



League of Women Voters
Of La Plata County

VOTER

Volume 9, Issue 2

Sixty-three Years Serving La Plata County
97 members

September, 2009

www.lwv.org

www.lwvlaplata.org

www.lwvcolorado.org

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**September is
Membership Renewal
Month!**

Fill out the survey and send
your check in the return
envelope you will receive.



Mark your calendars!

September Meetings

- Colorado’s Budget Crisis -

**Tuesday, September 1
7 – 9 p.m.**

Durango Public Library

Speaker: Carol Hedges, Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute, Denver

* * *

- Welcome Back to the League -

**Wednesday, September 23,
12 – 2 p.m.**

**Program Rm #1, Durango Public Library
Brown bag lunch**

**Welcome, Education and Advocacy – Stephanie Huss
Membership – Marilyn Sandstrom**

**How our LWV website can keep you in touch:
Online demo – Ross Park**

* * *

Farmers Market Booth

**September 19 and October 3
8-12 noon**

**Be sure to stop by and greet the members on duty while you shop
We will have educational materials available and mail-in voter registration
forms for address changes or permanent mail-in ballots**

President's Message

What is up with Colorado's budget? It seems every other day we see another \$300 million shortfall. State employees are forced to take days off and social service programs are suffering. And they say it will get worse.

Leaguers know that the Colorado budget system is broken. We've been preaching about TABOR and statutory and constitutional provisions for years. We learned at LWVCO state convention in May that Colorado is falling behind as revenues decline. A new report, *Looking Forward: Colorado's Fiscal Prospects Amid a Financial Crisis*, (which can be found at <http://www.thebell.org/node/3353/>) calculates the costs of maintaining current state services through 2012-13 and projects the amount of revenues necessary to pay for them. It isn't pretty.

Carol Hedges was our speaker in May at state convention and a researcher on the new report. She is a recognized TABOR expert and currently a senior fiscal analyst with the Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute. We invited her on a tour of Southwest Colorado, where she will speak with the community about these challenges and what must be done to fix them. Join us on Tuesday, September 1st from 7-9 p.m. at the Durango Public Library. Bring your questions for this dynamic speaker.

Don't miss our Fall Kickoff membership meeting on Wednesday, September 23rd from 12-2 p.m. at the Durango Library. Pack a lunch and come hear about education and advocacy activities, discuss membership, and learn about our website. Hope to see you there.

-Stephanie Huss

Farmers Market

This year we will staff a LWV booth at the Farmers Market for two Saturdays, September 19, and October 3 from 8-12 noon. We will have school board election information, should any of the three districts have a contested race; educational publications; information about the LWV; and mail-in voter registration forms. These forms can be used for address changes, as well as permanent mail-in ballot requests.

Stop by and greet the LWV volunteers staffing the booth and see our NEW TENT! If you would like to help with this project, call or email Jill Patton, 385-4061, or jgpatton@frontier.net.

League Day – September 26

You all saw in the August LWVCO Voter the front page notice of League Day, 9-3, Saturday, September 26. Four exceptional speakers will cover the League's priority topics:

Allison Eid, CO State Supreme Court Justice, judicial issues and diversity in the judicial system;
Alicia Archibald, Pueblo Sustainability Planner, real community, real sustainability;
Irene Aguilar, M.D., president, Health Care for All Colorado, understanding CO healthcare financing and reform and
Maranda Pleau from the Governor's office, on Federal Stimulus money, where it is going, how it is monitored and its effect on the state budget. (Ken Gordon had to cancel due to a conflict.)

The session will be held at the Holiday Inn Select in Denver. Contact Stephanie Huss if you would like to go to this challenging session and network with Leaguers from across the state. Carpooling is available.

-Marilyn Brown

Renew Your LWV Membership

Our annual membership renewal drive begins in September. This year we wish to learn more about your personal interests in League efforts; so we are requesting help from you. Early in September you will receive, from your postal carrier, a letter containing a message from LWVLPC President Stephanie Huss, a membership renewal form, a two-page survey, and a brief narrative of LWVLPC planned efforts during 2009-2010. Please return your renewal form, dues, and the completed survey to our treasurer, Nadine Ancel. The survey will provide us with information on topics and activities in which you have a special interest. The appropriate League member will then follow-up with you.

