



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

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Sixty-one Years Serving La Plata County

August, 2007

www.lwv.org

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*Check out the new
Civil Liberties and
Homeland Security section
in the For Members area of
the LWVUS website.
Several interesting white
papers are posted there.*

www.lwv.org



Mark your calendars!

August Meetings

**School Board Candidate
Education Workshop**

Saturday, August 11

8:30 – noon

(Working breakfast provided)

**Conference Room A,
Mercy Medical Center
1010 Three Springs Boulevard**

If you or a friend or neighbor is considering running for a school board position, join the three school board presidents for frank discussion of what it takes and means to be a school board member.

Bring your questions and concerns...

**Call Pam Patton, 884-2206, for info
and to reserve your spot!**

**co-sponsored by our LWV and the three La Plata County school
districts: 9-R, Bayfield and Ignacio**



President's Message

We held a very successful annual meeting on May 12, 2007 with 20 members as well as three guests from the Cortez League in attendance. The highlight of the meeting was a conversation with County Commissioner, Joelle Riddle, who spoke about her experiences after just four months on the job, and about current issues facing La Plata County. Listening to county residents has been the focus of her freshman year. We are so pleased to welcome Joelle as a member of our local League.

The Business Meeting was kicked off with my report, and I would like to extract the following important point from that report to reiterate here:

Our membership increased from 25 in 2002 to 73 in May 2007, and to 77 since then. It is because of each and every one of our members that we are able to educate and advocate with our forums and events. You support us and make your voices heard with your extremely generous contributions, by volunteering your time, by vigorously participating in meetings and representing the League, by taking individual action with our legislators, and simply by continuing to belong to this important organization. Because of the generosity of our members and donors our financial situation remains healthy even with the large number of programs we sponsored this past year. (Our activities were recognized by the State League by an award for Best League of the Year!) **Thank you all so much.**

These are the major actions taken during our business meeting:

- A motion to increase member dues by \$5/year (to \$50) was passed by the required 2/3 majority
- The 2007-08 proposed budget was adopted
- Members voted to terminate the Old Mercy Hospital Site study following justification by the Study Team
- Members voted to adopt all positions already in our portfolio
- Members adopted the position statement that derived from our 2006 Library Bond Issue study
- Members voted by two-thirds vote to adopt the proposed bylaw changes
- Members elected the new slate of officers as follows:
 - President: Ellen Park
 - Vice President: Jill Patton
 - Treasurer: Nadine Ancel
 - Secretary/newsletter editor: Marilyn Brown
- Identified as off-board chairs are:
 - Doreen Hunter: Legislative chair (who was subsequently appointed to the board by the officers at our May 30 board meeting)
 - Sue Herbst: Membership chair
 - Ross Park: Publicity chair
 - Pat Chatfield: International Affairs/Great Decisions
 - Suzanne Becker: Recording Secretary

President's Message (cont.)

The following directions were given to the new LWV LPC board:

- Find ways to raise funds in the community
- Discuss membership dues issues raised at the annual meeting
- Find ways to increase membership, particularly among minority populations and younger people

The Board will hold a retreat in late August to discuss these items and create our goals and direction for the coming year. I will report the results of this session in September.

Our 2007-2008 year is already underway with planning for the following activities:

- A School Board Candidate Education Workshop August 11 to encourage and inform members of the public who are considering running for one of our three local school boards this fall
- Candidate forums in each school board district closer to the November (mail-in) election
- A September update on the Health Care Crisis in La Plata County with a presentation by the consultants who are preparing a report for the County and City
- A November program on 'A Safer More Compassionate World' under a grant from the LWV of the United States
- Participation in the national LWVUS immigration study which will include an information session for all members on the federal immigration policy in October and consensus in January,
- A social event in December: "Celebrate your Heritage"

Contact me if you wish to participate in any of these planning activities. You can reach me at gellenpark@aol.com or 247-8116.

-Ellen Park

Kudos to the 9-R School Board

for their decision to support DCAT videotaping of their board meetings and especially to

Sue Herbst

through whose quiet persistent pressure, testifying before the school board and speaking with board members individually, over the months since 2003 almost single-handedly got this to happen, with assistance from

Sally Bellerue, Stephanie Huss, Ellen Park, and others

Sue's approach is a model for local League advocacy! Thank you, Sue!!!

