



**League of Women Voters®  
Austin Area**

**Voter**

February 2011    Volume 15 #7

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"The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. It shall not support or oppose any political party or candidates." The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of Austin Education Fund.

**February Calendar**

**General Meeting: "Is Green Affordable?"**

**Tues. Feb. 22, 2011, 7:00 pm, First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4700 Grover Ave.**

Moving toward using more renewable energy sources and encouraging conservation costs money. Not doing so will lead to increasing costs down the road as the cost of other energy sources increases and as we pay for the incurred costs of pollution and climate change.

**What should our community do?**

**What is Austin Energy (AE) thinking and proposing for our future?**

Come and hear Cheryl Mele, the Deputy General Manager and Chief Operating Officer of Austin Energy, which is the 9th largest public power utility in the nation. Ms. Mele is trained as an engineer and has worked in many capacities during her approximately 20 years at Austin Energy. She will provide an update on AE's efforts to raise utility rates, restructure AE's budget, and AE's views on how green we can afford to be.

For questions contact Joan Hilgers at 327-0504.

**Unit Meetings:**

**"New Federal Health Care Legislation and its Impact on Individuals"**

**Monday, Feb. 14, 1:00 p.m.** Central Unit — Old Quarry Library, 7051 Village Center Dr. Speaker: Audrey Selden, Senior Associate Commissioner for Consumer Protection, Texas Department of Insurance. Questions: Carolyn Baker, 249-7012. (You are invited to join us for lunch just prior to this meeting at El Chile, 3435 Greystone, at 11:45. Joiners — please RSVP to Judy at 502-0278)

**Tuesday, Feb. 15, 7:00 p.m.** North Unit — home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr., 78731 Speaker: Stacy Wilson, Director of Government Affairs with Central Health District. Questions: Judy Parken, 502-0278.

**Wednesday, Feb. 9, 7:00 p.m.** South Unit — South Austin Sr Activity Ctr, 3911 Manchaca Rd. Speaker: Audrey Selden, Senior Associate Commissioner for Consumer Protection, Texas Department of Insurance. Questions: Phyllis Portnoy, 280-7730; or Anne Roussos, 441-3913.

**Upcoming Board Meeting -- All members are welcome**

**Tues., Feb. 1, 6:30 pm, Central Market North, Community Room**

## President's Report

- Frances McIntyre



**Dear members,**

What a wonderful way to start the year with two very interesting and well attended meetings in January. **Professor Steve Bickerstaff**, one of Texas' leading experts on redistricting, gave an informative and lively

lecture on the history and current issues related to **Redistricting in Texas**.

Our 19<sup>th</sup> Annual **State of the City** Dinner was exciting, informative and a whole lot of fun. **Dr. Meria Carstarphen, Superintendent of AISD**, illuminated the complicated and ongoing effort to maintain a quality education program while dealing with severe cuts in the budget from the State of Texas. **State Representative Donna Howard** also updated us on the history of State funding of education and on the current deliberations of the House of Representatives regarding funding to schools. We have a tough row to hoe just to keep our school system intact.

Our mood changed at the dinner when **Mary Gordon Spence** again served up humor and levity throughout the live auction. The silent auction also was very popular and productive for the League. A total of **\$2556** was taken in from the auctions to replenish our Education Fund. Thanks to all **72** who came and participated. I want to thank the volunteers who made this such a successful program: committee chairs were **Jocelyn Doherty** and **Phyllis Portnoy**; committee members **Alison Dieter** and **Hugh Moore**; and assistants **Carolyn Baker**, **Judy Clack**, and **Jaci Collins**.

The Austin League is blessed with many members who are willing to help us provide services to the Austin public. And speaking of helping the League, the **nominating committee** is starting the process of interviewing members who might be interested in serving on our Board, being on the cutting edge of League activity, and helping us make decisions which

will determine the future of our organization. The League has always been a training ground for leaders in our community, so if you are interested or you know someone who might be interested in serving on our Board, please call **Margit Orange**, Nominating Chair (345-5349) or myself (451-5810).