Please join us at the membership meeting on September 23.


If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Sandstrom at 970-764-4596 or mjschili@bresnan.net. Looking forward to another great year with YOU as a member of LWVLPC.

-Marilyn Sandstrom

Membership Meeting September 23

Are you somewhere between a "*Natalie Novice*"



or a "*Cathy Comfortable*"  when it comes to using our website



(www.lwvlaplata.org)? Join us for a short on-line session at the September 23 Membership meeting and discover how you can sharpen your web skills and keep in touch with

LWVLPC. This website tutorial will follow Stephanie Huss and Marilyn Sandstrom on various aspects of League activity.

-Ross Park, your webmaster

Health Care Update

The only aspect of health care on everyone's minds these days is REFORM! Now Congress will reconvene and again take up this issue. Even if you've already contacted our representatives (John Salazar - www.house.gov/salazar/contact.shtml, Michael Bennet - senator_bennet@bennet.senate.gov and Mark Udall - Senator_Mark_Udall@markudall.senate.gov), contact them again - the higher the number of people they hear from, the better. Let them know we *have* to have reform - the status quo is unsustainable - we need everyone to have access to quality, affordable care, we want a *public plan option* and we need to address costs - without letting that last item negate either of the other two.

For a really good description of all aspects of the debate, it's hard to beat the Kaiser Family Foundation site - <http://healthreform.kff.org>. From this main page, you can see a side-by-side comparison of the various proposals so far, follow the latest news, and read articles on the subject. We also have lots of good references on our own website at www.lwvlaplata.org/healthcare.html - under "News Items" and "Healthcare References".

-Jill Patton

Got Some Extra Time?

We still need:

- A Voter Service chair
- A newsletter editor understudy
- A public relations chair

Contact Stephanie Huss, Stephanie@frontier.net or 259-7263, if you can help us out. Coaching guaranteed.



Legislative Action

One of the great strengths of the League of Women Voters is our ability to mobilize our grass roots organization of about 70,000 members to advocate individually for positions we have taken as a result of study and consensus by all of our local Leagues. This year, I have volunteered to fill the role of Legislative Action Chair for the La Plata League. My duties in this position include encouraging our members to take actions based on League positions on local, state, and national issues that are being debated by our elected representatives. To achieve this, I plan to periodically send state and national action alert emails to our members on topics upon which we are focused. These include but are not limited to Health Care Reform; Environment, Energy and Sustainability; Global Outreach; Voting Rights and Election Reform; Youth and Family Issues; and Immigration. I will also monitor potential actions we may wish to take in La Plata County based on our local positions.

The purpose of these alerts is to invite you to take action as individuals by contacting our representatives, and the alert will always contain instructions on whom to contact and how to do so.

My first email, which will be sent in early September, will contain instructions for you to decline to continue receiving action alerts from me, should you wish to do so. If I do not hear from you I will assume that you are interested in receiving alerts and deciding on a case by case basis to respond as suggested.

*-Ellen Park gellenpark@aol.com
LWVLPC Legislative Action Chair*

State Study on Sustainability

What are La Plata County governmental entities – city, county, special districts (especially schools and water), etc – already doing for sustainability? Are there local industries, hospitals, office buildings, etc doing sustainable activities? If you are interested in assisting in gathering information about local sustainability activities and organizations/businesses for the LWVCO Sustainability Study, plan to spend 30 minutes after the September 23 Membership Meeting to volunteer. If you have any questions, contact Deanna Collins, 259-7845 or dcdurango@msn.com.



La Plata Electric Association

(LPEA) Round Up Foundation

LPEA Round Up is a non-profit community support foundation that uses its funds to advance and support causes that strive to improve the quality of life in our community. Round Up Foundation funds are generated by LPEA consumers who choose to round up their electric bills to the next higher dollar amount. This costs an individual household or business an average of 50 cents/month, or \$6.00/year.

A local volunteer board (of which I became a member in 2009) reviews applications, determines need and allocates funds on a monthly basis. Since 2000, the Round Up Foundation has approved LWV La Plata's grant requests to cover printing and distribution of the LWV Ballot Issues pamphlet, containing pros and cons of all state ballot issues, an important service we provide to La Plata County voters.

