February 2015

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LWVAA Calendar

Mon., Feb. 2, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting, League Office, 1011 W. 31st St. Members.

Tues., Feb. 3, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, or 6:30 pm, Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training, Travis County Voter Registrar's office, 5501 Airport Blvd, Austin, TX 78751.

Wed., Feb. 4, 5:30 - 7:30 pm, Elected Officials Reception for Mayor and Austin City Council, Travis County Commissioners Court and County Judge. Austin City Hall. Open to the public. Free parking.

Sun., Feb. 8, 2:00 - 4:00 pm, General Meeting, "Texas Public School Finance," with speaker Judge John Dietz, Trinity United Methodist Church. Open to the public.

Sat., Feb. 21, 10:00 - Noon, Discussion Group on Local Government Issues at League Office, 1011 West 31st Street.

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.

Board Contact List

Carol Olewin
President
Mary Cullinane
1st VP Program
Cinde Weatherby
2nd VP Community Relations
Jo Reichler
3rd VP Organization
Peggy Stewart
Secretary
Gwen Santiago
Treasurer
Judy Parken
Membership
Jaci Collins
Member Records
Frances McIntyre
Advocacy and Voters Guide Editor
Mon. - Tues., Feb. 23 - 24, LWV-TX Lobby Days at the State Capitol. Members only.

Mon., Mar. 2, 6:30 pm, Board Meeting, League Office, 1011 W. 31st St. Members.

Tues., Mar. 3, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, or 6:30 pm, Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training, Travis County Voter Registrar's office, 5501 Airport Blvd, Austin, TX 78751.

Tues., Mar. 10, 6:00 - 9:30 pm, State of the City Dinner and Auction, Green Pastures Restaurant. Open to the public.

Sun., Mar. 15, Afternoon, 2015 Texas Legislative Update, Time and Location TBA. Open to the public.

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

Elected Officials Reception Feb. 4

League of Women Voters of the Austin Area is sponsoring an Elected Officials Reception
5:30 - 7:30 pm
Wednesday, February 4, 2015
Austin City Hall Atrium
301 West 2nd Street

This is your chance to meet the people who represent you in our local government. We have invited the ten new Austin City Council members, the Mayor, the Travis County Commissioners, and the County Judge.

It is open to the public, so bring your friends and neighbors. There are many new people representing us, so this is an excellent opportunity to meet and get to know them.

Refreshments will be served and your ticket for parking in the Austin City Hall parking ramp will be validated. The parking ramp is under the City Hall building.

Questions or more information? Contact Frances McIntyre at mcintyre.frances@gmail.com or 512-451-1551

~Frances McIntyre, Advocacy Chair and Voters Guide Editor

General Meeting, Feb. 8
"Texas Public School Finance"

The League of Women Voters, Austin Area invites you to a General Meeting with speaker Judge John Dietz
Open to members and the public
Sunday, February 8
2:00 - 4:00 pm
Trinity Methodist Church

Eliza May
Special Events
Hal Jennings
Webmaster
Donna Pauler
Voter Editor

From the President

Dr. Paul Cruz meets with the LWV-Austin Board
Dr. Paul Cruz, recently chosen full time superintendent of Austin Independent School District, addressed the Austin LWV Board of Directors at their January 5th Board meeting. He is reaching out to the community to see what concerns and questions people have for the district. He has been impressed with the League's community outreach and attended the League's Community Conversations on Education, so he wanted to meet the Board.

Dr. Cruz is concerned about AISD's loss of revenue to the Robin Hood School Finance Recapture System. Last year AISD sent $128 million to the Recapture Fund and this year AISD will send $175 million. This money, he feels, could have been better spent on teacher compensation in the Austin school system. He believes good teachers are the backbone of an excellent school system. Austin ISD is especially challenged as the student population is quite diverse with more than 90 different languages spoken.

ThinkVoting meets with LWV-Texas Board
Carol Olewin introduced Joe Santori and Jeff Cardenas, ThinkVoting co-founders, to the LWV-Texas Board on Saturday, January 10th. After a successful roll out of the ThinkVoting smart-phone application during the Austin area and City Council
We are thrilled to have Judge John Dietz as our speaker on "The Why's and Wherefores of Texas Public School Finance."

Judge Dietz has just retired as a District Judge where he was Presiding Judge for 10 of the 24 years he served in that position.

