



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

Volume 7, Issue 8

Sixty-two Years Serving La Plata County
90 members

April, 2008

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

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Inserts:

Annual Meeting Materials

Save and bring to annual
meeting

Looking Forward flyer

Welcome new members:

Candice Carson,
Daniel Black,
Michelle Campbell,
Messel McHugh,
Bill Collins,
Nancy Mead and David Wright



Mark your calendars!

April Meetings

Tour of Animas/La Plata Project

Wednesday, April 16, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

Dave Gates, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, project photographer and public outreach coordinator, will host our tour of this partially completed, controversial water project. See article on page 3.

* * *

Presentations on Foreign Policy Issues

Thursday, April 24, 12-2

144 Jones (Sage) Hall, FLC

Kim Martin’s students will present their research papers.
See article on page 4

* * *

Looking Forward: CO’s Fiscal Prospects After Referendum C

Wednesday, April 30, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

The Peaks, Durango Recreation Center
Mark Fermanich, CO Children’s Campaign
Rick Jones, The Bell Policy Center
See article on page 3.

Save the Date!!

LWV of La Plata County Annual Meeting!

Saturday, May 10, The Strater Hotel

9-12: RHA speakers and Business Meeting

Noon: Catered Lunch and Conversation



President's Message

Inserted in this issue you will find several documents relating to our **Annual Meeting**, which will be held **Saturday, May 10, 2008**. According to our bylaws, this material must be sent to our members at least 30 days before the meeting, so that you will have time to review them before you are asked to vote. Please bring them along with you to the annual meeting.

Included are:

- Annual Meeting Agenda
- 2008-9 proposed budget
- 2008-9 Nominating Committee Report
- Proposed Local Studies (if any)
- Proposed Bylaw Change

We are delighted to announce that the Staff of the **Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County** will be joining us to deliver the Keynote Speech. They will update us on their progress in achieving Affordable Housing in the County, and will take your questions. This is a terrific opportunity for the League to hear firsthand about a topic for which we have advocated for many years (our League completed a local study in 2003 which advanced the creation of the RHA) and to provide feedback to the RHA staff.

As a departure from previous years, we will be holding our meeting at the **Strater Hotel**, a location that is very special to us in Durango. We will be offering a catered lunch at a cost of just \$15. Our reasoning for this is that we have grown too big to host the meeting at a member's home, and

also thought we could all use a break from providing dishes for potlucks! You will each be receiving an RSVP invitation in April along with a self-enclosed envelope in which to send your check to cover the luncheon. Due date for the RSVP is no later than May 4, as we have to provide a count to the Strater.

In addition to meeting the staff of the RHA, attending this meeting is important for several more reasons, among them:

- A new board will be installed for 2008-9, and the nominating committee is proposing changing the structure of the board to make it easier for members to donate their time: we need your approval to institute this change and for a bylaw reflecting the need for a more formal nominating process
- Our budget has grown in the past couple of years, and it is important to see the reasons why
- This is National Convention year: our delegates need to hear from you how they should be prepared to vote
- *This is our chance to mingle and catch up with members we haven't seen for a while and meet new ones- our League continues to grow with 21 new members in the past year*

On a personal note, this is my last term as President, and I want to be able to thank everyone for helping me expand my life in this way. **Please plan to join us May 10!**

-Ellen Park



Moderator Pam Patton calls the Town of Bayfield Council Candidates Forum to order on Tuesday, March 18. Mayoral candidates Carol Blatnick and Rick Smith, left, and candidates for trustee, James Harrmann, Debbi Renfro, Bill Miller, Justin Talbot and Dan Ford are seated on the right. Candidate Bob Piccoli was unable to attend.

Many thanks to Marilyn Sandstrom, who pulled the forum together on short notice, and to helpers Pam Patton, Ellen Park, Ross Park, Marilyn McCord, Nadine Ancel and Marilyn Brown.

Town of Bayfield residents are reminded to vote Tuesday, April 1 at the town hall, 11 West Mill Street.