Health Care Update

There's lots going on right now, and we plan to join again with CHAC (Citizens' Health Advisory Committee) for a forum in mid-September. Details will be in the September *Voter*, along with a more lengthy update on healthcare issues. (This subject is not exactly light summer reading!)

The consultants, John Snow Inc., contracted to suggest solutions for La Plata County's current mess should have their report in by the third week of August, so that will obviously be a topic in September.

The Colorado Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Reform has selected four of the original 31 proposals for further study and analysis. Their report to the legislature is due in January, 2008. Hearings will be held around the state before the final proposal is presented. You can follow developments at www.colorado.gov/208commission.

More in September

-Jill Patton

Learning a New Language in Frisco -- or What is the Difference Between Consensus and Concurrence*?

The road to Frisco, Colorado from Durango is 283.47 miles of beautiful scenery, and the highway reaches just to the tree line in some areas: a thoroughly enjoyable trip to this year's annual LWVCO Leadership Retreat. Meeting other League members from throughout the state and sharing ideas and experiences with them was definitely a high point. A big THANK YOU to LWVLP for supporting our attendance.

Three of us from LWVLP; Edina Cullipher, Nadine Ancel and Suzanne Becker attended the two-day event at Best Western Lake Dillon Lodge, June 15-16.

The two day agenda included sessions on Voter Service training and development, how to do a local study, League policies, procedures, and, to some of us, a lot of new terminology, and also tips for local Leagues on how to best communicate with the State League.

Kelly McFarland-Stratman, LWVUS Field Support, spoke about the League's involvement in the issues

surrounding DC voting rights, the Observer Corps, and membership recruitment. She included an overview of the LWVUS' pilot project, Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI). Five local leagues in a state are needed as part of the initiative if a state League desires to participate in the entire pilot project. We were also informed that a decline in membership is a national trend.

In her State of the League address, Marjory Beal, president of LWVCO, encouraged local Leagues to be pro-active on issues in this non-election year. This summer the state League will be involved in a poll soliciting voters' opinions of the justice system in order to develop an approach to educate voters. The state League will also be working on issues of public funding for campaigns and processes regarding redistricting.

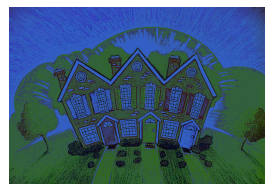
**Consensus: Collective opinion of a substantial number of League members, representative of the membership as a whole.*

Concurrence: Agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by a small group of members or by another League chapter

-Nadine Ancel and Suzanne Becker



Mayor Doug Lyon presiding over ground-breaking for our new library June 16, 2007!



Finding Home: A Homeownership Class offered by the RHA

Finding homeownership opportunities in La Plata County is a challenge. This class will explore homeownership - what affordable options exist and how to achieve the dream of owning a home.

Classes are FREE and offered monthly as a series of 3 sessions. The next class is August 1st, 8th & 15th from 5:30-8:00. For more information or to sign up call: Regional Housing Authority, (970) 259-1418. **Please pass this information on to anyone you know who would benefit from this opportunity.**

Net Metering and HB07-1169

[Ed. Note: LWVCO supported HB07-1169, which ultimately passed, but without the provisions most seriously contested by rural cooperatives. LWV member Pam Patton, president of the Board of Directors of La Plata Electric Association, a rural cooperative, volunteered to write a two-part explanation of the concepts involved. Part 1 follows.]

What is net metering and why is it important? Net metering permits a homeowner or business to provide electricity from its own generator onto the electric lines. A solar or other generator that is generating more power than the home needs sends the excess power onto the electric companies lines where it becomes available power for other customers. Prior to this year, electric cooperatives were required to net meter a customer's alternating current generation of up to 25 kilowatts (about enough electricity to light 4 to 5 homes.) Generators over 25 kilowatts were net metered when the electric company entered into a contract with the generator for the power.

During the last Colorado legislative session HB07-1169 was introduced to repeal the existing net metering law for electric cooperatives and replace it with a new law that would have required the cooperatives to net meter customer-generated power in different amounts based on the size of the cooperative. If a cooperative had 10,000 meters or less, it would have to net meter up to 500 kilowatt generators. With 10,000 to 40,000 meters the cooperative would have to net meter one megawatt loads and very large cooperatives with over 40,000 meters would have to net meter up to two megawatt loads. As originally written, the cooperatives would have to credit the net metered electricity at retail pricing from the customer up to the total amount of electricity used by that customer during the year.

The cooperatives would also have had to compensate the customer at the end of the annual period for any additional electricity generated at a rate equal to the co-ops' average incremental cost of electricity supply even if and when that power was being generated at a time that it wasn't needed for other customers. The cooperatives were required to supply necessary meters at their expense and the customers were to own any renewable energy credit (REC) associated with the generation. The REC's could be sold to the cooperative under a separate contract or sold by the customer to another party. Essentially, the customer got to sell renewable energy at retail and also separately sell the REC's associated with that power.

From the cooperative's perspective, the proposed law created a costly and unfair subsidy for the customer generating commercially sized solar, wind or other renewable power. Some small irrigation load rural cooperatives made the case that they would go bankrupt if they had to purchase all of a large irrigator's annual power requirements at retail because he was generating up to 1MW of power from wind that would come on the system at times when it wasn't needed.

The cooperatives worked to get the proposed law amended to make it fairer. Although some amendments that helped the cooperatives were added in the House Transportation and Energy Committee, there were still problems with the bill so the Senate removed the requirement to net meter 500kw, 1MW, and 2MW loads. The bill did make the rural cooperatives come in line with investor owned utilities for interconnectivity and insurance. Cooperatives still must net meter loads up to 25 kilowatts. Generation over 25 kilowatts may be contracted for between the customer and the cooperative.

-Pam Patton

Happy summer, everyone!!!



Jill Patton, Marilyn Brown, Ellen Park, Stephanie Huss and Ross Park holding LWVCO award for 'outstanding contributions to the local area in voter education and service', State Convention, May 19-20

Highlights of Roundup in Greeley (LWVCO Convention)

[Ed. Note: State convention will be written up in the next LWVCO Voter, including an article covering the excellent immigration panel]

Ellen and Ross Park, Stephanie Huss, Jill Patton and I enjoyed a stimulating and rewarding two days in Greeley! Highlights included our award, of course; greetings from Greeley mayor, Tom Selders, and President of the State Senate Joan Fitzgerald (dressed very casually in jeans); keynote speech by Kay Norton, president of Northern CO University, on Restyling Higher Education; and an excellent discussion of the death penalty in CO by Catherine Perrone of LWV of Jefferson County. We discovered at the dinner reception that a new member of the Archuleta County LWV, Kristeen Harris Katt, was in attendance and enjoyed building a communication bridge to that LWV.

Greeley has painfully experienced first-hand many of the problems associated with undocumented immigrants and we were disappointed that time did not permit more thorough exploration of those

issues following the immigration panel. Mayor Selders had just returned from a meeting on immigration issues in Washington. He mentioned the pressure on local resources trying to help the immigrants arrested in the raid on the Swift meat-packing plant in Greeley while they await processing of their cases.

The 2006 National Convention adopted the position supporting abolition of the death penalty, freeing state and local LWVs to take action based on this position if they wish. Jeffco LWV has collected financial data on capital cases in CO with the following conclusions: In the past 30 years, the state has spent \$40 million on the death penalty, has executed one person (in 1997) and has two people on death row. Capital cases are very expensive to prosecute and place a tremendous burden on county governments where cases are tried. Due to mandatory appeals, a death row inmate usually serves a minimum of 10 years on death row, at a cost of \$103.58/day

CU researchers studied the effect of race and gender on the death sentence in CO and concluded that death penalty decisions are not being made equitably. The decisions of prosecutors to seek the death penalty vary significantly across the state and are strongly correlated to the race, ethnicity and gender of the victim. The death penalty is most likely to be sought for homicides with white female victims and the probability of death being sought is 4.2 times higher for those who kill whites than for those who kill blacks.

The CO House Judiciary Committee voted to abolish the state's death penalty, replacing it with life-without-parole, and to use the money saved on the 1200 cold-case homicides in the state. The bill will next go to the House Appropriations Committee for consideration. LWVCO now has a position on which to base support or opposition to legislative action on this topic.

-Marilyn Brown

Excerpts from Testimony at EPA Hearing on EIS for Desert Rock

[Ed. Note: Testimony was presented orally by Marilyn Brown in Durango, July 18. Due to the 3-minute limit, the complete message was not read; however, it was presented to the EPA in its entirety in paper form.]