Our **February Unit programs** will center around **the Impact of Healthcare Legislation on the Individual**. Our **General Meeting** will be a follow-up to last year's very interesting program on **Austin Energy**, our city's utility company: **"Is Green Affordable?"** (see front page for time and place).

For those interested in talking to your representatives, hold the dates March 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> for the **LWV-Texas Lobby Days**. You will have an opportunity to learn about the issues, how to lobby, and put it in practice on those days. With the economic downturn, there are multiple budget issues at the local, state, and national governments.

We are extremely lucky to be in an organization that can actually make sense out of the issues and help us order our priorities. Let's get together at the meetings this month and exchange ideas. See you there.

### Honors and Memorials

The Austin League provides the opportunity for donations in honor of, or in memory of, League members. Please call the office if you need a donation/memorial form.

### Randall's Donations

Randall's Good Neighbor Program gives the Austin League a percentage of sales from members who link the League to their Randall's "Remarkable" cards. Our account number is 465.

## Maxine's Musings

-Maxine Barkan

I was invited to do a column for the VOTER on items or issues that may be of interest to Leaguers. I became interested in the judicial system when I found myself on an LWV-TX program review committee to restudy our long-held position on judicial selection. The next thing I knew I was State Program Chair for this issue.

Judges have come under some adverse criticism in today's political climate. Maintaining judicial independence has become a key issue.

For example, in the aftermath of the violence in Tucson recently, I noted the many comments in the media about negative attitudes toward the judiciary after the shooting of federal Judge Roll. He was not the target in this case, but according to information in the news media and the Brennan Center for Justice he, too, had received threats and was placed under 24-hour protection by U.S. Marshals Service.

There have been many other incidences where judges have been targeted both verbally and physically because of decisions they made. Generally speaking, we tend to think it is the large special interests, who label judges as "activist" or accuse them of acting more legislatively than judicially. Cited by the Brennan Center for Justice, Bill Raferty, an analyst for the National Center for State Courts suggests, however, that judges who interact daily with individuals are in vulnerable positions when individuals become upset if decisions are made against them. Some of these rulings take away children from parents, or are adverse opinions from lawsuits. These issues affect the thousands of people who come before the courts every day. Such stresses may send many fragile persons over the edge.

A different type of attack on the courts involves recent decisions that permit same sex marriages in Iowa. An article by Bert Brandenburg in the *Washington Post*, (January 7, 2011) alerts us to the heretofore unheard of articles of impeachment proposed by several judges for the remaining four judges of the Iowa Supreme Court who ruled to permit same-sex marriages. Brandenburg considered this to be an "assault on constitutional government." Justice at State cited two

polls taken in January indicate that a majority of Iowa voters oppose the impeachment of these judges. Impeachment as defined by the Iowa constitution is for misdemeanor or malfeasance, not court decisions.

It behooves us in the League not only to be aware of these assaults on judicial independence, but to defend the integrity of our judicial system whenever we can.

*Editor's note: Maxine Barkan is a multi-term former president of our League. Although in her 90's, Maxine is still working hard for the League. Note: The League Directory listing for Maxine is **incorrect**. Her phone # is actually 512-231-8523.*

## Civility Training Workshop

The **LWV-Wimberley Valley** is sponsoring a **Civility Training Workshop** on **Sat. Feb. 26, 2011** from **8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.** at the Katherine Anne Porter School, 515 FM 2325, Wimberley, TX. This workshop will be led by Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath, co-founders of the **Institute for Civility in Government**. Workshop sessions explore why we have trouble talking with someone who does not think like oneself, what is truly with good listening, and what can be achieved by working with others.

The Institute for Civility in Government is a non-profit organization that works to reduce polarization in society. The Institute aims to build civility in a society that increasingly tilts towards uncivil speech and actions.

