



League of Women Voters®
Austin Area

Voter

November 2011 Volume 16 #4

"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.

Stewart Snider, President.....345-7047	Lisa Harris, VP Voters Service 467-2504
Blossom Zanger, VP Program.....407-8878	Anne S. Clark, Secretary..... 347-0594
Carolyn Baker, VP Comm Relns249-7012	Carol Olewin, Treasurer..... 380-0088
Judy Clack, VP Organization.....731-0280	Judy Parken, Membership 502-0278
Betty Williamson, VP Organization..474-2130	Judy Clack, Voter Editor..... 731-0280

November General Meeting: LWV Texas Water Study
"Should Water Be Treated as a Commodity?"

Saturday, November 5th, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

Ascension Lutheran Church, Family Life Center, 6420 Hart Lane, Austin
Between 2222 and Far West Blvd., west of Balcones Dr.

Meeting is free and open to the public.

Our ongoing drought, extended high temperatures, and wildfires have increased the importance of the LWV Texas Water Study. In light of the state study and the critical nature of our water issues, LWV Austin is sponsoring a general meeting that will bring together an outstanding panel of speakers to discuss the topic.

This panel will help prepare us to discuss the Consensus Questions (see page 4) during our upcoming Unit Meetings. Come to learn approaches to managing Texas' very valuable water resources. Refreshments served at 9:00 am. Panel begins at 9:30 am. Find more information on page 3.

Calendar for November and December

- Tues. Nov. 1**, 6:30-9 pm, Board Meeting at home of Blossom Zanger, 4513 Spanish Oak Trail (512-407-8878).
- Sat. Nov. 5**, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., General Meeting, LWVTX Water Study at Ascension Lutheran Church Family Life Center, 6420 Hart Lane, between 2222 and Far West Blvd.
- Tues. Nov. 8**, 7 am - 7 pm, Election Day
- Wed. Nov. 9**, 7-9 pm, South Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus, at South Austin Sr. Activity Center; 3911 Manchaca Rd.
- Mon. Nov. 14**, 1-3 pm, Central Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus at Old Quarry Library, 7051 Village Center Drive.
- Tues. Nov. 15**, 7-9 pm, North Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus at the home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Drive, 512-502-0278.
- Sun. Dec. 4**, 2-4 pm, Holiday Party and Planning Meeting at the home of Nancy Neavel, 2905 Scenic Drive, 512-206-0164
- Wed. Dec. 7**, 5-8 pm, LWVAA Reception for Elected Officials of City of Austin and Travis County: City Hall, 301 W. Second Street, Austin.

IN THIS ISSUE

- President's Letter 2**
- Maxine's Musings 3**
- Unit Meetings 3**
- Voters Guide 3**
- Consensus Questions 4**
- Travis Groundwater 5**
- Observer Corps 5**
- Privatization Study 6**
- Education Study 6**
- Membership 7**
- Social Security 7**
- Human Trafficking 7**
- Party and Plan 7**

President's Letter by Stewart Snider



Dear Members:

The League of Women Voters of Texas formed the Water Study Committee after its 2010 LWV State Convention. LWVAA's own **Karen Haschke** is a Committee

member and has assembled a panel of experts who will present to us at our **General Meeting on November 5th**. At the November Unit Meetings, our own members will lead consensus discussions with the results becoming part of the LWVTX formal position on water. Thanks to last summer's weather, Texans may appreciate the well-informed position of the League. Consider a few "water-cooler" facts:

- In just 2 years, Lakes Travis and Buchanan have dropped to less than half of their storage capacities.
- The current Texas drought is projected to last into the next year and maybe into the next decade.
- The population of Texas is expected to nearly double in the next 50 years.
- Austin's access to Colorado River water may become more challenging as more cities compete for any and all available water.
- In Pflugerville, a private company is charging residents \$100/month as a base rate, and is working to pass a 60% increase (citing its obligation to shareholders). Other cities across the country have sold their water systems to investor-owned companies to get quick cash and are now in similar predicaments.
- The Ogallala Aquifer serves the Texas Panhandle as well as western Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska. Its near-zero replenishment rate, along with high agricultural pumping rates, have left it only 1/3 full. It is projected to be effectively depleted in 25 years. What will farmers do?
- Desalination is an option for San Antonio and coastal cities, but even there it is very costly because it demands so much energy.
- San Antonio has been a leader in water

conservation efforts (which other Texas cities should mimic), but is struggling now because it has not developed any surface water resources.