According to the Department of Energy, coal will continue indefinitely to be one of the least expensive sources of electric power in the U.S. The Four Corners region has abundant coal resources and many stakeholders wishing to capitalize on that abundance to produce energy, jobs and revenue. Technologies for transforming coal to energy vary enormously in cost, and pollution, especially when release of global warming gases is counted as pollution. Research into improved (cleaner) technologies continues...

The League recognizes that pressure to site coal-fired power plants in our area will continue and urges the permitting agencies to apply the following basic principles to review of proposals and their supporting documents, such as this environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Desert Rock Energy Project. Addressing these considerations will reflect the true costs of the use of coal for energy. The goal should be totally emission-free energy projects from raw material sourcing to transmission of power to users.

1. Gases contributing to climate change should be recognized as pollutants.
2. All power plants should be emission-neutral, judged independently, not in comparison to existing plants or to the atmosphere as a whole.
3. Plants should be designed so they can take advantage of improving technology cost-effectively as it becomes available. The owners of the plants should be required to phase out old technology and implement new technology as soon as it is available.
4. Best Available Control Technology (BACT) should not be limited by what is considered 'commercially available' or 'feasible' at permitting time nor by the technology those proposing the plant wish to use. Regulators should identify BACT for site and the type of coal and require that it be used.
5. Land disturbance from mining activity should be repaired and the affected lands restored to pristine conditions.
6. Displacement of human, domestic animal and wildlife activity resulting from mining activity should be adequately compensated in-kind or financially.
7. All short and long-term costs of pollution within the airshed, watershed, and viewshed of the proposed project should be considered during the permitting process, including costs of pollution from the sourcing of the raw material to the transmission of power to the customer throughout the life of the plant. These costs include impacts to human, domestic animal, fish and wildlife health and the natural environment;

impacts to sacred lands and historic and prehistoric cultural sites; impacts to the economy including tourism; and cleanup costs.

8. Alternative options for producing equivalent energy should be required to include conservation and renewable options.

9. The additional costs of employing the latest cleanest technology and/or upgrading plants as technology improves should be considered the cost of doing business and, when reflected in the retail cost to the consumer, accepted by society as the true cost of transformation of coal to energy

At present the Desert Rock Energy Project is far from meeting these principles. At the very least the EIS is sorely deficient in not giving realistic consideration to renewable energy alternatives. We urge the EPA to set standards to meet the above principles and enforce them through the permitting process.

In Colorado we have a little Bible called 'Leave No Trace'. This ethic for minimum impact outdoor recreation can and should be extended to the use of our natural resources to provide energy. Leave No Trace would mean complete restoration of land damaged by mining, preservation of pristine air, water and views, minimum impact to human and wildlife activity, avoidance of all sacred and historic sites and more. Application of this concept and the above principles would go a long way toward making the use of coal for the provision of energy here in the Four Corners acceptable to all of us.

If you [EPA] argue that you do not now have the enabling legislation to enforce this strict concept, or the other principles, rest assured that the LWV and many other organizations are working at the national level to get it for you. Wise forward-thinking regulators will recognize that it is coming and force promoters of new energy sources and owners of old ones to prepare for it. The public must be educated to consider these expenses the real cost of using coal as an energy source.

In conclusion, supercritical pulverized coal technology may have been considered the Best Available Control Technology at the time the Desert Rock Energy Project was first proposed but a lot has happened since, including an important Supreme Court decision directing the EPA to regulate greenhouse gases. Clean coal technology is a moving target and project proponents of Desert Rock and all current and future coal-fired power plants must be required to accommodate that fact through the lifetime of their plants.

[Comments will be accepted by the EPA at least until August 20.]

News from the Regional Housing Authority

Jenn Lopez, Executive Director of the La Plata County Regional Housing Authority, (and a member of the League of Women Voters of La Plata County) has learned that the RHA has received a grant of \$256,800 from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development through the state Division of Local Affairs. These funds will be used to create a revolving loan fund to assist with down payments and closing costs for qualified families and individuals. A family of four with an income of \$48,500 or less annually, which is 80 percent of the area's median income, could qualify for financial aid. Jenn has indicated that this is the first time the county has received this kind of money to assist with affordable housing.

Julie Levy, who was graduated summa cum laude from Fort Lewis College in 2005, and most recently was with Region 9 Economic Development District, has joined the RHA team as the Housing Programs Manager, reporting to Jenn. She will be responsible for, among many other things, homebuyer training and counseling and policy development.