Looking Forward post Ref C

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

Rich Jones, The Bell Policy Center, and Mark Fermanich, CO Children's Campaign, will be here in Durango Wednesday, April 30 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. at the Rec Center to give La Plata County residents a progress report. They 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, I know 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.
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. The coalition projects being able to retain all projected revenues under the new cap.
5. 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. Also, 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 Durango is sponsored by a number of local organizations, including It's About Kids, La Plata County Advocacy Network, LPC Health and Human Services, Durango Chamber of Commerce, Durango Adult Education Center at the Commons, Bayfield and 9-R School Districts, as well as our LWV.

Make a point to attend the discussion so you can make educated judgments when solutions are suggested. Refreshments will be served. Post the enclosed flyer on your fridge.

-Marilyn Brown

Tour of Animas/La Plata Water Project

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 our 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 20 to reserve your spot. Members will be given first choice, but friends and spouses are welcome as space permits.

Park by 1:15 in Centennial Center in front of K-Bob's just southwest of the Animas River project intake. Plan for mud!

Website Alert!!

LWVCO and LWVUS legislative action alerts have been added to our web site at <http://www.lwvlaplata.org/Legislation.html#Alerts>



**Jim Callard, left, leads Great Decisions discussion on 'Defense and Security'.
Kim Martin's students are in background.**

Presentations on Foreign Policy Issues

Kim Martin's second level composition class, mostly sophomores, at Fort Lewis College, has been attending the Thursday Great Decisions sessions. The class will present their research papers on foreign policy issues, Thursday, April 24 in Jones (formerly Sage) 144 from 12 – 2 p.m. Everyone is invited.

'League of Women Voters shines light on issues'

[Editor's note: The following tidbit in the Cortez Journal 3/22/2008, Page A4, followed an earlier article about the Montezuma County LWV becoming a full-fledged LWV]

Kudos to the local League of Women Voters for clearing all the hurdles to become an official chapter of the national organization. The League does extremely important work in Montezuma County, keeping voters of both sexes informed on important issues. Their research capacity is impressive, as is their nonpartisan advocacy in making information public. They deserve special thanks for their work in promoting local air quality monitoring.

Election Judge

Promote democracy – serve as a poll worker on Election Day! If you are a registered voter residing in La Plata County, you are eligible to serve in La Plata County. Submit your name by April 29 to the County Clerk, 382-6296. If you are affiliated with a political party, you will be vetted by that party.

Qualifications:

Willingness to serve a long (but very interesting) day from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Be U.S. citizen by the date of the election at which they are scheduled to work
Be physically and mentally able to perform the duties of an election judge
Attend a mandatory half-day election judge training class prior to each election at which they work
Never been convicted of election fraud, any other election offense or fraud and
Neither a candidate whose name appears on the ballot in the precinct that they are appointed to serve nor a member of the immediate family, related by blood or marriage to the second degree, of a candidate whose name appears on the ballot in the precinct that they are appointed to serve.

Judges are paid \$20 for attending the training session and \$100 for service on election day. Some LWV members have donated their earnings to our LWV.

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Republican County Caucuses/Assembly

To follow-up on Jill Patton's note last month on the Health Care Single-Payer Resolution presented at your precinct caucuses in February: The local Republicans held their County Assembly on March 1st and the resolution was not considered by the County Assembly at that time. The Resolution had not been forwarded to the County Assembly by any of the precinct caucuses meeting in February.

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Newspaper in Education Institute: Electing the President

LWVUS has partnered with the Newspaper in Education Institute to publish and provide free of charge *Electing the President*. Newspaper in Education, NIE, is an international program begun in 1955 to advance the use of newspapers in schools in order to improve reading, spelling and writing abilities and current events knowledge. Ann Flatten has volunteered to coordinate our efforts within the schools and to work with the Durango Herald's NIE representative, Julio Goicoechea, with support of publisher Richard Ballantine, to make the booklet available to all the high schools in La Plata, Montezuma and Archuleta Counties.