- Phoenix reduced domestic water use by 22 percent and landscape water use by 76 percent since 1980, despite seeing explosive growth. Las Vegas has also drastically reduced domestic water use while growing rapidly.

While exploration of the bulleted items above is beyond the scope of the study, collectively they give some indication of the complexity of this topic. It is clear that the League needs a thoughtful position from which we can advocate and lobby. Your participation will strengthen our consensus and make us more effective in ensuring Texas adopts water management policies that work for us all. If you haven't already read it, I urge you to read LWVTX's report, *Facts and Issues: Should Water Be a Commodity?* (you received this by mail in August from LWV-TX), which will prepare you for the presentation on November 5th. Also, be sure to read the consensus questions in this *Voter* (on page 4). You'll be discussing these at the November Unit Meetings.

The State Capitol is likely not the ideal arena to negotiate water policy. The people of Texas need a well-considered water management statute that only comes from knowledgeable, public-minded advocacy such as ours. Leaguers need to be part of the public discourse on this matter. We can start on November 5th and learn about the pressures, history and policy of water in our state. The more we know, the better we can spread the word about a resource we can no longer take for granted. I urge you to attend LWVAA's General Meeting on November 5th and one of the following Unit consensus meetings. You will find dates, times and locations of these meetings elsewhere in this newsletter.

I welcome your thoughtful response. (512-345-7047).

**** Note: due to space limitations, Maxine's Musings could not be published in this issue. Maxine will return in December. ****

November Unit Meetings to Discuss LWVTX Water Consensus Questions

Your input is needed at one of the three Unit meetings in November. As a follow-up to the five speakers on Water Issues at the General Meeting on Sat., Nov. 5, we must discuss and debate the LWVTX Consensus Questions (see page 4) regarding **"Should Water Be Treated as a Commodity?"** Statewide consensus will be used to form a position from which we will be able to lobby as new water-related issues arise. At each Unit meeting, either **Karen Haschke or Pat Bennett** (both of whom are LWVAA members) will serve as a resource person.

Wed. Nov. 9, 7 p.m., South Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus. **Phyllis Portnoy, Facilitator.** South Austin Sr. Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd.

Mon. Nov. 14, 1-3 p.m., Central Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus. **Joann Robison, Facilitator.** Old Quarry Library, 7051 Village Center Drive, 78731.

Tues. Nov. 15, 7 p.m., North Unit Meeting, LWVTX Water Study Consensus. **Suzy Reid, Facilitator.** Home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Drive, 78731 (512-502-0278).

November 5th Water Meeting with Expert Panelists

Continued from Page 1:

The following outstanding panel of speakers, all water professionals, will address water issues at the Saturday, November 5th General Meeting.

- **Carolyn Ahrens**, Booth Ahrens Werkenthin Attorney - *Water Marketing*
- **David Meesey**, Texas Water Development Board Water Planning - *The Regional Planning Process*
- **David Wheelock**, LCRA, Manager of Water Supply and Conservation - *Surface Water Supply*
- **John Dupnik**, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District - *Groundwater Management*
- **Brian Hunt**, Edwards Aquifer Conservation District - *Groundwater Management and Water Modeling*

Prior to this meeting, you are strongly encouraged to read the LWVTX publication:

Facts and Issues: Should Water Be a Commodity?

~**Karen Haschke**, Chair, LWVAA Water Study and member of LWVTX Water Study Committee

~**Pat Bennett**, Resource Person, LWVAA Water Study

November LWVAA Voters Guide: State Constitutional Amendments; County Propositions

LWVAA, in conjunction with LWVTX and the *Austin American-Statesman*, has produced the *2011 Voters Guide* for the 10 statewide Constitutional Amendments and the two Travis County propositions. Pros and cons for each are listed. No position is taken.

This guide was published in the Sunday, October 23 *Statesman*. Copies are available at the LWVAA office, in libraries, and in the October 23rd *Austin American-Statesman*.

