March 2013

**LWVAA Calendar**

**Mon., Mar. 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., Mar. 5,** 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, 6:30 pm, **Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training.** Travis County Tax Office, 5501 Airport Blvd.

**Mon., Mar. 11,** 10:15 am, **Central Unit Meeting.** Howson Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd. "Medicaid Expansion and Texas."

**Wed., Mar. 13,** 7:00 pm, **South Unit Meeting.** South Austin Senior Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd. "Medicaid Expansion and Texas."

**Sat., Mar. 17,** 3 - 5:00 pm, **General Meeting.** Community Room, St. David’s South Medical Center, 901 W. Ben White Blvd., "Funding Texas Public Schools."

**Tues., Mar. 19,** 7:00 pm, **North Unit Meeting.** at home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr. "Medicaid Expansion and Texas."

**Sat., Mar. 23,** 11:30 am, **Healthcare Committee.** League office, 1011 W. 31st Street.

**Mon., Apr. 1,** 6:30 pm, **Board Meeting.** Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.

**Tues., Apr. 2,** 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, 6:30 pm, **Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training.** Travis County Tax Office, 5501 Airport Blvd.

**Sat., Apr. 13,** 9:30 am - 12:00 noon, **Community Conversation in Public Education.** AISD District 3, North Austin Community Recreation Center/YMCA, 1000 West Rundberg.

Back issues of the LWVAA Voter can be found at [this link](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=49l8dbdab&v=00...).

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March Unit Meetings:
"Medicaid Expansion and Texas"
If the Texas Legislature and the Governor approve Medicaid Expansion under the Affordable Care Act:

- Up to two million Texans would get health insurance of the 6 million currently uninsured.
- The federal government would cover 100% of the cost for insuring adults for the first three years and 90% of the cost thereafter.
- The federal government would send Texas $100 billion over the next 10 years.
- Cities and counties would gain more than $2 billion a year in local taxes.
- Every legislative district would see lowered health costs for local taxpayers.

Lawmakers must decide this year if Texas will extend Medicaid coverage to adults earning less than 138% of the federal poverty level—about $15,000 a year for a single person and $32,000 for a family of four. The majority of these Texans are uninsured today, and local taxpayers foot the bill when they get injured or sick.

Information above gleaned from Texas Impact reports.
To download either the Executive Summary or Full Report, click here.

Each of our three units will have a different speaker who is very well qualified to present information about the Expansion of Medicaid in Texas. Attend any or all of these meetings which are free and open to the public.

**Mon., Mar. 11**, 10:15 a.m., Central Unit Meeting, Howson Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd. Speaker: Emily Ramshaw oversees the Texas Tribune's editorial operations from daily coverage to major projects, and covers state health agencies and health policy trends. She received her bachelor's degree in Journalism from Northwestern University.

**Wed., Mar. 13**, 7:00 p.m., South Unit Meeting, South Austin Senior Activity Center, 3911 Manchaca Rd. Speaker: Laura Guerra-Cardus, MD is the Texas Associate Director of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF). CDF is a leading partner of the Texas Well and Healthy campaign to ensure every child and every Texan has access to affordable health care coverage.

**Tues., Mar. 19**, 7:00 p.m., North Unit Meeting, 7917 West Rim Dr., home of Judy Parken. Speaker: Bee Moorhead, a League member, has served as Executive Director of Texas Impact since April 2000. Previously, she spent 7 years as a senior fiscal policy analyst for the Texas Comptroller. She holds a Master's Degree from the LBJ School of Public Affairs.

~ Judy Parken, March Unit Chair, japarken@aol.com

March General Meeting:
"Funding Texas Public Schools"

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day to Learn about the Green - Money, That Is!
How Much Do you Know about Funding Texas Public Schools?
Ask Questions. Get Answers.

LWVAA's own Gwen Santiago, who is executive director of the Texas Association of School Business Officials, draws from her deep and rich experience with public school funding for a sobering yet entertaining and interactive approach to explain the how's and why's of our current system of funding public education.

Sun., Mar. 17, 3 - 5:00 pm
St. David’s South Medical Center Community Room
901 West Ben White Blvd.
Park in the south lot, parking garage, or use valet. All parking, even valet, is free. Go in the south entrance and take the elevator to the fifth floor. Follow League signs to the meeting room which has a beautiful city view.
Free and open to the public.

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

Third and Fourth Community Conversations on Public Education

About 50 people from education, community organizations, the faith community, parents, one student, and the AISD board/central administration gathered at the South Austin Community Center to consider what's right with schools in AISD District 2. District 2 is the home of Eastside Memorial High School (formerly Johnston High), about which there has been much in the news concerning its need to find a partner to boost students' achievement. So our second question focused on the qualities the participants would like to see in a partner.