Electing the President, based on LWVUS' *Choosing the President* and other League resources, is available as a 30-page letter-size .pdf and a 16-page tabloid supplement for printing in volume by NIE programs nationally. The Herald plans to distribute the booklet as a supplement in an issue of the newspaper this fall. This will be a wonderful service to the communities as well as to the high schools. You can check out the booklet on our League website at <http://www.lwvlaplata.org/files/electingthepresident3-27-08.pdf>.

Volunteers are needed! The next step is to contact the Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio high school principals to encourage them to include *Electing the President* in classes this fall. We would also like to discuss with them the idea of having debates and a mock election at each school, hopefully run by the student councils with our help. Ideally, we will have a League committee working with each high school and perhaps some FLC students helping with the debates and mock elections. Please consider volunteering to help with this very exciting project. If you are interested, please contact Ann Flatten at 259-0971 or flatten@gobrainstorm.net.

We want to encourage all our high school students to become knowledgeable about and involved in the election process.

–Ann Flatten

LWVCO Council – May 16-17

The 2008 LWV of Colorado Council at the Strater Hotel, which our LWV is hosting, provides a wonderful opportunity for our members to see the state LWV in action without going to Denver!! We are allowed two delegates, which the board will appoint, and as many observers as we want at \$30 apiece. Dinner, at which U.S. Attorney for CO, Troy Eid, will speak on Native American Issues, is an additional \$25.

Those willing to help with registration and information will have time to observe as well without charge. We need multiple volunteers to help at the start of each business session and a few to man the table during the sessions for one-hour segments. Please call Marilyn Brown before April 10 at 259-3593 or marilbrown@aol.com, if you wish to be an observer and/or attend the dinner. If you can volunteer to help at the registration table, contact Marilyn before May 1.

National Convention – June 13-17 Portland, OR

Here's an opportunity to see the national LWV in action! The board has appointed Marilyn Sandstrom as our delegate, but we can have as many observers as we wish. If you plan to be in Oregon in June, think about attending for a day or more. Deadline for registering is May 23. Hotel reservations should be made by May 22 at the Hilton Portland and Executive Tower. Preview information is on the LWV website www.lwv.org and more information is coming.

River Protection Workgroup for Hermosa Creek

The River Protection Workgroup, established by the Southwestern Water Conservation District and the San Juan Citizens Alliance, is starting a series of community meetings to identify important stream and other values and their protection for Hermosa Creek, north of Durango. The first meeting is April 8, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the La Plata County Fairgrounds – Extension Building, 2500 Main Avenue. Participants are asked to commit to attending 10-12 meetings over the course of a year.

Additional information can be obtained from Bruce Whitehead, SWCD (970-247-1302) or Chuck Wanner, SJCA, (970-259-3583)

Think Before You Ink!

The League of Women Voters of La Plata County is encouraging its members and the public to be cautious during this period of circulation of petitions for an initiative or referendum measure.

Voters will be asked to sign a variety of petitions “just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it.” The League is telling voters, “Your signature is valuable, more valuable than your vote, considering that far fewer signatures are required to qualify a petition for the ballot than votes to pass it on the ballot. Only sign a petition that you believe belongs on the ballot.” In Colorado 76,000 verifiable signatures are required to qualify a petition for the ballot.

LWV of La Plata County lists six questions voters can ask themselves to help them determine whether or not to sign a petition:

Is it complex? Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. Complex issues may need to be thoroughly examined and debated in a legislative arena.

Is it confusing? Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.

Does it belong in the Constitution? If the measure would amend the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Is it a fundamental law that should be protected from change? Correcting a constitutional amendment later would also require amending the Constitution, is cumbersome and costly, and requires another vote of the people.

How will it be funded? Is it an “unfunded mandate” that would require the Legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative or referendum should generally create its own revenue source, and not earmark, restrict, or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.

Who is behind it? Ask which organization or person is behind this petition.

