January 2013

LWVAA Calendar

Mon., Jan. 7, 6:30 pm, **Board Meeting**, Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.

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 Texas 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 Texas Legislature."

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

Thurs. - Sat., Jan. 23 - 26, UT Law School Conference, "Is America Governable?" Open to the public. No reservations required. [Click here](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=49l8dbda... for schedule, topics, presenters, and rooms.

Mon., Feb. 4, 6:30 pm, **Board Meeting**, Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.

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](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=49l8dbda... .

**Urgent Need for League Members**

Local Leagues across the state have been tasked by LWVTX with conducting short interviews, in person, with their local legislators. More Austin League members are urgently needed. Two League members will meet with each legislator.

LWVTX has prepared a list of four short questions to ask, background information on each of the issues, and a clear process for conducting the 30-minute meeting. This is not a time to lobby the legislators. Rather the League is seeking information on each legislator’s current stand on these four issues. Contact me immediately if you are willing to help.

~ Stewart Snider, Co-President, [s2snider@gmail.com](mailto:s2snider@gmail.com), 345-7047.
Co-President's Letter: Carol Olewin

The New Year has arrived and 2013 will be another busy one for the Austin League. Be sure to read through the Voter newsletters you receive each month to keep up with the schedules and activities of the Austin League, or sign-up for electronic notices at lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org.

The 83rd Texas Legislative Session begins its 140-day season on January 8 and ends on May 27, 2013. Since the Texas Legislature meets only once every other year, the session is intense. The League will need a lot of help to advocate for statewide issues that are important to the League of Women Voters. The LWV Austin Legislative Corps is forming. Contact Co-President Stewart Snider (s2snider@gmail.com, 345-7047) and say, “Yes, I can help”. Bookmark the Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.state.tx.us. The site provides information on legislation, committees, house and senate bills as well as video broadcasts of meetings.

Be sure to attend the League’s Legislative Reception on Wednesday, January 16 at the Lieutenant Governor’s Office in the Capitol Building. This is a great opportunity to visit this important place and meet you local Texas house representatives and senators. Prepare for your informal chat with legislators by attending one of the Unit Meetings prior to the reception.

The Texas Capitol is an extraordinary example of late 19th century public architecture and is widely recognized as one of the nation’s most distinguished state capitolis. It was constructed in 1888. Self-guided and guided tours of the Capitol and Grounds are available during business hours. So, come early and tour the Capitol before the reception.

But most of all, be involved in the League’s events this year. Spring meetings will focus on contemporary legislative issues. This is your League and you make things happen. Be sure to say “Yes, I can!” when an activity comes around in which you are interested. Have a fun year and we look forward to seeing you at the many League events this spring.

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

January Unit Meetings:
"A Preview of Hot Topics in the Texas Legislature"

Providing a preview of hot topics that are expected to come up in the Legislature this session will be three Legislative aides. We’ll have staffers from the office of Paul Workman, HD 47 for the South Unit meeting, from the office of Donna Howard, HD 48 for the Central Unit meeting, and from the office of Mark Strama, HD 50 for the Central Unit meeting.

- 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 Activity Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd.
- Mon., Jan. 14, 10:00 a.m., Central Unit Meeting, Howson Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd.

Attending one of these meetings will provide background information that will be useful in conversations with Legislators at the League’s Legislative Reception on Jan. 16.

~Stewart Snider, Co-President, s2snider@gmail.com; Anne Roussos, Co-Unit Leader, roussos@swbell.net

Contact Us

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Texas Photo ID and the Courts

On December 17 a three-judge panel in DC granted the State of Texas motion for a final judgment in a case, Texas v. Holder,
Legislative Reception: Wednesday, January 16
Take advantage of this opportunity to converse with local area State Senators and Representatives 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, 12th Street, east of the Capitol, between Trinity and San Jacinto
- Enter the Capitol at the East entrance.
- Take the elevator to the 2nd floor. The Lt. Governor’s Reception Room is on the right as you get off the elevator, Room 2E.16. ([Floorplan](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=49l8dbda...))
- Refreshments served. Open to the public.

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

"Is America Governable?" Conference: Jan. 24 - 26
The UT Law School is hosting a conference entitled "Is America Governable?" Held from Thursday, January 24 - Saturday, January 26, this conference is free and open to the public. Registration is not required. Click here for schedule, topics, presenters, and rooms.

Pundits and political figures across the political spectrum now regularly refer to the United States government-and to some of its state governments as well-as "dysfunctional" or even "pathological," with serious questions raised as to whether the United States in the 21st century can even be described as "governable."

The weekend after the inauguration of President Barack Obama for his final term in office is a propitious time for confronting basic questions about the health of the American political system. The symposium brings together a remarkable array of scholars across many disciplines, persons with a variety of high-level political experience, and eminent journalists to discuss these and other questions of vital relevance to every American (or person affected by decisions made by American governments).

~ **Joanne Richards**, phjr@swbell.net

State of the City: Tuesday, February 5
**Bruce Elfant**, the new Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voting Registrar will be the keynote speaker for the League's annual State of the City Dinner and Silent Auction.

