LWVNM Celebrates Women’s Right to Vote-100 Years Strong!

**Committed to Getting Out the Vote in 2020, The Women’s Vote Centennial Year!**

The 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the League of Women Voters is an excellent opportunity to honor the amazing organizing efforts of thousands of women and supportive men who worked for close to a century to secure the vote for women. With this milestone, we recognize both how far our democracy has come as well as how far we must go for true equity. Progress requires that we go beyond fair access for all eligible voters to social and economic wellbeing for all by ensuring that government policies work in the public interest.

On Thursday, February 6, 2020, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico hosted an event at the state capitol celebrating the dual 100th anniversary of NM’s ratification of the 19th Amendment and the founding of LWVNM.  We had historic and informational displays appropriate to the occasion, people wearing suffrage garb and impersonating women leaders, and array of speakers ranging from Governor Lujan Grisham and Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver, to Virginia Kase, CEO of LWVUS, to Senators Nancy Rodriguez and Daniel Ivey-Soto, and Renee Villarreal, Santa Fe City Councilor. Speakers from many of our allied non-partisan partner organizations, NM chapters, included Heather Ferguson, Common Cause; Sonya Berg, AAUW; Pamelya Herndon, NAACP; Dana Middleton and Geraldine Salazar, NOW; Amber Carrillo, Native American Voting Rights. Fionnuala Moore, 14 year-old suffrage musical composer and friends, gave a powerful performance. Special thanks go to e and to Felicia Lujan, State Archivist, who compiled numerous historical photos and documents for the occasion and recorded the YouTubes linked below. These videos, the governor’s dual proclamations, and other artifacts from the event have been added to NM Archives.

Other features of the day were presentations by high schoolers who are part of the League’s civics program and information provided by Fair Districts NM, the League’s redistricting project. Participants enjoyed a League birthday cake designed like NM’s 19th amendment ratification flag and lemonade while examining history panels from the National Archives about women’s struggle for equality, voting rights, and representative democracy as well as creative placards with quotations from suffragists.

We are especially grateful to Senators Nancy Rodriguez and Liz Stefanics, League members from Santa Fe, and to Reps. Joanne Ferrary, League member from Las Cruces, and Gail Chasey from Albuquerque for sponsoring legislative memorials in their respective chambers recognizing the League’s accomplishments and NM’s suffrage leaders.

**History Note:**

NM’s 1910 Constitution finally allowed women the right to vote in school elections and made them eligible to hold public office as superintendent or school board member. However, Article VII restricted women’s right to vote if enough men in a county objected 30 days before a school election. NM’s all-male Legislature in 1910 had also made it extremely difficult to amend the franchise provisions in the NM Constitution. On February 21, 1920, NM became the 32nd state to ratify the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution. On August 26, 1920, 36 states had ratified, and 27 million women voters were eligible to vote and in all elections —the largest expansion of democracy in America, 144 years after its founding. On November 2, 1920, NM women joined women across the nation in voting for president! On November 3, 2020, more women candidates are expected to win offices than ever before.

**LWVNM Expanded Voting Rights-Recent Chapters:**

Until 2017, three-quarters of NM’s voters had to approve Constitutional amendments that dealt with election issues. Other amendments needed only simple majorities to pass.

The League of Women Voters sued the state in 2015 because it did not compile voting rights amendments which had passed in three previous elections. We challenged the supermajority requirement, which conflicted with the majority vote requirement for other amendments. In September 2017, the NM Supreme Court decided in our favor allowing the amendments in question to be added to the NM Constitution. Not only did our victory end discriminatory provisions, it paved the way to allow school elections to be combined with other non-partisan elections. The enabling legislation passed in 2018, and NM held combined elections for the first time in 2019, leading to much higher voter turnout.

In 2020, LWVNM filed an amicus brief in support of a petition by the NM Secretary of State and county clerks to allow for absentee ballots to be mailed to all qualified voters during the pandemic. The Supreme Court ordered the petitioners to mail absentee ballot applications to all qualified voters. LWVNM educated voters about absentee ballots and launched Vote411.org, its first statewide online voter guide for the primary election during the pandemic. <https://www.vote411.org/new-mexico>

LINKS

**REPORT FROM SANTA FE, PBS on Suffrage Centennial, January 28, 2020**

Host Lorene Mills interviews Hannah Burling, President of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico and Meredith Machen, Educator and Former LWVNM President, about the historic struggle for the women’s voting rights nationally and in New Mexico before our centennial celebration.  <https://www.pbs.org/video/suffrage-centennial-twsevp/>

Centennial Celebration of Suffrage Roundhouse, February 6, 2020, Courtesy of Felicia Lujan, State Archivist, 1:45. Note that some segments have no sound.

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaTdOzYmQt8**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaTdOzYmQt8)

“They Won the Vote!” Talk by Sylvia Ramos Cruz, February 21, 2020, NM State Library

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dOOuKzYvho>

**More About LWVNM**

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan, grassroots organization, has fought since 1920 to improve our systems of government and impact public policies through education and advocacy. The League never supports or oppose candidates or parties. At the same time, the League is wholeheartedly political and works to create positive policies in the public interest.

The League

* Empowers citizens to participate in their communities and educates them on their rights
* Fosters dialogue on pertinent issues from education, health care, environment, and more
* Advocates for transparency, accountability, and public participation in government decision- making
* Ensures that all elections are fair, safe, and accessible and that all voices are heard
* Collaborates with others to make democracy work

We believe that civil discourse promotes responsible actions and civic improvement. Our enduring impact and special vitality come from our members, both women and men aged 16 years of age and up. We are committed to social justice, diversity, and inclusion.

See more at <https://lwvnm.org/> Questions and comments: leaders@lwvnm.org

**Memorials** celebrating the League’s 100th Anniversary and the Suffrage Centennial were presented in both the House and Senate. Here are links to the Senate versions.

SM4 Centennial of LWV sponsored by Senator Nancy Rodriguez passed unanimously following accolades for LWVNM on February 6, our celebration day.

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=S&legType=M&legNo=%20%20%204&year=20>

SM7 Centennial of 19th Amendment sponsored by Senators Liz Stefanics and Antoinette

Sedillo-Lopez passed unanimously after testimonials to the power and importance of women in democracy and the League’s contributions.

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=S&legType=M&legNo=7&year=20>

<http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00293/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20200211/-1/66158> Presentation of proclamations in Senate Chambers, 12:34-12:47 pm, 2/6/20

<http://sg001-harmony.sliq.net/00293/Harmony/en/PowerBrowser/PowerBrowserV2/20200211/-1/66157> In the House Chambers 11:28-11:35 am

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Meredith Machen, LWVNM Past President and History Chair

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**Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy**