



"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.

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October General Meeting: LWV-AA Consensus Meeting on "The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education"

Sunday, Oct. 16, 2:15 - 5:00 pm,

Congregation Beth Israel, 3901 Shoal Creek Blvd.

Speaker: Peggy Hill, Co-Chair of the LWVUS Education Fund's Education Study Committee and member of LWV Houston

- *Should some public school programs be mandated by the U.S. government, or should they all be left to local control?*
- *Should the federal government attach standards to the programs it funds?*
- *Should there be a national curriculum that applies to all U.S. schools?*
- *How do we achieve equity?*
- *Should early childhood education have federal funding?*

You are cordially invited to attend this meeting to learn and contribute to this discussion. (More information on page 7.)

Calendar for October

Mon., Oct. 10, 1:00 p.m. Central Unit, Old Quarry Library, 7051 Village Center Dr. Panel discussion on Community Conversations. See p. 3 (Carolyn Baker, 249-7012)

Tues., Oct. 11, 7:00 p.m. North Unit; home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr. Presentation on school reform. See p. 3 (Judy Parken, 502-0278)

Wed., Oct. 12, 7:00 p.m. South Unit, South Austin Senior Activity Center, 3911 Manchaca. Presentation on school reform. See p. 3 (Anne Roussos, 441-3913)

Sun. Oct. 16, 2:15 p.m. General Meeting (See above article)

Mon., Oct. 24, 11 a.m. Voter registrar deputization at Howson

Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd. This event is in coordination with Women for Good Government. Election laws changed in September. RSVP to Marilee Phillips (338-0268).

Tues., Nov. 1, 6:30 p.m., Board Meeting, Central Market, 4001 N. Lamar, Community Room.

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President's Letter

Remembering Vinegar, Making Honey

Dear members:

Our League had the honor of hearing Jeanne Goka, principal of the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, at our annual Kickoff last month. Ms. Goka,



in one of the most energetic, vivacious and optimistic presentations I have ever heard, told us about her passion for working with students. When a Leaguer asked about her inspiration, she mentioned a high school teacher from her days as a student in Houston. This teacher made clear her disdain for teaching and students. This was in the days before schools were air conditioned, and this teacher pointed both classroom fans at herself and had trouble keeping all the papers on her desk from blowing away -- while her students were sweltering. Ms. Goka made this teacher a model of what an educator should NOT be, and explained how this became her driving ambition to create what would become the highest ranking middle school in the Austin Independent School District.

Like Ms. Goka, **Leaguers look at things that are wrong and find ways to right them.** We find our passion comes as often from what we don't like as from what we do like.

I've been a full-time volunteer for only about 5 years, and I still remember what it was like sitting on the sidelines letting most of you do the heavy lifting. While I was employed, I wanted to take part and do my civic duty, but everything I tried just felt futile. What difference, I wondered, could anyone make by contributing just a few hours per week?

It took a while for me to realize that one finds personal fulfillment mostly from just taking the journey. It's all about sharing a challenge with other people.

I'll never forget my first League meeting where I heard a thoughtful discussion about a local issue, and where **I received a warmer welcome than I could ever have imagined.** I felt right at home at my very first LWV meeting. I didn't realize it then, but what I was falling for was how LWV uses deliberation and dialogue to support democracy. I think that many people today are unaware that **civil discourse really is still happening.**

I wonder if we Leaguers are selling ourselves short by not reaching out more to the public? **We have a pretty enticing mission that deserves skillful marketing, don't we?** I encourage you to give that some thought. Something I've been working on with a number of people has to do with creating safe places for civil discussions that would entice people who don't see themselves as political advocates. Take a look at the Unit description on the next page and see if it strikes a chord.

Jeanne Goka never forgot her "inspirational" teacher from those decades ago and takes some well-deserved pride in what she has accomplished at the Ann Richards School. She continues to work to ensure that her students have the best possible learning experience. I see her story as a metaphor for Leaguers using our angst about today's state of public discourse to create new avenues to engage the public in constructive ways.

I welcome your thoughtful responses via email (s2snider@gmail.com) or phone (345-7047). - Stewart

Education Quiz - (bottoms of pp 2-5, answers on p 6)

LWVAA members Nancy Oelklaus and Judy Parken composed these from the Education Study materials. Most are true/false.

1. Over 100 years ago the Supreme Court determined that the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution permitted racially separate schools as long as they had equal facilities.
2. Soon after, in 1955, with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which followed the Civil Rights Act, the allocation of federal funds was outlawed to segregated programs.
3. Various groups began in the 1990's to develop national standards in core subject areas.

October Unit Meetings

Central Unit

"Creating Community Conversations; Improving Public Discourse" Panelists: Stephanie Nestlerode and Joanne Richards.

Texans have NOT lost the ability to reason, to listen, to share, and to change their minds. They have only lost any environment in which such things are fostered. This has led to political bickering in place of listening and sharing.

An alliance of nonpartisan organizations is forming to answer this dilemma by creating "**mini-Philadelphias,**" (settings modeled after the **U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1789**) where voters will discuss issues the way our Founding Fathers intended and the way Leaguers have done for 91 years. The end goal is to educate, involve and empower people so they will engage their circles in similar conversation.

Stephanie is a professional facilitator with Omega International. Joanne is president of the Austin Coffee Party and a returning LWV member. Along with a number of other people, these two have been developing a project that will bring groups of Texans together in a safe setting where they can express their political ideas and expect a fair hearing. When people come to understand how their own biases and internal rhetoric have alienated them from meaningful political conversation, they begin to see "solution" as a mosaic of interlocking ideas.

You are invited to come and hear about a plan that really could help people experience the power they've always had but rarely use.

Mon., Oct. 10, 1:00 p.m. Old Quarry Library, 7051 Village Center Dr. (west of MOPAC at Far West between Post Office and H-E-B.

~Carolyn Baker, Unit Leader; Stewart Snider, President

North and South Units

"School Reform: Where Have We Been, Where are We Going?" Speaker: Dr. Nancy Oelklaus.

Since the mid-1980s, Texas has been on a steady path of school reform. What have we done, and what has it gotten us? How are Texas students really doing? How do U.S. students compare with students in other countries? And how might this information inform the League's current national education study? Learn these answers at the October evening unit meetings.

Our presenter, Dr. Nancy Oelklaus, was executive director of the Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development at the time the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) were being written. As the leader of the state's primary curriculum organization, she was actively involved in designing the process for writing curriculum standards, as well as in the legislative process for establishing Texas' current accountability system.

For the last six years, as a volunteer, Nancy has served on the district judging team for the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards, and in 2011 wrote a book entitled *Excellence in Education: Culture and Leadership in Winning Districts* about 10 outstanding school districts in Texas and what makes them great. Nancy is currently serving on the LWV-AA's education study committee.

Tues., Oct. 11, 7:00 p.m. Judy Parken's, 7917 West Rim Dr., 78731. 502-0278.

Wed., Oct. 12, 7:00 p.m., South Austin Senior Activity Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd. Anne Roussos, 441-3913.

~Judy Parken, Phyllis Portnoy, and Anne Roussos, Unit Leaders

4. Under President George W. Bush, the Dept. of Education developed the Common Core Standards.
5. After governors agreed to adopt a uniform set of standards, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers launched the Common Core Standards Initiative.
6. The U.S. has a norm-referenced test, called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered randomly to students in states that opt in.
7. NCLB penalizes school districts that place more than 3% of students in special education.
8. Austin ISD is one of the school districts in Texas that did not make progress this year.
9. President Obama recently signed an executive order allowing waivers for NCLB if certain criteria are met — partly because so many schools have not made progress and are at risk of sanctions.

Maxine's Musings

"At the Forefront - Integration"



I'm sure you've noticed that many major reforms came from the persistence of women. The classic example is the ages it took for women to be able to vote. Women were ready to do whatever it took, even going to jail, to achieve this goal.

The League of Women Voters that grew out of the Women's Suffrage movement was at the forefront for reforms such as fair labor laws for women, child labor laws, civil rights, providing nonpartisan, nonbiased information on candidates and issues, among many other issues of public policy.

During the turbulent years of the early 1960's culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I was attending the University of Houston and working part-time for the Houston YWCA as Teenage Director at the Spring Branch YWCA, a neighborhood facility. Fortunately for me, I was supported by my husband who took on some of the household tasks. My children referred to this period as the hot dog years.

At that time, the YWCA was the first such organization to promote integration of all races and ethnicity in its facilities. The downtown YWCA was located next to the then headquarters of the Houston Independent School District that was segregated. The Y operated a cafeteria-style lunchroom open to the public and fully integrated at a time when blacks could not eat in any white restaurant in Houston. I loved seeing white administrators from HISD standing in line with black diners from the public. No fuss was made about this and our Executive Director's philosophy was the less said about it, the better it will go.

As Teenage Director, I was responsible for all programs involving teen girls. The Y had a summer weeklong camp-out, usually in the Hill Country. We decided to integrate the white girls

with black girls. Much to our surprise, we got permission from the Butt family camp on the Frio River to include the black girls and black staff members. We held meetings with white parents who agreed to prepare and allow their girls to go to an integrated camp. However, the shoe dropped. At the camp, some white girls phoned their parents to say they did not want to be with the black girls. Agitated parents came to get their children and told me that while they were not prejudiced, they only expected a couple of black girls would be included and that as far as they were concerned, there were far too many. My director and I were disappointed.

Driving to the camp, I took three middle school black girls with me in my car. I was worried about the restrooms and water fountains "For Whites Only" when I had to stop for gas. In Columbus at the Humble station, I asked the station personnel if my girls could use the restroom and the fountain. They agreed, but the girls were too scared to use the facilities.

One time, when state troopers were on the lookout for busloads of black youth and adults - thinking they were traveling for sit-ins - I was driving with three black Y staff members from Louisiana going to a conference. I kept looking in my rear view mirror in case any over-enthusiastic state troopers thought we were a group of sit-ins to be arrested. Fortunately, we were safe. Stopping for gas in LaGrange, the station restroom was labeled for whites only. Once again I asked the station personnel if my passengers could use the restroom. They agreed but the women went across the road to a facility I did not know about that catered to black travelers. I was terribly embarrassed.

Women of the League of Women Voters and the YWCA played their part to ensure equality for all and I was grateful to have played a small part in the struggle.

~Maxine

10. NCLB has created a 50-state/50-test environment in public education. States publish annual reports, revealing that in 2010 the U.S. did not have a consistent set of academic assessments.

11. The Common Core Curriculum has not been field-tested; therefore, no one really knows whether or not it would make a positive difference for the education of American children.

12. States that rely heavily on property taxes to fund education tend to have large inequities in school funding. In the U.S. the wealthiest 20 per cent own 84 per cent of the total wealth.

13. What percentage of U. S. students live at the poverty level: 7% , 16% , or 20% ?

Project Vote Smart (PVS) A Natural LWV Ally

September Unit Meetings featured presentations from staffers from PVS, an organization that provides detailed voting information on all sitting members of Congress as well as legislators from all 50 states. PVS now has an office in Austin that does all the legislative research.

This voter education organization:

- Provides detailed information on all sitting members of Congress
- Provides detailed information on legislators from all 50 states
- Does legislative research, summarizing key bills, and reporting on their progress
- Gathers voting records and public statements of legislators
- Gathers public statements of candidates
- Provides information on campaign funders

PVS now has an office in Austin with 3 staffers and over 20 interns from The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation at The University of Texas. PVS is strictly non-partisan, and requires an equal number of Republicans and Democrats on its board.