The event will take place on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, 6 - 9pm at Chez Zee restaurant, located at 5406 Balcones Drive 78731. Complimentary valet parking is available for our members and their guests. Tickets are $50 for members and $55 for non-members. Invitations will be sent soon along with instructions on how to make a reservation. In addition to the dinner and speaker, we will hold a silent auction. Auction items include wine and food baskets, certificates for dinner at restaurants, tickets for local theater, gift certificates to a business or restaurant, and artwork. All proceeds will benefit the LWVAA Education Fund.

~ **Adriana Cox**, Co-chair, adrianacox@austin.rr.com

challenging the Texas photo ID law.

The court denied preclearance of the law thus siding with LWVTX which is deeply involved in the case. LWV-TX opposes a photo requirement as an unnecessary barrier to eligible voters and was an intervenor in the D.C. Court case. The State of Texas quickly appealed the decision to the US Supreme Court, which may hear the case.

Previously, the District Court, in its August 30 decision, refused to allow Texas to enforce its new voter ID law (Senate Bill 14), finding that it would discriminate against minority voters, particularly those who are poor, in violation of Section 5. Without that court's preclearance, Texas cannot implement the law.

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

Honors and Memorials
It is with deep sadness that the League notes the sudden, untimely death on December 5 of active League member Natalie Balden Lysyj who served for years on the Office Corps.

Donations made in memory of Natalie were received from Jo Reichler and Judy Clack.

To make a donation in honor of or in memory of a
LWVUS Position on Gun Control and Mental Health

"We are all deeply distressed by the shootings in Newtown, Connecticut and share in the country's grief. Since 1990, the League of Women Voters has had a position to protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons, and we supported the original ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines when it was passed in 1994. The League's health care position also states that every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of quality care that includes, among other things, mental health care."

"There will be opportunities for the League to take action through legislation at the state and federal levels. Members of the U.S. House and Senate have already signaled their intent to introduce legislation to reinstate the ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines when the 113th Congress meets in January, and President Obama has asked Vice-President Biden to oversee a task force that will develop new gun control and mental health policies."

"In the meantime, you can reach out to your representatives when they are home to express the League's view that there is no role for assault weapons or high-capacity magazines in civilized society."

~ Elizabeth MacNamara, President, LWVUS, Dec. 20, 2012

League Program Planning: 2013-2014

I'm especially grateful that in LWV-Austin, we "have each other's backs," with ample volunteers showing up when they are needed to create success.

On December 8, seventeen Leaguers met in the home of Phyllis Portnoy to review what's going well that we want to continue and to look ahead into 2013-14 program planning. The word "program" has special meaning in the League. It is not a meeting or a series of speakers. The League program consists of governmental issues that League members have studied and on which they have reached consensus.

Coming up in the spring of 2013, look for the Capitol Corps to be sharing much information about the work they are doing in the Legislature on behalf of League positions. January 16 is the date for our legislative reception, followed by State of the City on February 5. In late March there will be a general meeting on educational funding, led by Leaguer Gwen Santiago and her associate, Tom Canby. In April will be a general meeting on water, followed by the annual meeting in May. Intertwined throughout the spring will be regular unit meetings, focused on legislative issues. In January the units will have a legislative preview; February is focused on water; March, on health care. In April the LWV Capitol Corps will be featured at the unit meetings.

Looking ahead into 2013-14, we need volunteers for the review of the national LWVUS position on agriculture, with consensus due in April of 2014. Materials will be ready near the end of 2013. A state LWVTX consensus on human trafficking will kick off in the fall of 2013, and we need volunteers to study provided materials. Also, the state convention will be in Austin in the spring of 2014. Carol Olewin is spearheading the planning but we'll need many local Leaguers to help.
At the local level, here are the areas of emphasis for 2013-14. Volunteers are welcome to join any of these groups:
* Campaign Finance Reform--Joanne Richards and Stewart Snider
* State Judicial Selection--Joanne Richards and Stewart Snider
* Human Rights--Joanne Richards, Stewart Snider, and Jacklyn Williams
* (new) Preparing Candidates for Public Office--Jacklyn Williams, Lupe Sosa, Frances McIntyre
* Health Care, including Women's Health--Marilyn Wills, Judy Clack, Betty Williamson, Nan Clayton, Phyllis Portnoy, Joanne Richards
* Community Conversations about Public Education--Nancy Oelklaus, Stewart Snider, Carol Olewin, Frances McIntyre, Nan Clayton, Judy Clack, Jacklyn Williams, Anne Clark, Laura Sheridan, Sylvia Clapp-White, Polly Street, Gwen Santiago.
* (new) Affordable Housing--Anne Clark, Pat Bennett, Judy Clack
* City of Austin Redistricting--Frances McIntyre, Stewart Snider
* Candidates Forums--Jacklyn Williams
* State of the City--Phyllis Portnoy

These following topics were suggested with no volunteers at the meeting stepping up to lead. Leaguers who are interested in leading a specific area should email me as noted below.