"If adult Americans will not model civic responsibility, how can we expect our young people to be any different?" *Richard Riley, Former Secretary of Education*

The cost is \$50 which includes workshop materials, lunch & a one-year membership in the Institute for Civility in Government. **To register**, contact **Cookie Hagemeyer, (512) 847-7177**.

## What's Your Question?

The LWVAA is starting production of the **May Voters Guide**. Candidates for Austin City Council will be included. If you wish to suggest a question for candidates, call the League office at 451-6710 before the end of February.

## Thanks to Auction Donors

The following individuals and businesses contributed items to the **Silent Auction and Live Auction at the State of the City**. Due to their generous donations and the spirited bidding of the attendees, the League raised **\$2556 for the Education Fund** to print more *Voters Guides* for the May 2011 election.

Deep gratitude to the large donors to the Live Auction: **Alan Pogue, Ben Sargent, Dorothy and Terrell Blodgett, Frances McIntyre, and Judy Parken.**

Special thanks the donors to the Silent Auction: **Austin Playhouse, Austin Symphony, Blanton Museum, Bob Bullock Texas History Museum, Carol Olewin, Carolyn Baker, Central Market South, Daryl Slusher, and Dr. Robert Desimone - UT Butler School, State Representative Elliot Naishtat, Esther's Follies, Fine Art Services, Images Of Austin, Jim Hightower, Judy Clack, Karen Haschke, State Senator Kirk Watson, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, City Council Member Laura Morrison, Lisa Harris, Mescal Evler, Moonshine Patio Bar & Grill, Natural Gardener, Paramount Theatre, Suzy Reid, Texas Freedom Network, Twin Liquors, Vortex Repertory Theatre, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve, and Zachary Scott Theatre.**

## Is This YOU?

Would you like to meet interesting people while working on interesting projects? How about a demanding, rewarding, challenging, and satisfying volunteer experience? If so, the Nominating Committee is seeking members like you to assume a Board position. Here is where you can build your leadership skills and apply your existing skills to make things happen for the League and for your community.

If this sounds like an opportunity for you or someone you know, please contact **Margit Orange**, Nominating Committee Chair, at 345-5349.

## Save these March dates

### LWV-TX Lobby Day, March 7 - 8, 2011

**March 7:** Training workshops and background on state league's priority issues at LWV-TX office in Austin; Salute to Advocacy Dinner, UT Campus

**March 8:** Visit at Capitol with respective State Representatives and Senators to lobby on League positions.

More details in the *March Voter*.

### Making Democracy Work

LWV-Texas will host a Salute to Advocacy on Monday, March 7 -- 6:30 p.m, UT Etter-Harbin Alumni Center, San Jacinto Blvd. at 23rd Street. LWV-TX will present the first Making Democracy Work in Texas Award to the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP).

CPPP's unique focus on low- and moderate-income Texans provides an understanding of the impact of government action on the lives of many Texans, an understanding essential for informed government decisions and public participation. CPPP's research is the gold standard on issues of economic opportunity, quality and affordable health insurance, fair and adequate taxation, child well-being, and basic family needs. F. Scott McCown, CPPP's Executive Director and a retired state judge, has been called "the voice of the voiceless" and "the conscience" of Texas politics by *Texas Monthly*. *The Dallas Morning News* describes CPPP as "...the primary source for detailed analysis on almost any legislative issue affecting low- to moderate-income Texans."

The public is invited at \$60; League members at \$50 to a reception, dinner and brief program. Attendees will learn more about CPPP's work which informs much of the League's own advocacy. Reservations for the evening must be made by February 22 and can be made in conjunction with Lobby Day registration by calling the League office (512-472-1100) or by returning the Lobby Day registration form by mail.

## Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

- Joann Robison

Items discussed this month:

- (1) Add support to a bill to increase the warrant fees for Constables from \$50 - \$75 to assist with their budget.
- (2) Encourage a continuation of programs to help with state funding to replace vehicles with poor emissions as a move to clean air.
- (3) Watch how state budget will affect counties, especially unfunded mandates.
- (4) Be alert for stressors on jail costs from cuts in Mental Health funding and potential pushes to incarcerate more undocumented immigrants.

