



January 2014

Volume 18 # 6

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The League shall not support or oppose any political party or candidates. It may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest after significant study and consensus is reached.

The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area Education Fund.

[If you received this email from a friend, click here](#)

to get on our list. You do not have to be a member. We will NOT give your email address to anyone else.

LWVAA Calendar

Mon., Jan. 6, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting, League Office, 1011 W. 31st St. Open to all members.

Sat., Jan. 11, 10:00 am - 12 noon, Program Planning Meeting, Westminster Manor, [4100 Jackson Avenue, 78731](#). Open to all members.

Sat., Jan. 18, 9:30 am - 12 noon, Community Conversation in Public Education, District 5, Cafe Austin at Austin High School, [1715 W. Cesar Chavez, 78703](#). Open to the public.

Wed., Feb. 5, 6:00 pm, State of the City Dinner and Auction, Green Pastures, [811 West Live Oak Street, 78704](#). Recognize the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. Open to the public.

Sun., Feb. 23, Time and location TBA. Panel on Healthcare and Mental Health Services in Travis County. Open to the public.

March, General meeting and unit meetings TBA on **U. S. Agriculture Policies and Legislation**. Open to the public.

Fri., Apr. 25 - Sun., Apr. 27, LWVAA hosts the **LWVTX Convention** in Austin at the DoubleTree Hotel. All members needed to volunteer a shift.

May, Date, time, location TBA. **Annual Meeting**

Back issues of the LWVAA *Voter* can be found at [this link](#).

Board Contact List

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Primary Election Calendar

Fri., Jan. 3 - Fri., Feb. 21, Dates for receipt of Applications for Ballots by Mail.

Mon., Feb. 3, Last day to register to vote in the March Primary.

Tues., Feb. 18 - Fri., Feb. 28, In-person Early Voting for Primary Election.

Tues., Mar. 4, Joint Primary Election.

Program Planning Meeting, Sat. Jan. 11



Our League's annual program-planning meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 11 at Westminster Manor, [4100 Jackson Avenue](#) (corner of Bull Creek and Jackson, between MOPAC's 35th Street and 45th Street exits.) The meeting is in Harris Bell Hall, which is on the second floor of the Windsor Building.

Leaguers may park in the open lot north of the building on Bull Creek and come in the north entrance. There is a smaller one-floor covered garage south of the Windsor Building that we may also use. Staffers will be on hand to direct us to the meeting room, which is beautiful, spacious, and complimentary.

Members will brainstorm ideas for topics they'd like to see investigated on the three levels of the League: local, statewide, and national. First this meeting will engage in a process in which the group decides what our League might focus on next year. Also we will discuss what to recommend to LWVTX and LWVUS that they adopt for studies at their biennial meetings in April and June 2014.

~Nancy Oelklaus, VP Program, NancyOelklaus@gmail.com



22nd Annual State of the City Dinner and Auction Wed., Feb. 5

Dinner, Cash Bar, Live Auction, Silent Auction
Wednesday, February 5, 2014, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
Green Pastures, 6:00 p.m., [811 West Live Oak Street](#), 78704

This year's theme, "**Celebrating Democracy**," will recognize the fourteen members of the historic **Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission**. They will each be given the League's "Making Democracy Work" award. The Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission set an example for encouraging democratic participation in Austin. The ten districts drawn reflected public input from neighborhood associations and individual Austinites. With their example of civil discourse, the commission reached consensus to create Texas' first independently-created political district map.



Our guest speaker, **Steve Bickerstaff**, Professor of Law, UT Austin, will review how this change will impact the level of participation in city governance and how this new system will affect representation and decision making by city government. Prof. Bickerstaff will also address and discuss the tasks that remain in Austin's transition to this new form of representation.

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[Eliza May](#)

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Honors and Memorials

To make a donation in honor of or in memory of a League member, [click here](#) for the form. Then mail with your donation to the LWVAA Office, 1011 W. 31st St., Austin, TX 78705.