* Higher Education, especially community colleges; * Board for Austin Energy
* Voter Registration; * Water; * Mental Health; * Air Quality

~ Nancy Oelklaus, Program Vice President, NancyOelklaus@gmail.com

City Auditor Seeks Input on Application for the Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission

The City of Austin needs your help. You have an opportunity to be on the first Commission that draws lines for our new form of government. 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.

City Auditor Ken Mory has created several web pages with relevant information that he will continuously update. Below is a summary of those pages.

10-One: Austin's Redistricting Portal
This link brings you to all information related to Redistricting into ten geographic single-member districts approved in November 2012.

10-One: Qualifications
This link gives you qualifications for serving on the 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission.

10-One: Draft of Procedures and Draft of Application
This link brings you to a draft PDF that includes a Draft of the Application for the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Public comment is sought by the City Auditor on this document.

10-One: News with Important Links
For news releases and documents, click here.

10-One: Subscribe for Updates and Application
Click here to sign up to get updates from City Auditor Ken Mory.

Join me in applying: Members of the Austin League are perfect candidates for this first account or create a new one.
--Search for lwvtx in the search box at the top of the page.
--On the left hand side of the page, under “People” click on our logo.
--Click on the “follow” button and then you will be subscribed to the LWVAA page and get updates on any of our posts.

I hope to see a bunch of new followers to our Twitter and Facebook pages in the near future! If you have any questions, get in touch with me.

~ Brigid Hall,
Social Media Intern,
brigid.hall@lwvaustin.org

Randall's Donations

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

Compass Bank Donates to LWVAA

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

Compass Bank also pays
Commission because they can be impartial and are very intelligent. Application deadline may be February 23, 2012. Please join me and make application to be on the first ever Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) 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, Past LWVAA President, mcintrye.frances@gmail.com, 512-451-1551

Community Conversations in Education

The League is receiving encouragement from the community and the school district to continue these conversations. Our plan is for the third one to focus on issues in District 2, which is represented by new board member Jayme Mathias, in early March. Then the fourth conversation will deal with issues in District 3, which is represented by new board member Ann Teich, in early May.

We will be needing the volunteer services of League members who facilitate, scribe, and assist with hosting. Details will be in upcoming issues of the Voter.

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

Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

December 4, Joann Robison
(1) City of Austin required Circuit of the Americas (COTA) to place the water line lower, to increase its size, and cover it. COTA had asked Travis County to pay, who refused. The County believes the city is responsible for the improvements they required. Added service connections and fire hydrants are not necessary for road. The County accepted the extended road.

(2) The need for two additional courts, deemed necessary due to population growth in the last decade and the associated increases in crime, was discussed in executive session. Commissioners had asked staff to explore a bill asking for the future authorization of an additional district court and an additional county court. The earliest this could be arranged would be 2015. There would be both startup costs of over $8 million and ongoing costs of over $1 million associated with these new courts.

~Joann Robison, gatorgunk@gmail.com

December 11, Karen Rankin:
(1) Commissioners discussed the possible banning of New Year’s fireworks with the Travis county fire marshal and a representative of the local fireworks association. Due to the lack of rain recently, conditions are poor, but do not quite meet the statutory level necessary for a ban. The industry has offered voluntarily to eliminate sales of “stick” fireworks, which are the most frequent cause of fire damage. Commissioners will meet again on Friday when they will receive an update on conditions and make a decision before the December 15 deadline to do so.

(2) Deece Eckstein, the county’s Intergovernmental Coordinator, described plans for a letter to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB). Currently, a fee is collected from county taxpayers, and returned to the county by the state via two programs that repair high-emission vehicles or get them off the road. The program has worked well, and is believed to have contributed

Leave a Legacy to Your League

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

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

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

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

Charitable
to the fact that the county is still below the EPA non-attainment limit, which can trigger penalties if it is exceeded. Unfortunately, that fee will soon be held by the state rather than returned to the counties unless the LBB agrees to release it. The county cannot afford to continue the program without these funds. A letter stating the achievements of the program and requesting release of the funds will be delivered by Mr. Eckstein to Speaker Straus and Lt. Gov. Dewhurst later this week.

~ Karen Rankin, karenrankin@austin.rr.com

**Membership**

**Regular and Sustaining Memberships**

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. The entire amount is paid to LWVAA and not to the Education Fund.

**League Websites**

As a member of the Austin League (LWVAA), you are also a member of the national (LWVUS) and state (LWVTX) Leagues. See the links below for an abundance of educational information.

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

**Thank You, Sustaining Members**

Special thanks to this month’s sustaining members: Judy Clack, Paul La Buda, Barbara Myers, Peggy Stewart and Kay Taebel. 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: Mary Lee Comer, Martha Hudson, Marjorie Loehlin, Ellie Pelletier, Joanne Richards, Amy Taylor, Doris Warlick and Janet Whitehead. 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. Choose an amount below. Or you may instead click here to pay your annual dues online by credit card via PayPal while providing all the above information.

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

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Contact me anytime with your League questions.

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

**Giving**

**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.

**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, 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.