Their marquis publication is called the Voter's Self-Defense Manual. You may request a printed copy by calling: 406-859-8683

PVS is eager to talk to other groups about their work. As proponents of nonpartisan voter information, the League is interested in spreading the word about PVS. Please call the Austin LWV office if you know of an organization that might also want to hear about this very worthwhile organization. We'll pass your suggestion along.

Membership—Judy Parken



Welcome, New Members

We cordially welcome Heather McKenzie and Rodney Gouraige (household) and Sylvia Clapp-White 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 Anne Shelby Clark, Adriana Cox, Ada Engler, Linda Friedman, Vicki Kullberg, Marge Loehlin, Nancy Neavel, Margit and Arnold Orange (household), Mary Patrick and Lynda Rife who recently renewed. We depend on your support and appreciate your timely renewals.

Thank You, Sustaining Members

Maxine Barkan, Shelly Baumgartner, Nan Clayton, Debra Danburg and Randy Chapman (household), Karen Haschke, Rose Lancaster, Sheila Milner, Pat Oakes, Bill and Suzy Reid (household) and Blossom Zanger.

New Membership, Renewal Dues Payment, Address Changes

Please send your name, address, phone number, email address, household member (if applicable) along with your dues payment and/or any changes to the LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. Checks may be made out to Austin League of Women Voters. Paying at the sustaining level greatly benefits the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League's activities.

14. Why are economically disadvantaged students more expensive to educate? (a) They are hungry. (b) They are behind in language development. (c) They lack models for educational success. (d) All of the above.
15. The Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) ranks education systems worldwide. The U.S. has such high student poverty that when scores are adjusted for that poverty, U.S. students score at the top, above Finland.
16. Inadequate funding of schools has a long-lasting impact. Dropouts cost the country about \$2 billion a year in lost wages, costs for social services, and crime.
17. Studies show the quality of teachers has a strong effect on student learning. Highly qualified and experienced teachers are generally found equally in affluent and less affluent areas.
18. Since the 1980's, the U.S. has spent three times more on the education system than on our prison system.

Observer Corps

**TCCC Meeting, 08/30/2011,
Joann Robison, Observer**

Several reports and updates were accepted without action

- (1) A formal request for permission to work with Travis County staff on urban rail plans. Lone Star Rail and CapMetro are looking ahead to implementation of a regional rail service. They were told that Travis County has been anxious to be part of the ongoing discussions and wanted to keep our citizens informed on plans.
- (2) Boundary maps for election maps should be ready next week. There may be minor changes in the justice of the peace and constable boundaries as they attempt to coordinate with the variances amongst senate, representative, county commissioner and state Board of Education lines.

**TCCC Meeting, 09/13/2011,
Karen Rankin, Observer**

- (1) The first item discussed was the Travis County disaster declaration as a result of the recent fires. The county has requested federal assistance to aid in repairing the many roads that were damaged and the citizens who were impacted. At the time of the session, it was not known whether the request would be honored, but if it is, the county would be eligible for 75% reimbursement because it is contiguous to Bastrop County that was heavily damaged.
- (2) There was a brief discussion, followed by approval, of the redistricting maps for county commissioners, justices of the peace and constables, and elections. Commissioner Huber stated her opposition based on what she felt was a "flawed process". The maps will be submitted to the

Department of Justice that has 60 days to consider them. Judge Biscoe stated that he had testified in the suit that opposes the congressional redistricting maps drawn in the recent legislative session.

- (3) Travis County DA Rosemary Lehmborg and Travis County Attorney David Escamilla joined a representative of the Anti-Defamation League in describing the work of the Hate Crimes Task Force in which they all participate.
- (4) Budget issues were discussed. The final proposed budget will be filed on Friday, September 23rd, following several public hearings. Possible decreased revenue due to property that was heavily damaged in the September fires won't be felt until FY 2013. After the routine budget presentation, Commissioner Huber requested additional staffing for her office, stating that Precinct 3 residents are not being served proportionately. She offered specifics pointing to the fact that her district is the largest, both in square miles and population, and has many more municipalities and ISDs with which to coordinate than the other 3 districts, but the same number of staff. With the new maps being adopted, she will have a portion of downtown Austin as well, meaning her office's responsibilities will now include urban concerns. The court did not favor additional staff for Precinct 3, but did agree to look at ways in which some functions can be performed by shared staff.