"Like" Our League on Facebook

It's so easy to follow our League on Facebook. With thanks to member Bridgid Hall for these instructions:

1. Go to facebook.com and login to your existing account or create a new one.



Cost is \$50 for League members, \$65 for non-members. Make your reservation online at lwvaustin.org. Or mail your check to LWVAA, 1011 W. 31st Street, Austin, TX 78705 by Friday, Jan. 31.

All proceeds from this event support the LWVAA Education Fund. Come celebrate these citizens' extraordinary contribution to our city, and support the League's educational mission at the same time.

~ **Eliza May**, Chair, Special Events, elizamay@sbcglobal.net
 ~ **Judy Parken**, Vice-Chair, japarken@aol.com

Co-President's Letter: On a Grand Jury



I just finished serving a term on a Travis County Grand Jury. In Texas a grand jury hears almost all felony cases and issues indictments for cases ranging from drug possession to capital murder. In Travis County, three 12-member grand juries are empanelled at the beginning of each quarter. Jurors report to the courthouse 2-3 times per week for ½-day sessions. Our jury heard over 500 cases. During our orientation in late September, we learned much about the array of alternatives there are to criminal prosecution (such as drug treatment programs). We also learned that the biggest provider of mental health care in Texas is the state penal system.

My service left me with several impressions:

- Lack of opportunity for education and employment is a social factor that contributes immensely to the illicit drug market and to criminal behavior. There may be no easy answers, but it is clear to me that we are not doing enough to address inequality in our community, state and country.
- The Travis County District Attorney's Office employs some incredibly smart, dedicated and caring people. Most of the presenting attorneys came to us multiple times and it was a pleasure getting to know them.
- Prosecution of felony crime is vastly more complicated than I had realized.
- The way the grand jury system works in Texas makes ideal use of the expertise of a professional legal staff and the collective wisdom of a group of members of the lay public. Being able to have a conversation with the attorneys who present cases creates a level of understanding and trust that gives me enormous confidence in this system. Not only are grand jurors a check on prosecutorial behavior, but this interaction keeps the DA office sensitized to public priorities.
- In my blue-sky system of government, there would be a requirement to have a similar panel of lay persons approve any bill or proposal under consideration by local, state and federal legislative bodies.
- With regard to societal issues, a group of people is wiser than any one of us. Disagreement, in a civil, uncompetitive setting, brings out our most thoughtful and deliberative nature.
- I'm not always right, and I'm not always the smartest person in the room.

On a related note -- during my grand jury service, I rode the bus to the courthouse. The service is excellent. It was nice to arrive ready to hear cases with no elevated adrenalin or recollection of another driver's rude behavior. Using public transportation enhances the sense of belonging to a community, and I like that.

On an unrelated note - please plan on attending the Program Planning meeting on January 11, where we will decide on our priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Member input makes us better, so we need you there.

2. Search for "League of Women Voters of the Austin Area" in the search box at the top of the page.

3. Facebook will show you possible matches to your search terms as you type. Simply click on the box with our logo and title.

4. Once you get to our page, there will be a button that says "Like" and has an image of a "thumbs up."

5. Click on that button. Now you are subscribed to our page and will see our news stories on your Facebook homepage.

Randall's Donations

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

Compass Bank Donates to LWVAA

Have you opened an account at BBVA Compass Bank in the last 12 months? If so, they will make a **\$50 contribution** to the Austin League of Women Voters. Just email your name (no account numbers) to our treasurer, Carol Olewin, c.olewin@gmail.com.

Compass Bank also pays the League a small percentage for Internet and phone transactions. For information, contact Paul

May all of you have a happy and rewarding New Year.

Sicotte at Compass Bank,
512-421-5741.

~ **Stewart Snider**, Co-President, s2snider@gmail.com

Community Conversation, Sat., Jan. 18



The League's sixth Community Conversation in Public Education will be held Saturday morning, **January 18 from 9:30 am - noon** at Cafe Austin, Austin High School, [1715 W. Cesar Chavez, 78703](http://1715.W.CesarChavez.78703).

