December 2012

LWVAA Calendar

Sun., Dec. 2, 5:00- 7:00 pm, League Celebration, Lakewood Clubhouse, 7317 Lakewood Dr., RSVP. Open to the public.

Mon., Dec. 3, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting. Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.

Tues., Dec. 4, 7:00 pm, City Auditor's Public Forum, Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission, One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road, Room 325. Open to public.

Sat., Dec. 8, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm, Program Planning, at home of Phyllis Portnoy, 2402 Winged Foot Cove. Light lunch and business meeting.

Tues., Jan. 8, 7:00 p.m., North Unit Meeting, at home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr. "A Preview of Hot Topics at the Legislature."

Wed., Jan. 9, 7:00 p.m., South Unit Meeting, South Austin Senior Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd. "A Preview of Hot Topics at the Legislature."

Mon., Jan. 14, 10:00 a.m., Central Unit Meeting, Howson Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd. "A Preview of Hot Topics at the Legislature."

Wed., Jan. 16, 5:30 - 7:30 pm, Legislative Reception, Lt. Governors Reception Room at the Capitol (East entrance, 2nd floor, Room 2E.16.). Refreshments. Open to the public.

Tues., Feb. 5, 6:30 pm, State of the City Dinner and Auction, Chez Zee American Bistro, 5406 Balcones Drive. Dinner, Speaker, Fundraiser.

Back issues of the LWVAA Voter can be found at this link.

Co-President's Letter: Carol Olewin

As this year comes to a close, we should take time to reflect on all the things that happened. Our League year was full of accomplishments which could never have succeeded without the support and involvement of the many members of the Austin League. Here are some of the Austin League of Women Voters' Accomplishments in 2012:

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.

The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of 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
• Passage of Single Member Districts for Austin City Council.
• Publishing the two largest Voters Guides in the history of the Austin League.
• Austin Community College Voter Registration drive and Voter Follow-up Initiative, as well as many other voter registration events.
• Candidates forums for Austin Mayor and City Council, Caldwell County Commissioners, Southwest Travis County State Legislators, and Austin Independent School District.
• Daily work of the office volunteers during the election season and all year.
• Two Community Conversations on Education—a brainstorming series on public education issues in Austin.

Let's Celebrate! On Sunday, December 2, we will have a party to celebrate the Austin's League accomplishments for 2012. All are invited to rejoice and reflect on the League's achievements this year from 5 to 7 pm at the Lakewood Clubhouse, 7317 Lakewood Drive, Austin, 78750. Be sure to RSVP at this link.

Help Wanted, Fund Raisers: We need members to help plan our Love Your League fundraising for the upcoming year. If you have ideas for producing a fundraising event, or can help with the design of our fundraising brochure, or help with the mailing and follow-up phone calls, please send an e-mail to Treasurer/Co-President Carol Olewin at colewin@gmail.com.

Help Wanted, Interviewers: League members are needed to help with interviewing the three state senators and twelve house representatives that serve Travis County. The State League has prepared an information packet of questions for these elected officials. We need teams of two to help with the interviews. Contact Stewart Snider at s2snider@gmail.com if you are available to help before January 10, 2013.

Voter Protection Survey: Travis County has 638,311 registered voters. Sixty-one percent (61%) of them voted in the November 6, 2012 Presidential and General election. The Austin League is participating in a Public Advocacy for Voter Protection survey conducted by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund. Jacklyn Williams, VP of Voter Services and Carol Olewin, Co-President are interviewing elections officials at the Travis County Clerk's office to identify how state and local Leagues can work together with election officials to protect the interests of voters, and identify problems in the election process.

Update Your Contact Information: (1) Whenever you move, you must update your voter registration information. Contact the Tax Assessor-Collector's office at (512) 854-9473 or visit their website: www.traviscountytax.org. You may update your registration online if you moved within Travis County. (2) Also update your information with the Austin League whenever you move or change your email address or phone. Call or email Judy Parken with your new contact information: japarken@aol.com or 512-502-0278.