### *Leaguers in Action ...*

- Carolyn Baker, 2nd Vice President

#### **Speaker Bureau Report:**

**Frances McIntyre**, our ever-busy President, spoke to the residents of The Village at the Arboretum, a retirement community, on Monday, January 17. Her topic: "The History of the League of Women Voters."

#### **Letters to the Editor: (published in the Austin American-Statesman)**

**Anne C. McAfee's** "Bush Tax Cuts" was published in on Dec. 1, 2010. Anne looked at the pros and cons for extending these cuts at various income levels.

**Nancy Neavel's** "People in Need" was published On Dec. 1, 2010. Nancy urged that budget cuts not be made that impact the most vulnerable.

**Stewart Snider's** "Votes for Sale" was published on Jan. 24. Stewart asked that the public insist that lawmakers work to find ways to control the money in politics after the Supreme Court's *Citizen United* decision (which opened the floodgates for anonymous campaign spending).

#### **Community Leaders:**

**Lisa Harris**, our Voters Service Vice President, is President of the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association. Our League certainly develops community leaders.

**Cheryl Hazeltine**, long-time League member, is a mainstay of the Garden Club of Austin. On February 24 at 7:00 p.m., the Garden Club is presenting "An Evening with Cheryl Hazeltine" at Zilker Botanical Garden. It's free, fun and undoubtedly informative. Let's all go!

### **Membership**

- Judy Parken (502-0278)

#### **Welcome, New Members**

We cordially welcome Wilda Campbell, Anita Garcia, Meg Kimberland, Shay Morrow, Kathay Parker, Peg Treadwell and Jacklyn Williams to the Austin League. We are delighted you have joined us. Your membership includes the national (LWVUS), state (LWVTX) and local (Austin) Leagues. We study and advocate issues at all three levels: National League (National issues, State League (State government, election law, more), and the Local Austin League (Austin and Travis County policies and issues)

We hope you will become involved this year as your schedule permits. Volunteers are always needed in our office for a three-hour shift once a month. In 2011, many Leaguers will be busy with the Texas Legislature, so others' help in staffing the office is needed. Contact me, Judy Parken, at **512-502-0278** if you have questions or are able to help out. I hope to see you at the February Unit Meetings and General Meeting.

#### **Thank You, Renewing Members**

Many thanks to the following renewing members: Mary Ann Baker, Diane and Henry Benjes, James and Louise Bridges, Judy Clack, Jocelyn Doherty, Louise Hasty, Martha Hudson, Dolly Lambdin, Jane-Elizabeth Madison, Julia Marsden, Erika Mittag, Susan Morrison and John King, Helen Putman, Pam Reed, Judd Rogers, Virginia Sampson, Grace Schmitt, Susan Shelton, and Paula Weisner. We do appreciate your support, and depend on it to keep functioning.

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF THE AUSTIN AREA**  
1011 West 31st Street  
Austin, TX 78705

Are your dues paid?

**ATTENTION MEMBERS:** Please fill out the form below and send with your dues renewal and/or any changes to the LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. **The League is grateful for your support!** If you do not wish to renew, please notify **Jaci Collins, Member Records**, at [jacic@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jacic@sbcglobal.net) or at 257-9636. This will save time and expense in sending follow-up reminders. Thank you .

**For new and renewing members and for address changes:**

**\*\*\* Not for Women Only \*\*\***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_

Name of household member (if applicable)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Household</b>	<b>Student</b>
<b>Dues</b>	\$ 60.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 20.00
<b>Additional Donation</b>	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

I'm an existing member and this is a change to my information.  
You can also PayPal dues to [lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org](mailto:lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org)

(Dues allocation: National \$29.15; State \$22.80; **Local \$8.05**; Total \$60.00)

MAIL TO LWV-AA OFFICE: 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705