



March 2013

Membership: 29

www.Montrose.co.lwvnet.org

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MONTROSE COUNTY

www.lwv.orgwww.lwvcolorado.org

VOTER

Let's Talk!

***Now is the time to weigh in
and help shape
Montrose County League of
Women Voters
2013 – 2014 year.
Your ideas are needed!***

***Local Program Planning
Thursday, March 7th
Noon
Montrose District Library
Community Room***

***"Alone we can do so little.
Together we can do so much."***

Helen Keller

Great Decisions Continues in March

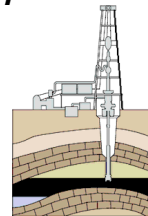
Co-sponsored by the Montrose County LWV and the Montrose District Library, Great Decisions, a series of discussions produced by the Foreign Policy Association, a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational arm of the World Affairs Councils of America meets each Thursday in March at 7:00 in the Library Community Room. The evening begins with a video where foreign policy experts present their perspective followed by conversation with participants.



See the calendar on page 5 or visit our website, www.Montrose.co.lwvnet.org for more information.

Fracking Wrap-up

League members met on February 7th to discuss consensus questions presented to all League members throughout Colorado in an attempt to work toward forming a state position. Thirteen members weighed in either as part of the discussion or by submitting their written opinions since they couldn't be present on that date. Two guests were non-voting participants in the conversation.



Members were able to come to consensus on all the questions and submitted suggestions as to how the question parameters could be expanded or enhanced. Our input has been forwarded to the state League. Using results from each League in the state, a position will be formulated and voted on by League delegates to the state convention in May. If passed, the position will become part of the *League of Women Voters Program For Study And Action*, enabling the League to monitor and advocate for or against legislation that falls within the parameters of the position.

Montrose League input does not constitute a position, so results may not be made public. However, as a League member if you would like to know more about decisions made on the 7th, contact President Karen Connor.

Fracking Action In Our Backyard

Two groups, Citizens for a Healthy Community and the Western Environmental Law Center, have opposed the BLM leasing of 20 parcels in the North Fork Valley as part of an oil and gas lease sale, even sending representatives to Washington, D.C. to lobby at a national level. Early in February the BLM announced that it would defer the leasing of North Fork Valley parcels for an unspecified time. The BLM is in the process of updating its resource management plan.

A recent legal decision was also rendered in favor of Citizens for a Healthy Community and the Western Environmental Law Center. U.S. District Senior Judge Richard Matsch ruled that the BLM must make public the names of those who have submitted interest in nominated lease-eligible parcels. Information would include names, contact information, legal descriptions on parcels and contact information for private surface owners. The ruling will impact leasing on a national basis. It enables people in leasing areas to research the background of the potential leaser (e.g. safety and environmental records) before the BLM makes a decision.



Jason Lauve speaks at Don Coram’s Town Hall Meeting in early February.

Is There Hemp in our Future?

When voters in the 2012 election approved Amendment 26, it not only legalized marijuana in Colorado but it also made possible the cultivation of hemp pending legislative authorization.

While genetically related and similar in appearance to marijuana, hemp actually contains no THC, the narcotic property in marijuana. However, because of its mistaken association with marijuana it has been banned from being grown in the United States for decades.

Because it can be an active ingredient in food products, animal feed, fiber, fuel and shelter materials, the United States is the biggest importer of hemp in the world, importing most of it from Canada. With that in mind, House District Representative Don Coram invited Jason Lauve, a participant in the Industrial Hemp Remediation Pilot Program (www.hempcleans.com), to speak at his most recent Town Hall Meeting in Montrose.

While circulating items such as jeans, socks, and a cement-like building block fortified with hemp, Lauve told the audience that hemp can be a huge support for the agricultural community. It uses little water, has no heavy need for pesticides or herbicides, is able to grow in poor soil, can absorb/remove selenium and heavy metals from the soil and has been shown to actually rejuvenate the soil for the growth of other products. In an article by Steve Raabe (*Hemp industry poised to grow in Colorado with new legal status*) on February 23rd the Denver Post reported that in Canada hemp is more profitable than wheat to grow.

Raabe reported that, “If Colorado were to establish a hemp-farming industry, it would be limited by a federal ban on interstate transportation of the crop. The harvested hemp would need to stay inside Colorado, where currently there are few major industrial customers.”

Presently, there is an attempt to make hemp growing legal in the U.S. Earlier in the month, SB 359 (sponsored by Senators McConnell, Merkley, Paul and Wyden) was introduced in the U.S. Senate to amend the US Controlled Substances Act to exclude industrial hemp from the definition of marijuana. The measure grants state legislatures the authority to license and regulate the commercial production of hemp as an industrial and agricultural commodity.

How Does Colorado’s Election’s Systems Rate? Wow!