**TCCC Meeting, 09/27/2011,
Joann Robison, Observer**

- (1) The 2012 budget was approved with little comment or disagreement.

Honors and Memorials

This month, in honor of Carol Olewin's retirement, Jo Reichler made a donation.

To make a donation in honor of, or in memory of, a League member, please mail your donation to LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st St., Austin, TX 78705. Include name and address of those to be notified of your donation.

Answers to quiz

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|--|
| 1. T. | 7. T | 15. T |
| 2. F. (1965) | 8. T. | 16. F \$200 billion. |
| 3. T. | 9. T | 17. F |
| 4. F (G.H.W. Bush.) | 10. T | 18. F We spend 3X on prisons than on education |
| 5. T.40 states have done so | 11. T. | |
| 6. T. | 12. T. | |
| | 13. 20%. | |
| | 14. (D) | |

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

Water or lack of it has been paramount in everyone's mind during this historic Texas drought, sustained high temperatures, and raging wildfires that caused great personal and economic loss to this state.

An outstanding panel of speakers, all water professionals, will address water issues at the **November General Meeting on Saturday, November 5th, from 9 am - 12 noon**

**Ascension Lutheran Church
Family Life Center
6420 Hart Lane, Austin 78731**

Coffee, tea, pastries will be available at 9 am
This presentation will provide the background education for our participation in discussions at our November Unit Meetings (which are open only to members this time). From what we learn at the General Meeting and from our

Unit Meeting discussions, we will arrive at consensus from which the League can take action.
Our esteemed panel presenting at the General meeting consists of:

Carolyn Ahrens; Booth, Ahrens, Werkenthin; attorney - Water Marketing

David Meeseey, Texas Water Development Board - The Regional Planning Process

David Wheelock, LCRA, Manager of Water Supply and Conservation - Surface Water

John Dupnik, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

Brian Hunt, Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

~Karen Haschke
Chair, LWVAA Water Study
Member, LWVTX Water Study Committee

"The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education"

After years of involvement by the Federal Government, are children receiving a better education? Has this been too politicized? What do educators think about this issue?

Hear about this and more at this month's General Meeting.

Here are some of the terms we'll discuss:

- ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act)
- Title 1 (Special Education, Disabilities, Disabled)
- NCLB (No Child Left Behind)
- Charter Schools
- ELL (English Language Learners)

- Early Childhood

LWVUS has provided us with information related to this study. This consensus meeting is your opportunity to direct the national League in their efforts to address critical education issues.

Currently, LWVUS does not have a national position on Public Education. Everybody has an opinion about education, so come and learn and help decide the direction the League of Women Voters will take in the future.

(See cover page for meeting particulars.)

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

~Frances McIntyre, Study Chair

Leaguers in Action

The Texas Freedom Network bestows a high honor on LWVAA member Nancy Neavel and her late husband, Dick, on October 20. They will be recognized as the "Samantha Smoot Activists of the Year."

These LWVAA members had Letters to the Editor published in the Austin American-Statesman:

- Martha Schumacher, 8/16, "Eisenhower Insight"
- Mary Lee Comer, 9/5, "Irony and the Governor"
- Nancy Neavel, 9/5, "Community Health"
- Robbie Ausley, 9/8, "Planned Parenthood"
- Mary Patrick, 9/8, "Praying for Rain"
- Martha Schumacher, 9/19, "Social Security is a Good Scheme."

**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 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 or at 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
Regular membership	\$ 60.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 20.00
Sustaining membership	\$ 100.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 20.00
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
MAIL TO LWV-AA OFFICE: 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705