Honorariums and Memorials: During the past year, the Austin League of Women Voters received Honorary and Memorial Contribution on behalf of the following people. We honor the contributions these people made to the League and to the society in which we live: Maxine Barkan, Morton Batlan, Matt Blackstock, Natalie Henkes Buchtal, Frances McIntyre, Rachel Milner, Carol Olewin, Jo Reichler, Dr. Florence Molomur Ross, and Grace Schmitt.

Leave a Legacy to the League: As you reflect on 2012 and the League's many accomplishments, consider an end-of-year donation to the Austin League of Women Voter to help continue the Legacy of the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area. Make a contribution to the Austin League through the web page at lwvaustin.org or mail a
contribution to 1011 W. 31st, St, Austin, TX 78705. Your financial support is crucial to the programs and initiatives of the local Austin League. Be sure to specify if you want to support Advocacy for League Programs or Voter Education Initiatives (tax deductible.) With the 83rd Legislative session starting in January, the Austin League will be actively advocating for the Programs we support and we need your financial assistance.

~Carol Olewin, Co-President and Treasurer, colewin@gmail.com

Celebrate! League Appreciation Party
Sunday, December 2

All League members, want-to-be members, League supporters, their family, and friends are invited to an informal celebration of the Austin League’s 2012 accomplishments. Light hors d’oeuvres, beer and wine provided.

Sun., Dec. 2, 5 - 7:00 pm
Lakewood Homeowners Clubhouse, Map
7317 Lakewood Drive, just west of Loop 360
RSVP here.

League Program Planning
Saturday, December 8

Every December we gather to brainstorm and prioritize possible future program items for the upcoming year. To help you propose program ideas, review our League’s current positions on a vast variety of issues that are listed in the 2012 Annual Meeting Workbook, pages 19 - 29.

Sat., December 8, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm
Light lunch at 11:30. Meeting at 12 noon.
Home of Phyllis Portnoy, 2402 Winged Foot Cove, Austin, TX 78747, Map
If you get lost, call Phyllis: 512-280-7730

Directions: From I-35 heading south, take Exit 225. Continue on frontage road to stop sign. Turn left at stop sign onto Onion Creek Parkway. Continue 3 blocks to Pinehurst. Turn left on Pinehurst. Winged Foot Cove is the 4th street on the right. It's a cul-de-sac.

January Unit Meetings:
"Hot Topics in the Texas Legislature"

Each of our unit meetings in January will cover "Hot Topics in the Texas Legislature." Aides to some of our Travis County Senators or Representatives will speak to us. After attending a unit meeting, please follow up by attending the January 16 Legislative Reception at the Texas Capitol. The information gleaned at those unit meetings will help all attendees compose questions or topics to discuss with our legislators.

Tues., Jan. 8, 7:00 p.m., North Unit Meeting, 7917 West Rim Dr., home of Judy Parken.
Wed., Jan. 9, 7:00 p.m., South Unit Meeting, South Austin Senior Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd.
Legislative Reception: Wednesday, January 16

Take advantage of this opportunity to converse with your State Senator and Representative about subjects in which you have concerns.

Wed., Jan. 16, 5:30 - 7:30 pm
Lt. Governors Reception Room, Texas Capitol
Park in the Visitor Garage, 12st Street, east of the Capitol.
Enter the Capitol at the East entrance.
Go to the 2nd floor, Room 2E.16. (Floorplan)
This beautiful, historic room is off the Central Court Rotunda.
Refreshments served. Open to the public.

We Did It! Now What?
Apply to Be on the Redistricting Commission

The Austin League has been a part of an historic change in the city’s government. We will be changing from an At-Large system to a Single Member District system for the election of our City Council members. This is a great example of citizen cooperation and participation in the political process, voters coming together to demand a change that had not been accomplished before. The six other times it was on the ballot, it originated with the City Council. This time, it was initiated by a diverse coalition of citizens who agreed on how the City should be represented. Thanks to all the Leaguers who participated in this process. We won with 60% of the vote, an astonishing accomplishment.