Frances McIntyre led the LWVAA effort for the production of this Guide. **Karen Rankin** researched the pros and cons for the Travis County propositions. **Anne Roussos, Margit Orange** and **Jocelyn Doherty** prepared the Guides for distribution, while many others delivered them.

Consensus Questions for the LWV-Texas Study: “Should Texas Water Be a Commodity?”

League members: Think about these seven Consensus questions prior to attending one of the three November Unit meetings. You may also wish to bring this page to the November 5 General Meeting.

1. **Texas has a mandate to preserve and conserve the water of the state. Both groundwater and oil and gas are considered the property of the landowner. Should water continue to be regulated differently from oil and gas? Choose one.**
 - a) Like oil and gas, groundwater in place is private property. There is no reason to regulate the two differently.
 - b) While there are some similarities between water and oil and gas, water serves a much different function, and it should be managed for the benefit of the people and the protection of the resource.
2. **The “Rule of Capture” has been modified by the creation of groundwater conservation districts (GCDs). How do you feel about the following issues? Yes or no.**
 - a) If a water district prevents the owners of underground water from selling as much water as they want, thereby depriving them of income, the landowners should be compensated for loss of potential income.
 - b) Locally controlled groundwater conservation districts should have the power to regulate groundwater use in a way that protects landowner water rights from neighboring water withdrawal and to conserve the aquifer.
 - c) The state should enact laws strengthening the rights and responsibilities of GCDs in order to improve their ability to defend against lawsuits questioning those rights.
 - d) Groundwater should be owned and permitted by the state, as is surface water.
3. **Transfers of water from areas of surplus to areas of scarcity have been discussed. Which of the following options would best serve Texans? Choose one or more.**
 - a) A state agency with strong enforcement powers should regulate all water transfers to make sure that water resources are not depleted.
 - b) The state should allow water transfers through an exchange agency that lets the price float with the market. Buyers would determine the successful bidder, not the state.
 - c) There is no need for the state to regulate water transfers. Because of the expense and distances involved, localities will solve this problem without interference from the state.
 - d) The state should only intervene when transfers are in dispute.
4. **What steps should be taken to ensure that future growth makes the best use of limited water resources? Choose one or more.**
 - a) Developers should not be allowed to build unless they are able to find enough water for the project.
 - b) Requiring permits would limit growth. Market forces plus the price of water should determine what gets built.
 - c) There should be mandatory public interest review of water transfers that considers potential third-party impacts and protects the environment.
 - d) Water moved to urban areas should not endanger the future economies of rural Texas.
5. **Should groundwater be regulated differently from surface water or should the same rules apply? Choose one.**
 - a) Groundwater and surface water are so inter-related that the same rules should apply.
 - b) Because groundwater is less quantifiable, it should be governed by a different set of regulations and different agencies.
6. **Given the limited supply and the various needs for water, how would you prioritize the following? Rank 1-3, with 1 being the highest.**
 - a) The needs of people, including domestic uses and utilities.
 - b) The needs of the economy including industry, agriculture, and mining.
 - c) The needs of the environment, including in-stream flows for wildlife and preservation of our natural surroundings.
7. **Texas has always suffered from periodic droughts, and this pattern will likely continue. In addition, the population of Texas is projected to nearly double between 2000 and 2060. What solution do you think is best to handle future water shortages? Brainstorm and offer ideas.**

Groundwater Availability, Travis County Commissioners Court

10/21/11 by Joann Robison

In the rapid growth of Travis County, water is clearly an important issue. While the majority of water is from (lakes and rivers) there is significant use of groundwater (aquifers). Three aquifers exist in Travis County. The deepest aquifer is the Trinity which extends from the Dallas area, through western Travis toward Del Rio. It underlies the Edwards in parts. In eastern Travis is the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer which is limited.

Texas Water Development Board recognizes that aquifers have limited amounts of water and estimate that only 3-5% of rainfall recharges the aquifer. For the Trinity, that comes out to an average of less than an inch of water per year. TWDB allows the creation of **Groundwater Conservation Districts (GCDs)** as a way to designate how much water should may be pumped. As of this date, a GCD has not been established for Travis Trinity Group Aquifers. If it were allowed, significant costs would be involved. The Edwards GCD has a budget of about \$1.7 million. Some money is recovered from a per-gallon fee on users, but 60% of the budget is paid by the City of Austin.