Recently, Round Up monthly income has been dwindling and the community's needs have been increasing, due to the economy. If you are not already signed up, and are able to do so, please consider rounding up your electric bill by calling LPEA at 970.247.5786 or click here:

www.lpea.com/programs_services/roundUpForm.asp

-Ellen Park
gellenpark@aol.com

Update to Mail-in, Early and Provisional Ballot Report

Since the issuance in May of our report on how the county processes Mail-in, Early and Provisional ballots, an amendment has been passed to the Colorado Revised statutes that govern these processes. This amendment allows voters who have requested mail-in ballots to return their ballots to a polling place in the county in which they are registered to vote on Election Day.

Previously, if a mail-in ballot had been requested, the voter would either have had to mail in the ballot or bring it to the county clerk's office. If the voter presented himself at his precinct on Election Day with the ballot, the voter was directed to go to the Clerk's office, or to destroy the ballot and vote with a provisional ballot.

This is a welcome change for voters, but does result in some concern by the Clerk's office as additional cost will be incurred to maintain a new ballot box at each precinct, and to pick up mail-in ballots at each polling place throughout the day so that they can be processed at the County Clerk's office.

Also please note that the term "inactive-undeliverable" used in the report when the post office returns mail sent to a voter from the County Clerk's office should correctly be "inactive-returned mail" everywhere that it is used.

Click on www.lwvlaplata.org/files/me_p_ballot_report_updated_8-21-09.pdf for the full report.

-Ellen Park

Carpenters Nominated for 2009 National Outstanding Tree Farmer

The La Plata County Board of Commissioners has written a letter in support of the nomination of Lois Carpenter, a LWV member, and her husband Ken, of Pine Song Tree Farm in Vallecito, as National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. The nomination letter includes the statement that 'Ken and Lois Carpenter bring honor not only to themselves, but also to La Plata County, through their remarkable achievements at Pine Song Tree Farm. We believe their environmental ethic, their sound stewardship and their civic commitment are qualities befitting of the [award] and we urge your favorable consideration of their nomination. Ken and Lois were Colorado Tree Farmers of the Year in 2007. An article printed at that time in the *San Juan Tree Farmer* publication describing their efforts can be found at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/DUTree%20Farm%20Newsletter%2007-5-07.pdf>

Good luck, Lois and Ken!

MSI Air Quality Forum

Mountain Studies Institute 2009 air quality forum on August 26 focused on ozone and mercury, with updates on recent activities of the Four Corners Air Quality Task Force (4CAQTF), air quality on tribal lands, and air quality jurisdictions in the Four Corners area. All presentations will be available on MSI's website after Labor Day www.mountainstudies.org.

The forum wrapped up with a panel discussion of the following question: "Given recent recorded ozone levels and the potential for the ozone standard to be lowered below the current 75 ppb, what challenges and opportunities should organizations, constituencies and citizens be focused on?" The panel, moderated by Stephanie Huss, LWV president, included Jeremy Nichols, Wild Earth Guardians; Wally White, La Plata County Commissioner; Dana Wood, BP; Doug Blewitt, consultant; James Temte, Southern Ute Indian Tribe; and George San Miguel, Mesa Verde.

Dana Wood mentioned the 4CAQTF modeling, which projected results from implementation of certain mitigation strategies on NOx and SOx emissions up to 2018, showing very little reduction on a base of approximately 50 ppb of emissions from outside our area. Doug Blewitt discussed the observation of greater than expected amounts of ozone in high altitudes, indicating the need for more study of the natural sources in high terrain.

Jeremy Nichols advocated stopping the finger pointing and getting on with solving the problems with the data we have now, despite the desires for more. Models are all we have and they keep getting better and better. George San Miguel indicated that for Mesa Verde the Clean Air Act is just one of many federal mandates they must follow and they would benefit from access to a set of best practices. Their charge is to determine the dose impacting the ecology and its cumulative effects. James Temte sees our issues as coordination of activities, emissions reduction, avoidance of ozone non-attainment, mercury deposition and visibility.