Residents of **AISD District 5** are especially encouraged to attend, but this is open to the public. Trustee **Amber Elenz**, who is actively involved in the planning, represents District 5.

Thanks to League members who have volunteered to serve as facilitators and recorders: Nancy Bene, Delores Block, Judy Clack, Anne Clark, Joanne Richards, Anne Roussos, Gwen Santiago, Laura Sheridan and Dianne Wheeler. Thanks also to our co-presidents, Stewart Snider and Carol Olewin for their continuing support.

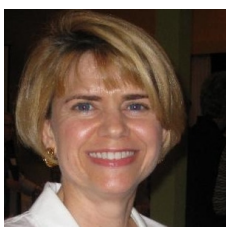
~**Nancy Oelklaus**, VP Program and Chair, Education Study Group,
NancyOelklaus@gmail.com

What's Involved?

LWVUS Agriculture Position Update Study

LWVUS convention delegates in 2012 voted to conduct an update of their Agriculture positions and encourage all Leagues across the country to participate. This Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on:

- (1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling;
- (2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process.



Chair of the agriculture update is **Ami Hooper**, amijhooper@att.net. Other members of the study group are Nan Clayton, Karen Haschke, Judy Moore, Nancy Oelklaus, and Dianne Wheeler. **We need more members.** If you're interested in participating in this study group, contact NancyOelklaus@gmail.com.



To help study group members and anyone else learn about these issues, **LWVUS has published a series of research articles** on requisite topics. Two pages of links to detailed study documents [begin here](#). All articles are copyrighted by the LWVUS as follows: © November or December 2013 League of Women Voters. Produced by the Agriculture Update Committee.

The titles of each of the LWVUS researched articles are listed below. Click on title to go directly to article. Scroll to the bottom for a printable PDF.

- [Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System](#)
- [Overview of Water Management](#)
- [Overview of Soil Management](#)
- [Overview of Pesticide Management](#)

Leave a Legacy to Your League

Making a legacy donation to the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area Education Fund in your will is among the easiest ways to offer support of the LWVAEF's work for years to come.

We suggest the following language to include the Austin League Education Fund as a beneficiary of a will or trust:

" I give, devise, and bequeath to the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area Education Fund, a charitable organization formed in the State of Texas, with offices at 1011 W. 31st St, Austin, Texas 78705, {the sum of \$___} {___ percentage of my residuary estate}." If you already have a will, you can have your attorney add a codicil to include the LWVAEF.

After you've added the League, please email the Austin League office at lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org so we can list you as a member of our Love-Your-League Legacy Society.

- Overview of Plant Breeding, Seed Industry, and Biodiversity
- Overview of Farm Management
- Introduction to Agriculture Technology
- Antitrust Enforcement Agencies and Legislation
- Agriculture Study Questions
- Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)
- Interaction of Federal Agencies with Food Safety Missions
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health
- Food Labeling: FDA and USDA
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- USDA's Role in American Nutrition
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Overview of Key Agencies Supporting and Regulating Food and Agriculture
- [Agricultural Update: Multimedia Resources for Background Information](#)
- [Agriculture Update: Suggested Readings](#)

The general informational meeting for members and the public is scheduled for March 9, with follow-up consensus meetings on March 10 and 11.

~Nancy Oelklaus, VP Program, NancyOelklaus@gmail.com

~Ami Hooper, Chair, Agriculture Study, amijhooper@att.net

Health Care Forum, Feb. 23



Health Care Forum
Sunday, February 23rd, 2:30 pm
Trinity United Methodist Church
[4001 Speedway, 78751](#)

An extraordinarily "perfect storm" is taking place (for the good) in our local health care system. Major improvements are planned to make the system more responsive to local needs. Public health is also working to complement these changes and do its part to keep our community healthy.

Executive Director **David Evans** will describe what Austin-Travis County Integral Care is doing to improve mental health care, and **Dr. Phil Huang**, Medical Director of the Austin-Travis County Medical Authority, will represent public health. A speaker from Central Health will also attend. Mark your calendars and plan to attend this meeting which is free and open to the public.