Travis County is trying to establish fair, consistent rules for developers in approving water sources despite a lack of a GCD. For a year there has been a moratorium on new developments in western Travis as these rules are developed. Seven of our sister counties have already adopted water availability rules over the Trinity. Those rules are being used as a basis for much of the recommended change.

The goal is to ensure groundwater will remain available in the future. The rules are for subdivisions outside of the Austin ETJ only. The **Groundwater Management Area (GMA)** has set goals for Travis County based on the aquifer level 50 years from now. These rules attempt to make developers responsible for determining their effect on the aquifer and their neighbors, to address the storage of water to be available during periods of stress, and to address fire safety issues. Having taken comments on the rules, staff suggests the moratorium be extended another 90 days during which they will review their rules, hold public meetings and bring final rules to the Commissioners Court for approval. They also look to putting in place efforts to better define the water table levels in the various aquifers and to monitor our effect on those levels.

Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

October 11, 2011, by Karen Rankin

Representatives of the Long-term Recovery Committee discussed the county's response in the wake of the recent wildfires. This committee is working with other agencies including FEMA to streamline the claim process, provide aid for those who suffered damage, and mitigate the risk of future similar disasters.

A lengthy review of the status of the Central Campus Master Plan was presented. After months of input, planning, and refining, the final product is expected to be presented to the Court next month for approval.

As a result of the county's decision to curtail a free water service in the southeast area of the county, it became clear that there are many residents of that area who have no other source of water. This service, which the county has offered for decades, allows people to drive to the location and fill jugs, tanks, etc. at no charge. This water is used by farmers and ranchers to fill cisterns, but other residents rely on this water for cooking, laundry, and other daily needs. Following testimony by several county residents the court postponed further action for two weeks in order to research other options.

October 18, 2011, by Joann Robison

Information was given on approaches to disaster assistance in the wake of the Spicewood and Steiner Ranch fires. A Long Term Recovery Committee has been formed to funnel needs to the appropriate channel. TNR reports that right-of-ways are almost completely cleared but they expect cleanup to be ongoing as dead and dying trees become problematic. Erosion during the recent rain gave evidence of the need to disseminate information on controls property owners can take. Permits for rebuilding are expected to require only 24-hours. There was prolonged discussion about publishing information in a timely fashion and having the plans in place before the next need. There was also discussion on whether there need to be regulations for developers to facilitate access for emergency vehicles and management of vegetation.

**LWVUS Study on Privatization:
“The Transfer of Government
Services to the Private Sector”**

**Consensus Meeting:
“The Role of the Federal Govern-
ment in Public Education”**

LWVUS has adopted a national study on **Privatization** and will provide League members with all the study materials. LWVUS papers will define legal issues to be considered when privatizing at different levels of government, current state regulations on privatizing and case studies on successful and unsuccessful privatizing efforts.



The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.

Our League will soon begin to delve into the issues and read the LWVUS research materials. All members are welcome to join the study group.

Signed up so far are Judy Clack, Nan Clayton, Joanne Click, Mescal Evler, Elaine Fowler, Julia Marsden, Frances McIntyre, Suzy Reid, Lanny Van Allen, and Doris Wilhite.

Frances McIntyre has agreed to co-chair the study. **Contact Frances to join this study group: 512-451-5810.**

Thirty people came together on October 16th to answer consensus questions from the LWVUS study: *The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education*. The points raised during our vigorous discussion will soon become part of the National position on this topic.

Thanks to the study committee who worked for five months to bring you this program: Maxine Barkan, Nancy Bene, Judy Clack, Nan Clayton, Mescal Evler, Sandra Fox, Sylvia Kauffman, Judy Moore, Belia Nichols, Nancy Oelklaus, Judy Parken, Anne Roussos, Dianne Wheeler, Jan Williams, and Frances McIntyre.

Special thanks to **Peggy Hill**, a LWVUS Board member from LWV-Houston. Peggy introduced the study and remained a valuable resource during the meeting.

