will represent MRGHC's interests during the session.

Commissioners discussed the MRGHC's \$200M 2025 Legislative funding request to the 2025 NM Legislative leadership. The request is to address the affordable housing funding needs in the City and County as detailed in the consolidated list of proposed housing projects developed last year. It was decided that there would be a joint funding request from the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County through the MRGHC for the following projects and programs:

- Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative: A joint project with the City of Albuquerque, the project would build 2,000 new housing units and rehab over 800 others in neighborhoods throughout each city quadrant. The county seeks \$100 million to close a \$261 million funding gap. Of the \$100 million, \$51 million would be used to complete eight projects under construction within a year. The balance of that funding would go to 13 other projects in the planning and design phase.
- Affordable Housing for Seniors: A \$1.5 million funding boost would build a 60-unit complex on county-owned property at Sixth and Coal for low- to moderate-income senior citizens.
- International District Housing: \$2 million to buy land, build cottages, and renovate a former clinic for use as affordable and transitional housing.
- El Centro and Seybold Village Housing: \$500,000 requested to renovate 75 housing units, including new flooring, interior walls, countertops, bathroom upgrades, paint and HVAC for the community of low-income seniors and handicapped-disabled citizens.
- CARE Campus Transitional Housing: \$20 million for 30 units serving individuals in recovery for up to two years.
- Family and Senior Wellness Hotel: \$7 million to convert a hotel offering 100-150 rooms for families and seniors for up to six months
- Tiny Home Communities: \$6 million for three mobile tiny home communities, serving up to 90 individuals in recovery for nine months



**6739 Academy Rd. NE, Suite 124
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The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico, a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization is a nonpartisan political organization, that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy by education and advocacy.