



March 16, 2010
Comments to La Plata County Commissioners
Making Democracy Work Day
League of Women Voters of La Plata County

The League of Women Voters (LWV) was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920 as a "mighty political experiment" designed to help 20 million women carry out their responsibilities as voters. It encouraged them to use their new power to participate in shaping public policy. From the beginning, the League was an activist, grassroots organization whose leaders believed that citizens should play a critical role in advocacy. It was then, and is now, a nonpartisan organization. League founders believed that maintaining a nonpartisan stance would protect the fledgling organization from becoming mired in the party politics of the day. However, League members were encouraged to be political themselves, by educating citizens about, and lobbying for, government and social reform legislation.

The League of Women Voters of La Plata County (LWVLPC) was founded as the League of Women Voters of Durango in 1945. The LWVLPC is composed of 94 volunteer members, many of them men. We register voters, educate them about the issues and introduce them to candidates at forums. We also advocate for our positions on policy issues if we have studied them. We are currently working on an EPA liaison for the Four Corners Region and will testify here today about the Primary Election as Mail in Ballot issue, since we researched it last year. And we're official Census 2010 partners and have been doing talks around the county.

Our next candidate forums will be held in Ignacio on March 23rd and in Bayfield on April 1st.

We will hold candidate forums for the Ignacio Town Board of Trustees on March 23rd and for Bayfield Town Board of Trustees on April 1st.

Primary Election as Mail in Ballot

LWV does not have a formal position on all-mail balloting. The State League did support HB1015, the legislation passed in 2009 to allow the county to conduct the Primary Election by mail ballot.

Last year our League conducted a research project into how La Plata County processes mail-in ballots and our conclusions were very positive. Based on this review of the Clerk's office, we expect that this mail-in primary election will be similarly reliable. Therefore, we support conducting the Primary Election by mail ballot.

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Background info for Leaguers:

Info from Carol Tone at LWVCO:

HB1015 was introduced early and hammered out over a long period of time, eventually passing on April 29th. One of the main purposes of the bill was to save the cost of conducting primary elections if there is not more than one candidate nominated for any political party. If, however, more than one candidate is nominated, whether from a major or a minor political party, then an election must be held. In addition the bill sought to allow a county clerk and recorder to conduct a primary election by mail-in ballot only. It was this portion of the bill that was controversial, such as provisions for notifying the public how the election would be conducted, how unaffiliated eligible electors can affiliate with a party, who will be sent a mail ballot packet, the minimum number, hours, and location of places where ballots can be dropped off (service centers), etc. Although the League has no formal position on all-mail balloting, we were happy to see amendments to the original bill that allow voters to drop off their ballot and not have to depend entirely on the US Postal system.