Our consensus results have been compiled and sent to the LWVAA Board for approval at the November 1 Board meeting. They will then be sent to LWVUS for consideration along with the results from all other participating Leagues. In early 2012, the Committee will analyze the data from consensus and write the formal position paper. In March 2012, the LWVUS Board of Directors will review and vote on recommending approval of the new position. It will then be up for approval at the LWVUS Convention in June 2012 attended by League representatives nationwide. Voila! We have a new National position from which all Leagues can advocate.

~Frances McIntyre, Committee Chair

Leaguers in Action

These LWVAA members had Letters to the Editor published in the past month. Please let Judy Clack know if your name is missing (512-731-0280).

- **Alison Dieter**, Oct. 4, *Austin American-Statesman*
- **Beverly Kimbrough**, Oct. 16, *Austin American-Statesman*
- **Joan Hilgers**, Oct. 11, *Austin American-Statesman*
- **Lisa Harris**, Oct. 20, *Austin Chronicle*

Randalls 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**.

Membership News, Judy Parken, Chair



Welcome, New Member

We cordially welcome **Brigid Hall** to the Austin League. We are delighted you have joined us. As a member of the Austin League, you are also a member of the national (LWVUS) and state (LWVTX) leagues. Call me with your League questions anytime: **512-502-0278**.

Thank You, Renewing Members

Many thanks to Natalie Balden, Pat Bennett, Mary Lee Comer, Mary Jansen, Maria Johnson, Patricia LaCombe, Anne Nappa, Anne Roussos, Sonja Sussenbach and Virginia Stotts who recently renewed. We depend on your support and timely renewals.

Thank You, Sustaining Members

John and Susan Hinton, Nancy Oelklaus, Carol Olewin, Judy and Ed Parken, Alyce Richardson and Doris Wilhite. Paying at the sustaining level greatly benefits the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League's activities.

New Membership, Renewal Dues Payment, Address Changes

Complete the form on page 8, sending 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. Make checks out to Austin League of Women Voters.

An Invitation from the LWV San Antonio Area: The Future of Social Security and Medicare

Thursday, November 17, 12 - 2pm

First Unitarian Universalist Church, 7150 W Interstate 10, San Antonio

Speaker: Pamela Larson

Executive Vice President of the National Academy of Social Insurance (NAIS)

Box lunch available. Send your check for \$10 made payable to LWVSAA. Mail it to League of Women Voters of San Antonio Area, 1809 Blanco Road, San Antonio, TX 78212. Questions: 210-657-2206. Call the LWVAA (451-6710) office if you want or need a ride. Carpooling is encouraged.

Human Trafficking: LWV-Houston Requests Study Support

In 2011, LWV-Houston completed a widely acknowledged study on human trafficking, defined as exploiting persons through force, fraud, or coercion, for the purposes of sex, labor, or other involuntary acts. LWV-Houston wants to gain statewide League support to establish a state position on human trafficking that considers state and local policies as well as the public's role in abating human trafficking.

LWVAA Holiday Party and Program Planning

Mark your calendar! On **Sunday, December 4**, Leaguers will consider human trafficking, city elections, collaborating with Austin Community College on a new civic event, celebrating Women's Equality Day with the Bob Bullock Museum and many other program items for the following fiscal year. This is a great place to visit with fellow Leaguers and contribute as well as learn about the League process for prioritizing our issues. We hope you'll join us at this event, to be held at the **home of Nancy Neavel, 2905 Scenic Drive, from 2 - 4 pm**.

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE AUSTIN AREA**
1011 West 31st Street
Austin, TX 78705
(512) 451-6710

Are your dues paid?

ATTENTION MEMBERS: Please fill out the form below and send with your dues renewal and/or any changes to the LWVAA 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 or at 512-257-9636.

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 _____

____ I'm an existing member and this is a change to my information.

	Individual	Household	Student
Dues	\$ 60.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 20.00
Sustaining Dues*	\$ 100.00	\$ 150.00	
Additional Donation*	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

You can also use PayPal and your credit card to pay your dues at lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org
Click on Membership.

Dues allocation:
National \$29.15; State \$22.80; **Local \$8.05**; Total \$60.00)
*All extra payment stays with the local League.
MAIL TO LWVAA OFFICE: 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705