Now the City needs your help. The City is obligated to start work right away on organizing the Independent Citizens' Redistricting Commission (ICRC). It is an opportunity for you to be on the first Commission that draws lines for our new form of government. I do want you all to think seriously about this, because the city will definitely benefit from your knowledge. Below you will find a summary of the requirements. To read the entire petition that was adopted, click here. You do NOT have to be an expert or particularly educated in the redistricting process; you need only to be impartial and be able to understand the legal and demographic information that will be presented.

Tues. Dec. 4, Meeting with City Auditor: City Auditor Ken Mory just announced a public forum to encourage participation in the Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission (CIRC) and to secure a large and diverse pool of qualified applicants. The forum starts 7 pm Tuesday, December 4 in One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road, Room 325. (To see a map, click here.) Mory invites public input for the citizens redistricting panel on "how best to identify applicant qualifications including relevant analytical skills, the ability to be impartial, and an appreciation for the City of Austin's diverse demographics and geography." Click here for the press release.

Basic qualifications: Are you registered to vote, and a student at a community college, college or university in Austin? OR Are you registered for at least 5 years and have you voted in 3 of the last 5 Austin city elections? AND Do you have relevant analytical skills? Can you be impartial?

Disqualifications: In the last 5 years, have you or your spouse: Run for city or state elective

released findings from the conversation on November 26, and they are on our website for anyone who is interested.

We are receiving much encouragement from the community and the school district to continue these conversations. Our plan is for the next one to focus on issues in District 2, which is represented by new board member Jayne Mathias, in early March and then the next for District 3, which is represented by new board member Ann Teich, in early May.

These conversations would not be possible without the volunteer services of League members who facilitate, scribe, and assist with hosting. Thank you, one and all.

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

Honors and Memorials

A donation in honor of Frances McIntyre was made by Jo Reichler in "awe and appreciation for Frances' work on the November Voters Guide."

Two donations were received in memory of Morton Battin, father of Judy Clack, by Nancy Oelklaus and Judy Parken.

To make a donation in honor of or in memory of a League member, click here
office? Been a paid employee on a campaign committee or paid consultant to a public official? Been a registered state or local lobbyist? Did you contribute or bundle $1,000 or more in contributions in the last city election campaign? In the last 3 years, have you been a paid city employee? Received a professional, non-competitively-bid city contract?

**Restrictions on your future political activity:** Do you agree not to hold an Austin city elective office for the next 10 years? For the next 3 years, do you and your spouse agree not to: Hold appointive office for the city? Serve as paid staff for the city or the city council? Be a paid consultant to the city or the city council? Receive a non-competitively-bid contract with the city? (These last two also apply to your spouse and to all entities for which you or your spouse are a "controlling person," e.g. 10% or more ownership of a corporation.)

**The Process of Selecting Commission Members:** On or about December 1, 2012, the City of Austin Auditor shall initiate and widely publicize the application process. Applications will be accepted until sometime in February 2013. The Auditor will randomly draw the names of 3 qualified independent auditors to serve on his panel. The panel selects a pool of 60 qualified persons from all the applications. This pool is submitted to the City Council, each of which can strike one applicant (no reason need be given for a strike). Thereafter, the Auditor shall randomly draw at a public meeting 8 names from the remaining pool of applicants. These 8 individuals shall serve on the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Then these 8 Commissioners shall review the remaining names in the pool of applicants and shall appoint 6 applicants to the Commission. These 6 appointees must be approved by at least 5 affirmative votes among the 8 Commissioners. This is the time to ensure that the Commission reflects the diversity of the City (i.e. racial, ethnic, gender, etc.) Every aspect of the selection process and the work of the Commission will be public and transparent. Members of the Commission will not be compensated for their service, however they are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable and necessary personal expenses incurred in connection with the duties performed (e.g. child care, travel, etc.)