The panelists all agreed, with varying amounts of enthusiasm, that an EPA liaison/coordinator based in the Four Corners area, who communicated with all groups and jurisdictions and coordinated a holistic approach to Four Corners issues would be a plus. Panelists also agreed that long-term regional air quality planning should replace the case by case treatment each newly proposed project gets from the EPA now, suggesting that perhaps this could be part of the EPA liaison's function. All agreed that the decision to lower the current ozone level should be based only on health effects, acknowledging that the EPA has a prescriptive process per Clean Air Act and that process should be followed. A couple of panelists felt that the economic effects of a lower limit should at least be acknowledged.

Panelists encouraged citizens to hold their public officials accountable for following through, particularly on the mitigation suggestions in the 4CAQTF Report from 2007.

-Marilyn Brown

Four Corners Air Quality Group Update

The focus of the Four Corners Air Quality Group (4CAQG) meeting August 27 was the report of the modeling of five ozone mitigation scenarios drawn from recommendations of the 4CAQ Task Force's 2007 report. The full modeling report is available at www.4cornersair.org.

The purpose of the modeling was to determine whether various types of controls on nitrogen oxide (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) emissions from power plants and oil and gas production units would reduce amounts of ground-level ozone and/or improve visibility at Mesa Verde. The sophisticated modeling used emissions and meteorological data from 2005 and projected results for 2018 including a do-nothing scenario. Results showed that the mitigation scenario using controls on power plants and oil and gas production for both NOx and VOCs would likely bring down ozone levels slightly, keeping us under the current EPA limit of 75 ppb. A significant problem is the large base amounts of ozone not within our control, coming from outside our area and/or from wildfire, etc. Another confounding factor is that not only is ozone produced by NOx and VOCs reacting in heat and sunlight but NOx also cannibalizes ozone in some circumstances, so as you reduce NOx, you can inadvertently increase ozone levels, creating hotspots. Visibility was slightly improved but not so much that the naked eye would notice it.

There is no doubt that the issue is very complicated and that as we struggle to stay within attainment for ozone, we don't have much flexibility due to the large amount of ozone resulting from factors outside our control. On the other hand, officials now dealing with ozone nonattainment in the Front Range assert that even bringing down ozone levels by 1-3 ppb is very significant.


-Marilyn Brown

Two New Papers from LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force, 2009:

'The Evolution of the Health Care System in the United States' and

'The Impact of Preexisting Conditions on the Individual and the Community'

www.lwv.org, click on Health Care (left margin), then Get Informed under Background Papers (right margin)

<h1>Calendar</h1>			LWV La Plata County www.lwvaplata.org 296 Highland Hill Drive Durango, CO 81301
September			
Tues 1	Colorado's Budget Crisis, Speaker: Carol Hedges, CO Fiscal Policy Institute 7-9 p.m., Durango Library		
Sat 19	Voter Education Booth, Farmers Mkt, 7:30-12:30, 1 st Natl Bank parking lot		
Wed 23	Welcome back to the League, 12-2, Prog Rm. 1, Durango Public Library		
Sat 26	LWVCO League Day, Holiday Inn Select, Denver		
Tues 29	Board Meeting, 1-4 p.m., Durango Coffee Co., 730 Main St		
October			
Sat 3	Voter Education Booth, Farmers Mkt, 7:30-12:30, 1 st Natl Bank parking lot		
Thur 8	Four Corner Air Quality and Our Health, 7-9 p.m. 130 Noble Hall, FLC		
Wed 14+	Bayfield School Board Forum, Bayfield Township Hall, 6-7:30 p.m.		
Thurs 15	Dgo 9-R School Board Forum, City Council Chambers, 6-7:30 p.m.		
Tues 20+	Ignacio School Board Forum, Ignacio Library, 6-7:30 p.m.		
November			
Thurs 12	Empowerment: One Heart at a Time, Ellen/Ross Park, Life Long Learning, 130 Noble Hall, 7 p.m.		
+Assuming contested races			
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. Discounted household memberships are available. Call Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596, for more information.			
		<u>Board of Directors</u>	
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		Env, Energy, Sustainability Deanna Collins, 259-7845 dcdurango@msn.com	Legislative Action* Ellen Park, 247-8116 gellenpark@aol.com
		Great Decisions* Pat Chatfield, 247-1692 patchwork@gobrainstorm.net	Website* Ross Park, 247-8116 eandrpark@aol.com
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