Who is asking you to sign? Before you sign, ask to see identification of the signature gatherer. If the person is a volunteer they must display an identification badge that includes the words “VOLUNTEER CIRCULATOR” in bold-faced type that is clearly legible. If the circulator is paid they must display an identification badge that includes the words “PAID CIRCULATOR” in bold-faced type that is clearly legible and the name and telephone number of the individual employing the circulator. The signature gatherer must be a resident of Colorado, a citizen of the United States, and at least eighteen years old.

[The above is modified for the State of Colorado with thanks to the LWV of Oregon]

LWVUS Climate Change Grant

Our League has received one of twelve grants offered by the national LWV in partnership with Oxfam of America to present a program on issues relating to global climate change. The goal of the grant is to engage communities in dialogues and to energize citizens around the issue of climate change and the connection between challenges faced in the U.S. and those faced by other countries, in particular, how practices in our country affect climate change elsewhere in the world.

The grant will help us bring Kristen Averyt, a staff scientist with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to La Plata County to speak on October 23, 2008, as part of the Professional Associates Life Long Learning Series at Fort Lewis College. Ms. Averyt was one of five scientists supporting the IPCC Working Group I, which assessed the physical scientific aspects of the climate system and climate change. She will speak about the IPCC process as well as its findings. We will also arrange a number of other meetings with community members and students while she is in the area.

Additionally, Oxfam of America will supply us with a variety of other resources on climate change, including their Sisters on the Planet package, which contains videos of women in other countries affected by climate change.

-Marilyn Brown



Peter Butler, left, and Jack Rogers address LWV members on La Plata County and Durango water issues

La Plata County Water Issues

Jack Rogers, public works director for the City of Durango, and Peter Butler, chair, La Plata County Water Advisory Board, covered quite a range of issues when they spoke to about 20 LWV members and guests on March 19. The text of Jack Rogers' remarks can be found on our website www.lwvlaplata.org.

Jack explained the recreational in-channel diversion (RICD) rights, recently awarded to the City for Smelter Park, indicating that in the process, several upstream water users who depend on Animas River water but hadn't applied for water rights, were awarded formal rights. These rights, although junior to many other rights, will prove important should there be a call on CO River water by downstream states in the future. While RICD water rights were created in 2001, Durango's RICDs were the first the CO Water Conservation Board did not oppose. Their logic had been that when RICD rights are granted, especially close to the state line, that water may not be as easily reused for beneficial purposes downstream and will just flow on out of state. Durango's rights are the closest to the state line of any CO RICDs created to date.

Peter justified the \$500,000 Sen. Isgar has requested for a CO water rights study for the state water engineer, who will be faced with deciding how CO is to trim back its water use across the state fairly in the event of such a call on the CO River. As global warming continues, we will be faced with increased wind, increased evaporation, increased sublimation and earlier snowmelt, all reducing the availability of water.

Jack noted that when the Animas/La Plata Water Project is completed in three years, the City plans to seek voter approval for general obligation bonds to acquire our \$7 million share of the water in the project (2.5% of the total amount of stored A/LP water). The city plans an impact fee of \$5700 for each new home, called a 'plant investment fee', a portion of which would go toward investment in the water supply and to pay off the bond issue. The city has a water efficiency management plan but hasn't calculated a carbon footprint of

city water usage. Since the city's water is obtained mostly through gravity flow with very little pumping, the source of energy usage are the treatment plants. The city is not testing for pharmaceuticals or endocrine disrupters but Jack indicated that since Durango water is currently drawn from the Florida River captured in Lemon Reservoir, and thus is primarily wilderness drainage, this is probably not an issue. Once the city starts to use Animas River water the problem could present itself.

Peter indicated that the county is not in the water business with no supplies or treatment plants. However, the county has established regulations developers must follow to show their developments will have sufficient water in perpetuity. A subdivision of more than 4 lots using ground rather than surface water must prove that it does not take more from the aquifer than it consumes. As for water hauling, the county allows water hauling only for 2-lot subdivisions and only if there is no option. Collecting water on roofs from snow and rainfall is illegal in CO at present, since that practice theoretically infringes on downstream water rights.


Rural water systems: Lake Durango Water System has been converted to a Water Authority, meaning that as opposed to Water Districts, directors are appointed, and it cannot levy taxes. La Plata West Water Authority for the La Plata River drainage (drinking water only) will be very expensive. The Water Authority is building a water intake source from the A/LP project now. Proponents of the La Plata-Archuleta Water District are collecting signatures now and expect to have the creation of the district and election of directors on the ballot in late summer. A mill levy would be set and voted on later. Water source would be Vallecito Reservoir. Jack indicated that the City of Durango is not an enthusiastic supporter of Rural Water Systems, as they tend to encourage sprawl.

Water quality issues: Various groups around the county are monitoring water quality: mercury in Vallecito Reservoir, and nutrients in the lower Animas River. The Southern Utes' are working toward 'primacy' or being able to set their own water quality standards.

Peter spoke of the Animas River Stakeholders group, which has completed 50 remediation projects valued at \$30 million for reducing heavy metal loading from abandoned mines in the watershed. He mentioned the 14-year effort stakeholders groups have been involved in to achieve "Good Samaritan" federal legislation shielding third parties from assuming liability when they take on remediation of abandoned mines, indicating that the LWV's help would be welcome. To date this legislation has been opposed by both mining and environmental interests for different reasons.

A surprising statistic is that 95% of the water used in La Plata County goes to agriculture, the remaining 5% for urban usages.

-Marilyn Brown

<h1>Calendar</h1>			LWV La Plata County www.lwvlaplata.org 650 Hermosa Cliffs Road Durango, CO 81301
April			
1 or 3	*Great Decisions , 'Latin America'		
15 or 17	*Great Decisions , 'U.S.-China Trade Policy'		
16 Wed	Voter Service Committee meeting, 11-12:30 Upstairs, Common Sense Café, corner 15 th Street and E. 2 nd Ave		
16 Wed	Tour of Animas-La Plata Project , 1:30-3:30, K-Bob's parking area, Centennial Center		
17 Thurs	Board meeting, 9-12, Bowman Hall, UU Fellow- Ship Hall, 419 San Juan Dr. NOTE TIME!		
17 Thurs	Looking Forward team meeting, 3-4, Northpoint Mall, Early Childhood Training Center		
24 Thurs	Foreign Policy Issues , papers presented by Kim Martin's second level composition class, 12-2, 144 Jones (Sage) Hall, FLC		
29 Tues	*Great Decisions , "Private Philanthropy"		
30 Wed	Looking Forward: Post Referendum C, 5-7:30, The Peaks, Durango Rec Center		
May			
1 Thurs	*Great Decisions , 'Private Philanthropy'		
8 Thurs	Board meeting, 9:30-12:30, Bowman Hall, Unitarian Fellowship, 419 San Juan Drive		
10 Sat	Annual meeting, LWV of La Plata County, 9-1:30, Oak Room, Strater Hotel		
16 Fri 17 Sat	LWVCO Council, 12:45-9, Strater Hotel, Dgo LWVCO Council, (cont.) 9 -12:15, Strater		
June			
13-17	LWVUS National Convention, Portland, OR 'Reaching New Heights Together'		
20-21	LWVCO Leadership Retreat, Best Western Motel, Frisco		
	*Great Decisions: 11:45-1:45 Tuesdays, Twilight Room 12:30-2:30 Thursdays, Sunlight Room, Durango Rec Center		
League Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.		Board of Directors	
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 Sue Herbst at 382-9446 for more information.		President Ellen Park, 247-8116 gellenpark@aol.com	
		Vice President Jill Patton, 385-4061 jgpatton@frontier.net	
		Newsletter Ed/Secretary Marilyn Brown, 259-3593 marilbrown@aol.com	
		Treasurer Nadine Ancel, 259-3675 ancelnm@yahoo.com	
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		Voter Service Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596 mjschili@bresnan.net	
		Off-Board Members	
		Membership Sue Herbst, 382-9446 sue_herbst@frontier.net	
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