Pew Research recently released a study that ranks all 50 states’ elections systems based on more than 15 criteria. The criteria included wait times, lost votes and problems with absentee and provisional ballots. The data covers the 2008 and 2010 elections. Colorado ranked 4th best in 2010 election administration, an increase from 12th in the 2008 election.

A report from Secretary of State Gessler’s office announced that the 2012 election showed continued improvement particularly in high voter turnout, acceptance rate of military and overseas ballots, and online voter registration and “lookup” tools. Pew Research will update and publish official 2012 data when it becomes available later in the year.

When SOS Gessler spoke in Montrose on January 30th as part of his around the state “Listening Tour”, he pointed out that there were 400,000 more registered voters than in 2008, a 10% increase. He was particularly proud of the advertising campaign generated by his office that encouraged citizens to register to vote or update their registration information. 250,000 Coloradans updated their voting information prior to the 2012 election.



Congratulations to County Clerk and Recorders Fran Tipton Long in Montrose County and Ann Eddins in Delta County for their contributions in making us national leaders!

Coming Up

On April 4th, noon, at the Montrose Library, Norm Birtcher will give a presentation on the Montrose Forest Products Sawmill, a facility that is milling wood from trees killed by the Pine Beetle. Program Chair, Nancy Ball, has attempted to also schedule a tour of the sawmill, but it has been temporarily postponed until weather conditions make a tour more feasible. On the next page are notes that Nancy took during a presentation on February 13th at a Heidi’s Forum. Information should provide some background on why Montrose Forest Products is a valuable asset.

Heidi's Forum – February 13, 2013

The featured speaker for the one-hour meeting was Scott Armentrout, the Grand Mesa/Uncompahgre/Gunnison (G.M.U.G.) Forest Supervisor, whose office is located in Delta. Also in attendance was Tammy Randall, the District Ranger for the Ouray District, whose office is located in Montrose.

We were told that our G.M.U.G. forests have 2.9 million acres, cover ten counties, offer 3,500 of routes/trails, 3,090+ miles of roads, 3,600 miles of streams, 58 campgrounds and host 2 million visitors annually. There are five district ranger areas: Grand Valley District with offices located in Grand Junction and Collbran, Gunnison with offices located in Gunnison and Lake City, Ouray with an office in Montrose, Norwood with an office there and Paonia with an office in that town. The forest service is a major regional employer with 148 full-time and approximately the same number of seasonal and part-time employees.

The issues that have to be dealt with on federal forestlands include creating jobs, providing for recreation, and utilizing natural resources.

Forest restoration is the vehicle for jobs and land usage. Because there are too many trees in the forests now, a drought cycle, and bark beetles, the plan is to treat the forests with controlled burns and thin them through harvesting. Recently, 32,000 cubic feet of timber has been sold, 73,000 cubic feet of timber has been leased, 2,500 treated and 4,000 fuel contracts let. Funding from the federal government has been cut, so they are looking to public/private partnership, in which lumber mills are a vital component.

The forest service issues permits to ski resorts and then works as partners with them, and outfitters and guides as well, in a business friendly manner. An issue regarding water rights of ski resorts has come up, and Mr. Armentrout said the issue has been clouded and seemingly made political, but is actually quite simple. The forest service wants the water rights to remain with the land and with the ski resort business while it is operational; it doesn't want a situation to arise whereby the water rights can be sold off to a third party.

Range management (grazing rights) are challenging now because of drought conditions, and forests are challenging because of the bark beetles and too many trees. When there is an overabundance of trees, each tree produces less sap, which is the tree's best protection against beetles. Currently, the scourge of the mountain pine beetle has about run its course as the beetles have "eaten themselves out of house and home" but the spruce beetle epidemic is on the rise in the Gunnison and Grand Mesa forests, in part due to the prevailing winds pushing millions of beetles through the air. Last year, 40,000 more acres became involved. They are pushing harvest and salvage operations. He mentioned the Uncompahgre Plateau Project which is a collaborative partnership involving fuels, watershed, wildlife and timber efforts.

Responding to a question, the Forest Supervisor said road permits are granted for timber operations following a mandatory environmental impact study. Once the contract for harvesting of the timber ends (from one to ten years with two to three being customary) roads are often closed because it is too costly for the Forest Service to maintain them--- gravel, culverts, safety and liability issues. Some roads remain open due to stewardship operations.

"Treatment", was defined as basically meaning controlled burns in wilderness areas because there are far too many trees, far too many beetles, and far too few dollars to manage them any other way. The marketplace dictates pricing for timber, and it varies greatly, depending on demand. There will also be thinning of green stands once the fires, harvest, and logging/salvage operations clear the beetle-damaged forests. He said that 98% of the NFS prescribed burns are successful and locally many are termed "underburns" because they involve sagebrush and juniper.