**Duties of the Commission:** Once constituted, the commission shall conduct hearings and adopt a plan for the boundaries of the city's council districts as required by the Charter of the City of Austin. Commissioners can be removed from office for substantial neglect of duty by a vote of 10 members. Vacancies will be filled. The Commission will follow open meetings requirements. Records are public records. They will select one member to serve as chair and one to serve as vice-chair, hire commission staff, legal counsel, etc. After the districts are drawn and approved, the Commission shall remain inactive except when necessary until the next census when a new Commission will be established.

**Approximate Timeline:** (This is a big guess.)
December 2012 - February 2013 - Taking of applications by the Auditor's office.
May 2013 - November 2013 - Public meetings, deliberations, choosing district plan.
December 2013 - Send plan to Department of Justice for approval.
November 2014 - First election of 10 City Council members and a mayor elected at-large.

**Possible time commitment for Commissioners:** (another big guess): 2 meetings per month at 10 or so hours per month. Of course, the time of meetings would be up to Commissioners, but public meetings in the evenings allow for more public input.

**Are You Ready To Apply?** The men and women in the Austin League are perfect candidates for this first Commission because they can be impartial and are very intelligent. Please join me and make application to be on the first ever Independent Citizens Redistricting for the form. Then mail with your donation to the LWVAA Office, 1011 W. 31st St., Austin, TX 78705.

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**Join Us on Facebook and Twitter**

To follow our local League's updates on Facebook and Twitter, here are the steps you need to take:

**FACEBOOK**
--Go to facebook.com and login to your existing account or create a new one.
--Search for "League of Women Voters of the Austin Area" in the search box at the top of the page.
--Facebook will show you possible matches to your search terms as you type. Simply click on the box with our logo and title.
--Once you get to our page, there will be a button that says "Like" and has an image of a "thumbs up."
--Click on that button.
--Now you are subscribed to our page and will see our news stories on your Facebook homepage.

**TWITTER**
--Go to twitter.com and login to your existing account or create a new
Commission in Austin, Texas. We will be making history and maybe we can be models for other cities and our own State government.

If you have any questions, please call or email me.  
~ Frances McIntyre, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com, 512-451-1551

Viewing Voters Service

We survived the 2012 Elections! Thank you again to all of our volunteers. We are completing our survey of Election Officials in Travis County for LWVTX. In the process we learned some enlightening information.

We interviewed Delores Lopez on Voter Registration from the Travis County Tax Assessor's Office. Did you ever wonder how many registered voters were in the county and what happens to the forms after the Deputy registrars submit them? There are 638,311 registered voters in Travis County and we learned that within 30 days, the Secretary of State validates their registrations. In this validation process approximately 4,000 registrations were not validated for mostly three reasons: date of birth was incorrect, person was not a citizen, or they forgot to sign the application form. On the wish list of the Tax Office to improve voter registration, they would like to have online new registration if they can figure out how to get the required signature, and they would like to have same day registration. Those volunteers who were recently deputized remain deputized for 2 years, and can continue to register voters up until 30 days before the next election.

Further, we interviewed Michael Winn on Election Administration from the Travis County Clerk's Office. He was very pleased with the use of Vote Centers this election. There were 207 of them in Travis County that used laptop computers and an electronic poll list. They publicized early voting on their website, hotline, partnerships with print media and other organizations, and through their social media networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter).

In response to our question what role could the League play in future elections, they responded by thanking us for all of the valuable tasks we performed this time, asking that we continue doing those tasks, wanting us to continue to publicize voter registration information, and to continue helping with communications about the ballot process.

Stay tuned, for the next election cycle!  
~ Jacklyn Williams, VP Voters Service, jacklynwilliams@aol.com

Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

November 13, Joann Robison
(1) A burn ban was reinstated until December 12, 2012.
(2) The county will be initiating a publicly posted, web-based survey in Travis County on water supply issues. It will be sent to all municipalities and other interested parties to develop a list of ideas around best uses of water resources.
(3) The county is working with city of Austin and TXDOT to put in long-awaited sidewalks along Decker Lane with the idea to expand to bicycle lanes. They will be looking for funding one.

~ Frances McIntyre, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com, 512-451-1551
in the next year; but this road is a state highway, which complicates the situation.