On September 15, 2014, Judge Dietz concluded a five-and-half-week trial by ruling unconstitutional the Texas system of public school finance. Since the case is ongoing, he will be limited in speaking about certain aspects.

He is the authority on public school finance and will welcome your questions during the event.

~Frances Mcintyre, Advocacy Chair and Voter Guide Editor  
mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

**LWV-TX Hosts Lobby Days**

All Texas League members are encouraged to participate in the LWV-TX sponsored Lobby Days February 23 - 24. Registration for the event begins at 12 pm noon, Monday, February 23 in the State Capitol Building. Cost of the Lobby Days is $10. Pre-registration is encouraged. League members will be receiving a special email providing information and the opportunity to register online.

The first day's session will feature:

- Remarks by Chad W. Dunn of Brazil & Dunn, legal counsel for the lead plaintiffs in the Texas Voter ID litigation
- A water panel featuring Dr. Andrew Sansom, Director of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, and David Phillips, a fracking and water use expert
- Remarks by The Hon. Alma Allen, Texas House of Representatives, District 131
- Remarks by Kathy Miller of the Texas Freedom Network

League members will pay a tribute to the late Senator Ray Farabee at the Making Democracy Work Dinner at the AT&T Conference Center Monday night. Mr. Farabee was scheduled as the featured speaker before his death November 20, 2014. Senator Farabee's sons, Steve and David Farabee will co-host the event and Steve's wife Karen Farabee of Austin is co-chairing the event. Senator Farabee helped the League pass garnishment of wages for child support legislation in the 1980s. He also achieved mental health code reform, juvenile justice improvements (taking juveniles out of the adult prison system), and passage of a bill allowing state agencies to maintain daycare facilities on the premises for employees. Texas Monthly selected him as a BEST LEGISLATOR for five consecutive sessions. His late wife Mary Margaret Farabee co-founded the Texas Book Festival.

Local leagues are requested to reserve a table for the event. A League table of eight seats is $800. This will include recognition in the program and from the podium. The LWVAA plans to reserve a table. Anyone interested in purchasing one or more seats at the table ($100) may contact Cinde Weatherby, cindeweatherby@gmail.com.

elections in November 2014, ThinkVoting wants to branch out to other parts of Texas and eventually across the nation.

The Austin LWV partnered with ThinkVoting during the last election to distribute the Voters Guide across an electronic platform for smart phone users. We will continue to work together and streamline the processes for uploading ballot information from the County Clerk's office and Vote 411's candidate answers to League questions in order to provide voting information to the public.

**Changes on the LWV Austin Board of Directors**

Three of our VP's announced their resignations from the Board, Stewart Snider, VP Community Relations; Judy Clack, VP Organization and Voter Editor; and Stacey Mather, VP Voter Services. We were saddened to lose their collective knowledge and enthusiasm for the League but realize that people must move on to pursue other priorities. Luckily we are filling those positions. Cinde Weatherby has accepted the position of VP Community Relations and Jo Reichler has returned to the position of VP Organization. Donna Pauler will be serving on Board as Voter Editor.

This leaves 2 two positions to fill, VP Voter Services and Chair of Development. Voter Services VP position oversees and works with the Voters Guide, Voter Engagement and Voter Registration, and Candidate Forums committees. Director of Development helps the League develop funding.

LWV Austin receives Voter Registration Partner Award from Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor & Voter Registrar.

On Thursday, Jan 15, 2015, the Travis County Voter Registrar held a deputy voter registrar appreciation and training session at the LBJ Library. The Austin League was recognized and awarded for making voter registration a priority at schools, libraries, concerts, and
The second day of Lobby Days will begin in the House Members' Lounge from 9:00 to 10:30 am with a briefing on best lobbying practices by Ms. Brooke Bennett, Senior Policy Analyst for State Representative Donna Howard. Attendees will then disperse to visit Legislators and their staff members and will distribute a copy of "We Support" detailing LWV-TX positions to Legislators and their staff members.

~ Cinde Weatherby, 2nd VP Community Relations, cindeweatherby@gmail.com 512-560-1334

**Save the Date!**

**State of the City, March 10**

Tuesday, March 10 from 6:00 - 9:30 pm  
23rd Annual State of the City Dinner and Auction  
Green Pastures Restaurant  
811 West Oak Street, Austin

Our keynote speaker is newly elected Mayor Steve Adler. We will also present our annual "Making Democracy Work" Award. Stay tuned for the announcement of our recipient. There will be dinner, cash bar, and silent auction. Free parking is available.

**Calling for help and volunteers**

Currently we are accepting sponsorship leads for our annual fundraiser benefiting the League and the Education Fund. Please forward names and contact information to Eliza May, Special Events chair.

The committee will be meeting twice a month at the League office. If you are interested in participating, please email: elizamay@sbcglobal.net for more information. Everyone is welcomed to become involved in the planning of the annual event.

A priority for the committee is organizing the auction. We need help in the solicitation of items and in the organization for the auction. If you like asking for gifts that help a good cause, our committee is right for you. If you have an item that you want to donate, please email me or call the League Office, 512-451-6710. All auction proceeds benefit the tax-deductible LWVAA Education Fund.

~ Eliza May, Special Events Chair, elizamay@sbcglobal.net

**League Prepares for Advocacy in 84th Texas Legislative Session**

Preparations for League of Women Voters of the Austin Area to populate an action group known as the Capitol Corps began in earnest January 9 at LWV-TX Headquarters.

As the new LWVAA Board 2nd Vice President for Community Relations and Capitol Corps Coordinator, Cinde Weatherby organized the meeting set by LWV-TX Vice President for Advocacy Laura Blackburn and Grace Chimene, LWV-TX Board Member and Legislative Director.

other venues throughout Travis County. June Conway is the Austin League's Voter Engagement Chair and led a team of dedicated League members to venues and events around Austin to register voters. June's team was well represented at the event and June plans on leading a team of deputy voter registrars into the 2015/2016 biennium.

~ Carol Olewin, President, c.olewin@gmail.com

**From the Webmaster**

If the League's email messages appear to be clipped, or you are having trouble seeing the content of this message, please click on the link at the top of the page which says: "Trouble seeing everything, click here."

We encourage you to "like" or "share" our Facebook posts to help expand the reach of these announcements to expand to all of your friends. See procedure below.

~ Hal Jennings, Webmaster, hal@jenningsweb.us

**Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training**
LWVAA members Anne Clark, Barbara and Chris Frandsen, Brenda Koegler, Julie Moore and Joanne Richards participated, as well as Betsy Singleton of San Marcos and Peggy Hill of the Houston area. Others have indicated an interest and were unable to attend, but will be participating in the future.

Laura provided information on roles and responsibilities of the Capitol Corps in supporting the work of state Issue Chairs responsible for following state legislation in their issue areas. Of special interest are the four priority issue areas for the 84th session, as determined by voting of all Texas League members. They are: (1) education, (2) voting rights/election laws, (3) reproductive rights/women’s health and (4) water—both quality and quantity.

Resource information was also provided to attendees to familiarize them, or remind them, about being advocates on behalf of the League in the Capitol.

A second meeting was scheduled at 1:30 pm Friday, January 23, at the LWVAA Office to continue preparations and attempt to confirm Capitol Corps participation and issue area assignments.

Also on January 23, LWV-TX Issue Chairs will contribute legislative updates related to their issues for the bi-weekly LWV-TX Legislative Newsletter. The electronic newsletter will be sent to all LWV-TX members by the end of the month.

~ Cinde Weatherby, 2nd VP Community Relations, cindeweatherby@gmail.com

**Discussion Group:**

**Local Issues at the City Level**

A new discussion group met for the first time on Saturday, January 17 to organize an ongoing conversation on local issues that the League can address at the city level. We found that we have League members on all the public entities - County Commissioners Court, City Council, AISD Trustees, and ACC Trustees - and are looking to see if our membership covers all 10 City Council districts. The first meeting was attended by 14 members and there were several others who were unable to attend, but who expressed an interest.

We agreed to meet on the **3rd Saturday of the month.** The next meeting will be Feb. 21, 2015, 10:00-noon at the League office conference room, 1011 W. 31st Street near N. Lamar. We will continue our discussions of issues that are of concern and how they relate to the issues the Austin League can address.

We welcome others who may be interested to join us. Just let me know so I can put you on the email list.

~ Frances McIntyre, Advocacy and Voter Guide Editor mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

**LWVAA Local Program Planning**

On Saturday, January 24, fifteen League members attended a meeting and engaged in a lively debate about the League’s 2015-2016 local program. The 2014-2015 study on poverty did not progress as hoped, so the group decided to extend it for at least another year.
Instead of calling it a poverty study, the group decided to reframe the issue in terms of economic inequality and to examine what limits economic mobility for certain individuals in our community. Even though Austin has seen great prosperity in recent years, some of our neighbors are still struggling to get by and a significant number are literally being squeezed out of the middle class. The group decided to ask why - and then explore what could be done to create opportunities for everyone in our community to make choices that allow them to be successful enough to afford the basics in life and provide for their families.

Then the real work began trying to wrestle the topic down to a manageable size. How does one tackle a subject as big as "poverty" when so many things contribute to it? The group made a list of obstacles to economic mobility like lack of education, lack of family planning, low wages, discrimination, lack of affordable housing and adequate nutrition, lack of reliable transportation, land use decisions, lack of child care and health care ... and the list went on.

Ultimately, the group decided that more information was needed about the current environment to understand what is required to expand opportunities for economic advancement for all residents of the Austin area. As a result, the group decided to plan educational programs over the next year with speakers who could address the various facets of poverty and inequality.

An organizing work group will meet in February to develop a draft plan to study the causes of poverty in the Austin area. The plan will be shared with the Board for their approval at the March meeting. Finally, it will be presented to the membership at the Annual Meeting in May for their approval. Everyone is invited to participate in this important and timely study. Contact me if you'd like to be included.

~ Mary Cullinane, VP Program, mculli@sbcglobal.net

**Travis County VDR Recognition and Training**

A sunny day welcomed about 600 to the **LBJ Library** on **January 15** to celebrate Travis County’s 2014 collective efforts to register voters. A stream of photos from various Voter Registration locations was displayed on screen for the early arrivals before the Huston-Tillotson University choir performed. The audience joined hands and voices for their last selection, ”We shall Overcome”.

The **LWVAA** was among those honored as Partners at the Travis County Volunteer Deputy Registrar (VDR) Recognition and Training Celebration of Democracy on January 15. League president **Carol Olewin** accepted the award on behalf of the League. Also recognized were the **Unitarian Universalist Church** as Partner of the Year and League member **Mary Patrick** as Volunteer of the Year.

**Mark Updegrove**, Director of the LBJ Library welcomed us with a history of the library and a 1964 recording of an LBJ conversation with Martin Luther King, Jr. discussing strategy for his civil rights efforts (appropriate, considering the criticism of the portrayal of LBJ in the movie "Selma") and of LBJ’s Voting Rights Act Speech of March 15, 1965.

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**Memorials**

**Jo Reichler** made a donation to the League in honor of long-time member **Judy Clack** who will be leaving us this spring to move to Pennsylvania. She will be dearly missed.

**Judy Parken** made a donation in the memory of **Lester Reed**, renowned scientist, husband of **Janet Reed**, long-time member and President of the Austin League. He was also the father of **Pam Reed**, also a long-time member and supporter of the League.

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

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**"Like" Our League on Facebook**

It's so easy to follow our League on Facebook. Thanks to **Brigid Hall** for these instructions:

1. Go to [facebook.com](http://facebook.com) and login to your existing account or create a new one.

2. Enter "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.
Keynote Speaker Regina Lawrence, Executive Director of the U. T. Annette Strauss Institute of Civic Life, addressed the apathy of citizens in Texas and the nation, spoiled by our freedoms, who are not engaged in the electoral process. Here are some dismal statistics: The USA ranks 100th among democratic nations in voter participation; only 40% of those we worked so hard to register turned out to vote although it was an increase over the last general election in 2010 and exceeded the state’s turnout of just 32%; and in Texas, only 28.5% of eligible citizens registered and voted, which puts us next to last, nationally.

A training session with VDR Coordinator Cheryl Reese followed. All who participated are now deputized through December 31, 2016.

Before the swearing in of the VDR’s, Bruce Elfant shared the achievements of this latest voter registration drive, the challenges of increasing voter turnout in Travis county, and the goals he aims to accomplish before the 2016 elections: Voter Registration increased to 90% or better; the highest voter turnout in the state; voter registration in the workplace and of seniors in the high schools; and lobbying the Legislature for on-line voter registration.

~June Conway, Voter Registration Chair, june_cnwy@yahoo.com

Maxines Musings
League Leaders I have Known

Looking back, I was thinking of leaders of the League of Women Voters I have known and who have had an influence on my League and non-League life. I don’t remember them all but certain ones stand out.