The National Forest Service has the largest forestry research facility in the U.S. Forests are resilient through natural processes that allow for adaption to current conditions. The NFS is striving to maintain that resiliency but it will require a great deal of management, especially in wilderness areas.



Being Heard At The National Level

In an attempt to maintain connections to all Leagues throughout the country, LWVUS assigns national board liaisons to keep in touch with local leagues. Carolyn Brown is the liaison to Colorado Leagues. Carolyn receives our newsletter monthly to keep up on what is happening right here on the Western Slope of Colorado. She is good about responding with encouragement and enthusiasm.

Carolyn resides in Alaska where on January 15th the newspaper, Juneau Empire, published an article by Melissa Griffiths celebrating her election to the LWVUS national board. Below are excerpts from the article showing her to be not only passionate about League but someone with a great sense of humor.

Dr. Carolyn V. Brown, who has been serving Alaska as a medical doctor and community activist since 1965, moved to Juneau and got involved in the League of Women Voters a decade ago, quickly taking on leadership roles in the organization. In August of 2012, Brown was elected to the national organization's eight-member board. A reception was held in Brown's honor Friday evening in the Lt. Governor's office.

"It is an incredible privilege to be a person to sit on the national board of the League of Women Voters." Brown said to the crowd of mostly women who had gathered to honor her.

The League is made up of 120,000 members and donors in the U.S. with a presence in all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong. In Alaska there are chapters in Juneau, Fairbanks, Kenai-Soldotna and Anchorage; Brown said that while that may not seem like much, "We're a very lean, mean machine."

The biggest issues for the League are voting and citizen education. "When we talk about voting, we're talking about registering people to vote, educating them about the voting process, talking about the barriers to voting." She also talked about accountability for elected officials and why people chose not to vote.

Brown shared a personal anecdote about the choice to vote; while working the polls in 2012, said she was disappointed to find a colleague hadn't voted. The woman said she "didn't know the issues."

"I'm so excited about it, and especially since you see a lot of older people coming in, who have been voting since three years before God, and we saw so many young people who came in and said 'I want to register to vote' and we had people come in the last day, just before the election and they could vote and they were so excited." Brown said, speculating, "I think they don't vote — maybe they don't now, and whose job is that? Maybe ours. Or they don't care, and why don't they care? Or they don't believe. So, each of us have a significant job to educate, and to let them know they can care, because if they don't care about what they're going to vote for, somebody else will care."

The other hot topic for the evening was the partisanship that has torn the U.S. asunder. She said it's something the League is serious about addressing.

In addition to talking about what the League plans to accomplish, Brown pointed out a few notable accomplishments of the last year (the history of accomplishments of the nearly-100-year-old organization can be found online at lwv.org), including the Vote 411 project — vote411.org — a tool that allows a citizen to enter his or her address to get information about voting in your district, with an option to view candidate information on their regular or mobile site, or to have the information emailed. Brown said more than 400,000 voters had used it for the 2012 election. (Ed. Note: Karen Connor from the Montrose League set up vote 411 for the state of Colorado in the 2012 elections.)

Another key issue is campaign finance reform. "I was very pleased not long ago to receive from Sen. Murkowski her proposal ... for legislation which she has not yet introduced — her proposal for campaign finance reform as a bipartisan (bill) with Sen. Wyden from Oregon."

The six-page outline Brown provided at the reception summarized legislation to improve transparency and public understanding of spending in federal elections in the aftermath of the Citizens United decision. Brown sought Sen. Begich's response to the legislation and the response was that the senator "Welcomes Sen. Murkowski's new efforts on this issue."

Brown sits on five committees at the League's national level and is responsible for five states: Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Michigan and Texas.

DREAM Legislation Moves Forward

In preparation for the 2012 legislative year, the Montrose League, with the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, the Hispanic Affairs Project, the Tuxedo Corn Company and the Higher Education Access Alliance, co-sponsored a community education presentation on allowing all Colorado high school graduates to attend Colorado colleges at the in-state tuition rate, regardless of their legal status. SB 15 ended life when it was postponed indefinitely in the House Finance Committee.

In the previous legislative year, a similar bill, SB 126 also failed after seeing passage in the Senate but not in the House.

Fruition of efforts, however, may be seen in the 2013 legislative year. On February 22nd, SB 33 (ASSET, Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow) was passed in the Senate. After one more vote, it will go to the House where it is also expected to pass. Governor Hickenlooper has indicated he will sign it making Colorado the 13th state with similar legislation including our neighbors, Kansas, Nebraska and New Mexico. The League supports SB 33.

Voting Privacy

In January 2012, the Montrose LWV hosted two public informational presentations on the topic of election transparency that included a discussion about bar codes on ballots that make them traceable to the voter.