-Ellen Park, RHA Board of Directors

Muchas Gracias

to everyone who submitted pictures
for our August newsletter!

**Safer, More Compassionate
World Forum**

**Saturday, November 10
10-3, FLC CUB Ballroom**

YES! The LWV of La Plata County has received grants from LWVUS and the Fort Lewis College "Common Reading Experience" and will be hosting the community for an open forum on the topic of a "safer, more compassionate world". Learn what has motivated local individuals to combat world poverty and terrorism by changing the image of Americans *one person at a time*. Please plan to join a cast of dedicated contributors that are determined to make a humanitarian difference around the world.

And, if you find that you have a few hours to explore what individuals can do in countries such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, Nepal and Seadrift, Texas, here is your summer reading assignment:

An Unreasonable Woman, Diane Wilson, Chelsea Green Publishing Co, 2005

Mountains Beyond Mountains, Tracy Kidder, Random House Publishing, 2004

Three Cups of Tea, Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, Penguin Group, 2006

Journey into Islam, Akbar Ahmed, Brookings Institution Press, 2007

The Hemingway Book Club of Kosovo, Paula Huntley, Tarcher, 2003

-Ross Park



*Our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Sue Herbst,
who suffered a broken hip after a nasty fall in July.
Sue, get well soon...we miss and need you!*

(Sue is currently residing in Four Corners Rehab Unit for the excellent PT they provide.)



Ellen Park, facilitating our Annual Meeting, May 12, 2007



Joelle Riddle, our speaker, county commissioner and new member



Marcia Boon, Jodi Foran and Llois Stein, guests from Cortez-Montezuma MAL



Immigration panel: Marlin Burke, Charles Heatherly, Larry Abramson, Sean McHugh, State Convention



Kristeen Harris Katt of the Archuleta County LWV, center, chatting with Stephanie Huss, left, and Marilyn Brown at state convention



Kay Norton, president of Northern CO University, keynote speaker, State Convention



Kelly McFarland-Stratman, LWVUS Field Support Office, addresses retreat



Participants of Leadership Retreat, Nadine Ancel and Edina Cullipher in foreground/right, Leadership Retreat, June 15-16



Marjory Beal, new LWVCO president, speaking to participants at retreat

Calendar			LWV La Plata County www.lwvlaplata.org 650 Hermosa Cliffs Road Durango, CO 81301
August			
8 Wed	Four Corners Air Quality Task Force, 1-6 p.m., FLC Student Memorial Lounge		
11 Sat	School Board Candidate Education Workshop, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Room A, Mercy Medical Center 1010 Three Springs Blvd		
15 Wed	Immigration Cmte Mtg, 9:30-noon, Barbara Cristol's home, 1638 W. 3rd		
23 Thu	Board Retreat, 9:30-3, Suzanne Becker's home		
September			
11 Tue	Board meeting, 9-12, C.R. W-4 Christ the King Church, 495 Florida Road		
12 Wed	Safer, More, Comp, World team mtg, 10-12, Christ the King Church, C.R. W-4		
17 Mon	Health Care Crisis: Update, 6-8:30 p.m., The Peaks, Dgo Rec Center, 5:30: light refreshments		
October			
6 Sat	LWVCO League Day, Speaker: LWVUS Pres Mary Wilson, Park Hill Golf Club 4141 E. 35th Ave., Denver		
9 Tue	Board meeting, 9-12, C.R. W-4 Christ the King Church, 495 Florida Road		
TBD	School Board Candidate Forums for each district		
17 Wed	Immigration Study Information meeting, TBD		
November			
10 Sat	Safer, More Compassionate World Forum, 10-3, FLC CUB Ballroom		
Welcome New Members!!!			
Joe Colgan, Gail Ann Thomas, and John and Nancy Loftis			
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.			
Join the League! Anyone of voting age may join the League of Women Voters. Others may be associate members. Call Ellen Park, 247-8116, for more information.			
		<u>Board of Directors</u>	
		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
		Legislative Issues Doreen Hunter, 259-3379 canyonstrider@gobrainstorm.net	
		<u>Off-Board Members</u>	
		Recording Secretary Suzanne Becker, 375-1533 srahmberg@aol.com	Publicity/Public Relations Ross Park, 247-8116 eandrpark@aol.com
		Great Decisions Pat Chatfield, 247-1692 patchwork@gobrainstorm.net	Membership Sue Herbst, 382-9446 sue_herbst@frontier.net