My first remembrance was that of Percy Maxim Lee, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States from 1950-1958. According to her biography, she was a founder and trustee of the League of Women Voters Education Fund, and president of the League’s Overseas Education Fund from 1959-1964. Her grandfather was Sir Hiram Maxim who invented the Maxim Machine Gun! When I was a LWV-Columbus delegate to the National Convention, I was awed by her knowledge, command, and control of the convention proceedings. She had an aura of aristocracy about her. I thought I could never do what she did. Actually, I did not meet her, as conventions were much more formal than now, but I have never forgotten her.

When I was elected to the board of the League of Women Voters of Columbus, the president was a stunning woman who looked like a model and certainly not like an LWV member president! She was elegantly dressed and wore huge-brimmed hats. One could envision her on the cover of a fashion magazine. But she came from a political family and did a great job representing the League. I learned a lot from her when I succeeded her as president, especially in working with the press for League publicity that was useful with other organizations.

In Texas I learned from each of the LWV-TX presidents when I was a state board member or an issue chair. Three stand out. Diane Sheridan was a beloved and caring president. There wasn’t anything she did not know about the League. She brought us her expertise from her regular job as Facilitator and Communications Specialist for Keystone Center. Board training that she conducted has been very beneficial to me even to this day. It made me a better trainer for local League boards.

It's so easy to follow our League on Twitter. Thanks to Brigid Hall for these instructions:

1. Go to twitter.com and login to your existing account or create a new one.
2. Search for lwvatx in the search box at the top of the page.
3. On the left hand side of the page, under "People" click on our logo.
4. Click on the "follow" button and then you will be subscribed to the LWVAA page and get updates on any of our posts.

Shop at Randalls and Support the League

Randalls 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.

Click on this link for a document to complete and return to any Randalls store to join the Good Neighbor Program and help our League.

Compass Bank Accounts
Support 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, Gwen Santiago, gsantiago@austin.rr.com.

Compass Bank also pays the League a small percentage for Internet and phone transactions. For information, contact Paul Sicotte at Compass Bank, 512-421-5741.
Ruthann Geer was a role model to me. She taught me by example how to conduct board meetings with control and style which carried over to board and commission meetings I have chaired over the years. I especially remember one state convention where I tried to be recognized for an action item that was out of order. She with good humor put up with my attempts until it was an appropriate time. I was honored that she chose me to be her roommate during state board meetings.

Julie Lowenberg's legacy has been to me helpful since I have been writing my memoirs in a Memoirs Writing class. I learned how to write effectively, clearly, with good grammar, syntax, and to watch for typos when she edited my League reports. In fact, four of my memoirs have been published in a magazine in northwestern Ohio where, much to my surprise, I was paid as a freelance writer! (If Julie is reading this, I hope it passes muster!)

My thanks to all LWV-TX presidents who were my mentors. I am sorry I could not mention all of them.

~ Maxine Barkan, LWVAA Past-President, mbarkan@austin.rr.com

Membership Report and Interest Survey

Member Interest Survey:
If you are either a new member or a member who may have a bit of time to volunteer for the League (either regularly or occasionally), please complete this Member Interest Survey. This will help us identify your skills and interests. A few new members have filled this out already, but most of our members have not. We especially need to hear from all members who have a little time to help us. Thank you for doing this now.

New Members: Six more individuals have joined our ranks as new League members: Heidi Gibbons, Jane McFarland, Kathi Miller, Karen Nafe, Kendall Pace, and Nancy Rowland. A warm welcome to each of you. As a member of the Austin League, each of you is 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, $54 goes to the LWVTX and the LWVUS, and only $6 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.

Thank You, Sustaining Members: Special thanks to this month's sustaining members: Terrell Blodgett, Debra Danburg/Randy Chapman, Jane McFarland, Susan Morrison, Donna Pauler, Diane Radin, Gail Rothe/Myron Hess, Ann Teich, Nancy Dittmar/Maxwell Stout and Jacklyn Williams. We are grateful for your additional financial support for our local League.

Thank You, Renewing Members: Many thanks to the following members who also renewed this month: Mary Ann Baker, Mary Lee Comer, Margaret Drake, Mary and Bill Finch, Louise Hasty, Harriet Harrow, Ethel Kutac, Tim Mahoney, Jo Reichler, Eleanor Sellstrom, Susan Sheldon and Paula Weisner. 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 for renewals (or click here for new memberships) to pay your annual dues online by credit card via PayPal while providing all the above information.

Here is the schedule of dues amounts:

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Individual</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Dues</td>
<td>$ 60.00</td>
<td>$ 90.00</td>
<td>$ 20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Contact me anytime with your League questions.

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