SOS Scott Gessler issued Temporary Rule 10.8 in August that no ballot could contain a printed number. The rule expired in December, and SOS Gessler has been asking for input on proposing permanent adoption of the rule.

State League president Cath Perrone, submitted comment to his office in early February stating, "The League of Women Voters supports adopting the proposed rule change 10.8.1-10.8.3 concerning the use of serial numbers on ballots. All Colorado voters must have confidence that their vote is private. Ensuring that no ballot is printed with a number or bar code that can be used to trace the ballot to the voter who cast it increases the transparency and security of the election process."

LWVCO State Convention In May

Details for participation in the 2012 League State Convention were announced in the latest state newsletter delivered to your inbox. **(If you didn't receive one, contact Karen Connor or Bonnie Koch.)**

Hosted by the Pikes Peak Region League, this year's meetings are being held at the Crowne Plaza in Colorado Springs. This is an opportunity for you to participate in the mechanics of what makes League work at the state level.

While only identified delegates will be able to vote on issues on the slate, any League member can participate as an observer. If you would like more information on what happens at the convention or how to become one of the Montrose LWV participants, contact Karen Connor.

2012-2013 LWV Community Support

The Montrose County League of Women Voters thanks these local businesses, organizations and individuals who have donated financial and in-kind support for the 2012 year. Please add your thank you when you visit these businesses or visit with these individuals.

**Alpine Archaeological
Dennis Olmstead
The Montrose Mirror
City of Montrose
Stone House Restaurant
Coffee Trader
D.M.E.A.
Nole Ryder
Ted Devlin
Montrose Community Foundation**

**Montrose Bank
Montrose District Library
Alpine Bank
Francis Serles
Mountain View Winery
Phil Ellsworth
Camp Robber Café
Ardi Halverson
Montrose Daily Press**

League Calendar

Make sure these dates are on your family calendar:

**Thursday, February 28th, noon, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Great Decisions - Myanmar

**Thursday, March 7th, noon, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Lets Talk – planning program for the League's 2013 – 2014 year.

**Thursday, March 7th, 7-9 pm, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Great Decisions – Humanitarian Intervention and U.S. Policy

**Thursday, March 14th, 7-9 pm, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Great Decisions – Iran

**Thursday, March 21st, 7-9 pm, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Great Decisions – China in Africa

**Thursday, March 28th, 7-9 pm, Montrose Library
Community Room:** Great Decisions – Assessing Threats To The U.S.

**Thursday, April 4th, noon, Montrose Library Community
Room:** Montrose Forest Products Sawmill presentation by Norm Birtcher

Friday, April 26th, Time and Location TBD: Bob Semro will speak on Affordable Health Care.

Thursday, May 9th, noon, Vista Charter School: Annual meeting; Principal Beth Sass as main speaker/tour director.

May 10th/11th, Crowne Plaza, Colorado Springs: 2012 League of Women Voters of Colorado State Convention

June 21st/22nd, Best Western Lake Dillon Lodge, Frisco: LWVCO Leadership Retreat

2012-2013 Board Members

President: Karen Connor, 249-2135
kconnor@1941gmail.com

Co-Vice President: Peggy Baxter, 856-6225,
peggybax@gmail.com

Co-Vice President: Martha Grewall, 856-4748,
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Secretary: Nancy Ball, 249-8963
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Treasurer: Kathryn Carson, 249-3776,
pkcarson@bresnan.net

Membership: Kathie Stigall, 249-6648
lnk@frontier.net

Voter Service: Barb Krebs, 249-3989
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At Large: Bette Nickell, 252-0616,
b_nickell@q.com

At Large: Rod Britten, 240-1119,
rodbritten@montrose.net

Voter/Website: Bonnie Koch, 252-1110
toouray@aol.com

Join League of Women Voters of Montrose County

2012-2013

Not for Women Only!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone (H) _____ (Cell) _____

E-mail _____

___ Individual \$55 (*Of this amount \$31 goes to National League; \$18 goes to State League; \$6 is retained by the Montrose League*)

___ Household \$90 – Two members in one household (*National League \$46.50; State League \$27; \$16.50 is retained by the Montrose League*)

___ I understand that I can join without being active, and this is my intent at the present time.

___ I would like to make a contribution beyond regular dues – It will go directly to our local League (Thank You!).

___ Sustaining Member \$100

___ I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Montrose League. *Write a separate check to LWVCO Ed Fund – League of Women Voters CO Education Fund. Write "Montrose" on the check's memo line.*

Please make checks payable to **League of Women Voters of Montrose County**. Mail to Treasurer Kathryn Carson, 62431 N. Star Dr., Montrose CO 81403

Questions? Contact Kathie Stigall, 249-6648, lnk@frontier.net



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MONTROSE COUNTY
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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.