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## CALENDAR 2015

**February** – US League of Women Voters turns 95

**February 23** – Renewable Energy Update, Buena Vista

**March 16** – Colorado Water Plan, Salida

**April 20** – LWVCC Annual Dinner, Salida

**May 16, 17** – LWVCO convention

## LWVCC hosts county commissioners

For its January program the League of Women Voters of Chaffee County (LWVCC) hosted the county commissioners who discussed several issues important to county residents.

Commissioners Dennis Giese and Dave Potts attended. Frank Holman was ill and was not able to participate. The commissioners covered several topics including workforce housing problems and the county's fiscal situation. Most of the program focused on the need for a stable funding source for the county's emergency medical services (EMS).

The commissioners explained that currently the county utilizes payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) from the federal government to help fund its ambulance services. For 2015, the county is anticipating using \$590,000 out of \$1.2 million in PILT for the EMS fund. PILT are federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to non-taxable federal lands within their boundaries. Most PILT are directed to local governments located in the western states.

The panel said that in addition to PILT, payments for ambulance services comprise a large portion of the funding for the EMS fund but reimbursement is not adequate to pay for the entire program. According to the commissioners, Medicaid only pays 14 percent of costs, Medicare pays 50 percent and private insurance pays up to 80 percent. Most ambulance services provided in Chaffee County are reimbursed through Medicare.

The commissioners are concerned about the county continuing to use PILT to fund this necessary service because recently federal representatives of several eastern states that don't receive much funding and are looking for ways to cut federal spending and eliminate or reduce PILT.

The commissioners are considering several different revenue sources for the service and asked for league members' opinions on the various avenues to raise the needed \$1 million. They mentioned that a ½ cent sales tax increase would raise \$1.2 million. Additionally, the commissioners added, out of town visitors would help pay the sales tax and fund the emergency services. Other options include increased property taxes, enhanced user fees on building materials and automobiles purchased outside the county or revenues from recreational marijuana. Audience members suggested a user fee on rafting companies and the use of a special tax district.

The commissioners did not endorse one proposal over another but said they will be talking to residents about the issue this spring and over the summer.





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Carol Sanford  
Harriet Patton\*  
Jeanne Younghaus  
Reed Dils

### Finance and Fund Raising

Libby Fay  
Mary Helen Dunn  
Scott Hartman  
Jeanne Younghaus\*  
Jackie Sobczak

### Great Decisions

Mary Helen Dunn  
Scott Hartman  
Carol Sanford  
Linda Mulka\*

## Feb. program on energy moved to the 23rd

The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Update is rescheduled for Feb. 23 at the Pinon Room of the Buena Vista Community Center at noon because of scheduling conflicts with the main speaker. It will be preceded by a social gathering.

We are pleased to have Paul Erickson, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, as the main speaker. Linda Nyberg and Bill Bennett, also from the association, will accompany Erickson. The main topic will be Senate Bill (SB) 13-252 and the mandated Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) increase. The mandate expands the amount of renewable energy like solar, wind and geothermal that the state's large rural cooperative and municipal utilities must have in their electric generating portfolio from 10 percent to 20 percent by 2020. Investor-owned utilities are mandated to reach a RPS of 30 percent. This bill is supported by LWVCO and attempts at repeal are opposed. Erickson will address the progress and difficulties in attaining this goal as well as how co-op members can play a role in meeting or exceeding this goal. Nyberg will discuss energy efficiency.

The National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) studied the Colorado RPS and found that the true renewable energy penetration was only 12.3 percent because of exemptions and multipliers. The study concluded that only a true 30 percent RPS meets the carbon reductions that are thought to be necessary to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Attached is a listing of background resources on SB 13-252 with the NREL analysis, Colorado's ranking among the states in energy and resource issues, health and economic effects of climate change, federal and state tax credits for renewables, individual household carbon footprint calculators, and solar building resources.