~Mary Cullinane, Study Chair, mculli@sbcglobal.net

Voters Guide - March 4 Primary



The *Voters Guide* for the **Primary election on March 4** will be again published and distributed by our **generous partner, the Austin American-Statesman**. It will be a pullout section in the **Sunday, February 16** paper (two days before early voting begins on Tues., Feb. 18). It will feature elections in the five counties included in the *Statesman's* distribution areas (Travis, Hays, Williamson, Bastrop, Caldwell). The LWV-Texas will be covering all the statewide offices and the Austin League will cover all the local elections in the five counties. The political parties covered are all those who hold a primary, the Democratic and Republican Parties. The General election in November will cover all parties who filed for office.

Donations to the tax deductible LWVAA Education Fund are encouraged to defray the costs of

these nonpartisan *Voters Guides* on which the public depends for information directly from the candidates that has not been edited. Mail checks to LWVAA Education Fund, 1011 W. 31st Street, Austin, TX 78705 or click DONATE on our homepage: lwvaustin.org. Our thanks go out to the committee members who put it all together: Jaci Collins, Donna Pauler, Stewart Snider and the Office Corps.

~**Frances McIntyre**, Voters Guide Committee, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

Sponsors Needed for LWVTX Convention in Austin



Sponsors are need for the 2014 League of Women Voters of Texas Convention that will be held in Austin on April 25-27, 2014 at the DoubleTree Hotel.

Consider sponsoring or helping to solicit a sponsorship from a business or professional entity. Do you know of a person or company that would like to have their name, logo or advertisement prominently displayed at the LWV Texas Convention? Our goal is to raise \$3,000 to pay for the Saturday and Sunday continental breakfasts, coffee and refreshment breaks, and auction room reception. Over 100 registrants from across the State of Texas will convene in Austin to engage in the LWV mission of encouraging active and informed participation in government, without supporting or opposing any political party or candidate.

Sponsorship are available at the \$1,000, \$500, \$250 and \$100 level. For more information to be a sponsor or to request a sponsorship registration form, contact Carol Olewin at 512-380-0088 or e-mail at c.olewin@gmail.com.

Thank you for helping with this task. The Convention will be exciting!

~ **Carol Olewin**, Co-President, and Local Chair of the LWVTX Convention, c.olewin@gmail.com

New Member Brunch, Dec. 7



29 members, both new and more experienced, attended the Brunch for New Members on Sat., Dec. 7 at Judy Parken's home. Ten new members were warmly welcomed to the League. Free time due to retirement, wanting to stay informed, and desire to do their part are some of the reasons new members have joined our league. Each new member has talents and skills we look forward to utilizing as we make democracy work together.

Judy Parken began by giving a brief history of the League history and explaining how the League operates. **Nancy Oelklaus** talked about Program (past, current, and future studies.) **Stewart Snider** described the Advocacy process based on our positions. **Carol Olewin** introduced the LWV Texas Convention that will be held April 25-27th in Austin. **Judy Clack** jumped in to encourage attendees to sign up to volunteer for a shift or two at the

Convention. Twenty-two attendees volunteered! **Frances McIntyre** gave an update on the progress of the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission which has completed drawing the boundaries for Austin's new 10-district City Council. **Eliza May** invited all to attend our upcoming State of the City dinner on February, 5th at Green Pastures. Also committee chair, **Mary Cullinane**, talked about the work of the Healthcare Committee and their upcoming program on February 23rd.

~**Judy Parken** and **Judy Moore**, Chairs

Thank You, Sustaining Members!



One-third of our membership, **73 individual and 13 household members**, chose to be Sustaining Members of the LWVAA in 2013. We are grateful for their additional financial support for our local League's activities.

Of \$60 in regular dues, \$52 goes to the LWVTX and the LWVUS with only \$8 left to support our Austin League. Paying at the sustaining level (\$100 for individuals or \$150 for household members) greatly benefits

the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League's activities.