(4) Melvin Wrenn and Richard Moya were reappointed to the Strategic Housing Finance Corporation Board of Directors.

(5) The Court published this Draft of Economic Development Incentive Policy:

- Tax abatements and Chapter 381 grants (rebates) OR Chapter 381 grants only.
- Tax code dictates abatements driving wording, criteria, reporting to comptroller, public hearings on reinvestment zones, must be outside municipalities.
- (Significantly) Court voted to use rebates through Chapter 381 only at this time. Option to offer abatements by future votes if deemed appropriate. This puts county in alignment with city of Austin and simplifies process for applicants.
- Simple majority to consider abatement.
- Available to lease hold with tight controls and restrictions. Must include new construction increasing tax base, rebates end with or before length of lease.
- Minimum investment $25 million and promise of at least 100 new jobs to be considered.
- Business must provide benefits package per city standards.

~Joann Robison, gatorgunk@gmail.com

November 27, Karen Rankin:

(1) Health and Human Services presented a summary of the annual performance evaluation for the Community Development Block Grant from HUD. The summary can be found on the county website.

(2) A non-profit organization, Children’s Optimal Health, presented an overview on how they use mapping technology to identify sources and causes of issues facing children in the area. Commissioners were interested in working with the group, and suggested that the county Health and Human Services department consult with the group about collaborating.

(3) District Attorney Rosemary Lehmberg and County Attorney David Escamilla appeared before the court to request that the county take over funding one full-time and 3 part-time attorneys in their offices who would comprise the family violence protection team. The grant that previously provided funding has run out.

(4) After three years of work, the draft of the county’s policy regarding economic development incentives was presented and approved. The court voted to make it effective today. Comments from commissioners included: Eckhardt, "We've set a high bar for preferential treatment." Gomez, "There is no better social program than a job."

(5) A proposed web-based opinion survey on water supply issues by the county Department of Transportation and Natural Resources was discussed briefly. Commissioner Huber suggested fewer questions and room for creative responses, and recommended that the survey be done quickly with a view toward possible legislative action. Commissioner Eckhardt commented, "We could lead on this issue." A revised survey proposal will be presented next week.

~ Karen Rankin, karenrankin@austin.rr.com

Membership

We hope to see many members, new and continuing, at the Dec. 2 celebration, the Dec. 8 program planning meeting, the Jan. Unit Meetings, the Jan. Legislative Reception, and the Feb. State of the City fund raiser. All who have joined the League during the past year will be recognized and welcomed at each of our upcoming gatherings.

Welcome, New Members!
We cordially welcome three new members to the Austin League: Kata Carbone, Whitney Thurman, and Marilyn Wills. 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. See the links below for an abundance of educational information.

**Thank You, Sustaining Members**
Special thanks to this month’s sustaining members: Kata Carbone, Ed and Judy Parken, 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: Pat Bennett, Frances McIntyre, and Eleanor Sellstrom. We depend on your support and appreciate your timely renewals.

**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 LWVAA office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. Checks may be made out to the Austin League of Women Voters. Or you may instead click here to pay your annual dues online while providing all the above information. Of your 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** greatly benefits the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League's activities. In either case, the League is grateful for your support!

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

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**League Websites**
There is an ABUNDANCE of excellent information on the three League websites. Do check them out.

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

Any member or prospective member may contact me with your League questions.

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

**Gift to League at All Three Levels!**
By making a gift of cash or securities of $5,000 or more to the League of Women Voters Education Fund/Pool Income Fund, you can receive an immediate income tax deduction for a portion of the gift's value and continue earning a quarterly return on the interest earned for life. You can name your local League, along with the LWVEF, to benefit from the residual funds when you're gone. Contact the LWVUS Development office at 202-263-1355 or plannedgiving@lwv.org.

**IRA Charitable Distributions**
Persons aged 70½ or older can again enjoy tax savings by making charitable gifts directly from their Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) to the LWV Education Fund. Contact Lauren Frank of LWVUS at 202-263-1355 or lfrank@lwv.org for additional information.

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**Forward email**

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