## BV workforce housing proposal unveiled

At the league's meeting last month, County Commissioners Dennis Giese and Dave Potts briefly discussed the upcoming release of a 50-unit workforce housing proposal for the Buena Vista area. Representatives from Urban, Inc. presented plans for the project to Buena Vista Trustees on Jan. 27.

The units would be for low-and middle-income residents and would be built on five acres near Antero Circle. The proposal is still very much in the beginning stages and Urban, Inc. is seeking funding from the Colorado Housing Finance Authority.

An article about the proposal appeared in the Jan. 29 edition of *The Chaffee County Times*.



**Membership**

Ann Graham\*  
Melissa Smith\*

**Voter Service**

Marjie Gray\*  
Tracy Craig  
Rose Mirich  
Libby Fay  
Mary Helen Dunn  
Scott Hartman  
Elizabeth Ritchie  
Eileen Rogers  
Karen Dils  
Carol Sanford

**Facility Coordinators**

Jeanne Younghaus\*  
Tracy Craig

**Publicity/Social Media**

Deborah Lively\*  
Nancy Walters\*

**Hospitality**

Betsey Downing  
Mary Helen Dunn  
Jan Scar\*

**Web Hosting/Design**

Gail Brooks  
Deborah Lively\*

**Video**

Gail Brooks  
Reed Dils  
Deborah Lively\*

**Bylaws**

Jan Scar\*  
Jenny Davis  
Marjie Gray

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**A BIG THANK YOU  
to everyone who volunteers!**

## State legislative conference a success

LWVCC member Jeanne Younghaus attended the LWVCO’s legislative conference last month. The agenda included a discussion of Colorado’s Water Plan, oil and gas issues, an update on TABOR and an overview of the legislative session.

Jim Eklund, head of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, briefly discussed the Colorado Water Plan. The latest draft of the plan was delivered to the governor in December 2014. Eklund stated that over the next year the state will be taking public comments and encouraged everyone to read the present draft and comment at [www.coloradowaterplan.com](http://www.coloradowaterplan.com). The LWVCC’s March program is on the plan.

Cathy Proctor, a journalist with *The Denver Business Journal* specializing in energy, discussed oil and gas issues, including Gov. Hickenlooper’s Oil & Gas Task Force that is due to give its recommendations this month. She also mentioned local control on oil and gas issues and the pros and cons resulting from the recent drop in crude oil prices.

Carol Hedges from the Colorado Fiscal Institute discussed Colorado’s present economy and how TABOR rebates would work.

LWVCO’s lobbyist provided an overview of the 2015 session of the Colorado General Assembly. Generally, she discussed the following as major issues for the Legislature: school testing, human trafficking, juvenile justice, increased caseworkers for child welfare, gun safety and background checks and marijuana taxes.

Other topics discussed at the conference included a new online tool call “digitdemos,” that individuals can use to express their opinions to their legislators and LWVCO’s use of Colorado News Connection to publicize the league’s events.

## Items of note...

**Subscribe now to the LWVCO’s 2015 Legislative Letter** and keep informed on the happenings of the Colorado General Assembly. The cost of a subscription is \$20 and can be paid by check or Pay Pal. Visit [www.lwvcolorado.org/news.html#legconf](http://www.lwvcolorado.org/news.html#legconf).

**The next Great Decisions discussion will be Thursday, Feb. 12** at the Congregational Church on Crossman Ave. in Buena Vista at 4:30 pm. The meeting days are the 2nd and 4th Thursdays and alternate between the church and the library. The topic for discussion will be the third topic in the book, “Sectarianism in the Middle East.” “Privacy in the Digital Age” will be discussed in the following session on Feb. 26.

**Need a ride?** Carpooling is available for the LWVCC’s monthly meetings. Members should meet at the public parking lot next to Safeway in Salida at 10:30 a.m. for a ride to Buena Vista. From Buena Vista members can meet at the CUCC parking lot at 10:30 a.m. for travel to programs in Salida.