The following were Sustaining Members in 2013. We appreciate the extra local support your dues provide. Please consider renewing (or joining) at the Sustaining level in 2014.

Robbie Ausley	Joan, David Hilgers	Anita Privett
Maxine Barkan	Karen Huber	Karen Rankin
Shelly Baumgartner	Donna Howard	Jo Reichler
Susan Bell	Hal, Judy Jennings	Dorothy Richter
Nancy Bene	Beverly Kimbrough	Janet Reed
Shay Blankenship	Ruth Koenig	Pam Reed
Barbara Cambron	Paul LaBuda	Suzy, Bill Reid
Grace Chimene	Joan Lovelace	Joann Robison
Judy Clack	Jane Elizabeth Madison, Judd Rogers	Barbara Ruud
Anne Shelby Clark	Chalda Maloof, Russell Zears	Jade Chang Sheppard
Nan Clayton	Julia Marsden	Edward Silha
Sheryl Cole	Janet Martin	Gwen, Joseph Santiago
Jaci Collins	Eliza May	Jan Soifer
Nancy Dittmar, Max Stout	Sheila Milner	Linda Stanley
Margaret Drake	Judy Moore	Peggy Stewart
Sarah Eckhardt	Julie, Jodie Moore	Kay Taebel
Mescal Evler	Barbara Myers	Franz Weller
Sandra, Larry Fox	Belia Nichols	Barbara Werth
Carol Whitcraft Fredericks	Catherine, Joseph Nall	Dianne Wheeler
Lucy, Gary Gibbs	Nancy Neavel	Doris Wilhite

Mindy Gomillion	Pat Oakes	Joyce, Dan Wilson
Margaret Gomez	Nancy Oelklaus	Jacklyn Williams
Bob Gregory	Carol Olewin	Anne Elizabeth Wynn
Cheryl Hazeltine	Judy, Ed Parken	
Karen Hayward	Donna Pauler	

~ **Judy Parken**, Membership Chair, japarken@aol.com

Membership



New Members: In the December *Voter*, we recognized 43 new members who had joined in the last twelve months. Two names were omitted from that list: **Barbara Andre** and **Nancy Namis**. I am so sorry for that omission. We are so glad you have joined the League - making a total of 45 new memberships in the last year. Joining Barbara and Nancy is brand new member, **Barbara Frandsen**. A warm welcome to you, Barbara! As a member of the Austin League, you are also a member of the national (LWVUS) and state (LWVTX) Leagues. See

these links for an abundance of educational information.

www.lwvaustin.org www.lwvtexas.org www.lwv.org

Regular and Sustaining Memberships: Of your \$60 in regular dues, \$52 goes to the LWVTX and the LWVUS, and only \$8 is left to support our Austin League. Paying at the sustaining level (\$100) greatly benefits the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League's activities. The entire amount is paid to LWVAA and not to the Education Fund.

Thank You, Sustaining Members: Special thanks to this month's sustaining members: **Anne Shelby Clark, Nan Clayton, Sandra and Larry Fox, Gwen and Joseph Santiago, and Jan Soifer**. We are grateful for your additional financial support for our local League's activities.

Thank You, Renewing Members: Many thanks to the following members who also renewed this month: **Helen Garman** and **Louise Hasty**. We depend on your support and appreciate your renewals.

New Membership, Renewal Dues Payment, Address Changes: Please mail your name, address, phone number, email address, household member (if applicable), along with your dues payment and/or any changes to the LWVAA office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. Checks may be made out to the LWV of the Austin Area. Choose an amount below. Or you may instead [click here](#) to pay your annual dues online by credit card via PayPal while providing all the above information.

You may renew or join, using PayPal by clicking on the amount that applies to you.

	Individual	Household	Student
Regular Dues	\$60.00	\$90.00	\$20.00
Sustaining	\$100.00	\$150.00	

Contact me anytime with your League questions.

~**Judy Parken**, Membership Chair, japarken@aol.com, 512-502-0278.