The findings will be released near the end of the first week in March for anyone to read. League facilitators and recorders have remarked on the love and loyalty of the community to their schools. Largely, people have not understood the many changes that have taken place in recent years, with the removal of leaders and programs that they thought were working well. Many asked, "What's the rush?"

We believe these conversations are filling a need for people to increase their understanding while having an opportunity to say what they truly need to say. LWVAA believes that this is in fulfillment of our mission to make democracy work.

The League will sponsor its Fourth Community Conversation on Public Education in April, focusing on AISD District 3.

Sat., Apr. 13, 9:30 am - Noon
North Austin Community Recreation Center/YMCA
1000 West Rundberg

Residents from AISD District Three wishing to be participants should RSVP to us below. We will be needing the volunteer services of League members to facilitate, scribe, and assist with hosting. Please notify us if you can help on Apr. 13.

~ Nancy Oelklaus, Program VP, nancyoelklaus@gmail.com
~ Stewart Snider, Co-President, s2snider@gmail.com

(2) The Healthcare Committee met on Sat. Feb. 23 and learned a great deal from Tamara Plaut who helped write the Texas Impact report on the effect of Medicaid Expansion in Texas. At the next meeting, Carrie Tilton-Jones will report on how Board members for Central Health are chosen. Betty Williamson will report on health-related bills making their way through the Legislature. That meeting will be on Sat., Mar. 23, 11:30 am, at the League office, 1011 W. 31st St. All members are welcome.

~ Mary Cullinane, Interim Chair, mculli@sbcglobal.net

(3) The UT campus unit of the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area is partnering with other student groups to build support for women's reproductive rights in Texas. Student leaders of the UT unit are part of a student coalition to organize a legislative teach-in to inform students of the real-life impacts of cuts to family planning services in the state of Texas. After the teach-in, the League campus unit will work with other student leaders to rally students to participate in Planned Parenthood's lobby day to voice their opinions on these important issues.

~ Brigid Hall, brigid.hall@gmail.com
General Meeting for April

As a follow-up to our well attended March Unit Meetings on Water with Hydrologist Raymond Slade, Jr., we will have more experts on water at our April General Meeting. This panel will give perspective from the front line of water supply and demand, as we project Travis County water needs for the next 50 years.

- **David Meesey**, Assistant to the Deputy Executive Administrator for Water Resources and Planning and Information, Texas Water Development Board
- **Karen Bondy**, P.E., Manager, Water Resource Management Department, Lower Colorado River Authority
- **John Dupnik**, P.G., Geoscientist, Asst. General Manager and Senior Regulatory Compliance Specialist, Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District

Sun., Apr. 28, 3 - 5:00 pm
Family Life Center Bldg., Ascension Lutheran Church
6420 Hart Lane, Austin 78731
Free and open to the public.

~ Karen Haschke, Water Chair, karenhaschke@sbcglobal.net

State of the City Report

Thank you to everyone that attended the State of City dinner and fundraiser auction at Chez Zee on February 5. We had a lovely dinner and then heard our keynote speaker, **Bruce Elfant**, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voting Registrar address plans for increasing voter registration in our area.

Bruce, a League member himself, asked specifically for the League's assistance. All League members are encouraged to become or re-certify their standing as **Volunteer Deputy Registrars**. The next public trainings, held on the first Tuesday of every month, will be on March 5 and April 2 at 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 6:30 pm at the Travis County Tax Office, Elections Training Room, 5501 Airport Blvd.

Thank you to everyone who supported our live and silent auctions that evening. With your generous support, the **League raised $2,500 towards the LWVAA Education Fund**. I want to personally thank the SOC planning committee members: **Phyllis Portnoy, Alison Dieter, Jaci Collins, Carol**

Girl Rising

The film, **Girl Rising**, is the centerpiece of 10x10, a global campaign to educate and empower girls.

"If you educate girls, you will change the world,..." ~Actress Freida Pinto.

Help make this happen. Join us **Thursday, March 7th at 7:30 p.m.** at the **Regal Arbor Cinema** for a screening of the film, **Girl Rising**. This movie spotlights the stories of nine unforgettable girls born into unforgiving circumstances. It puts a face on the 66 million girls around the world who only dream of going to school.

Tickets are $10. Use this to reserve your tickets, now: [http://gathr.us/screening/785](http://gathr.us/screening/785)

If you have any questions, go to [http://10x10act.org](http://10x10act.org) or contact Jaci Collins at jacic@sbcglobal.net or 512-257-9636.
Olewin and Heidi Gibbons. A special thanks goes to our live auctioneer, Mary Gordon Spence, for donating her time to entertain us and help raise funds during the Live Auction. Thanks also to Judy Parken and Frances McIntyre for their live auction donations. Special thanks to super-bidder (and member), Bob Gregory, whose frequent and generous bidding added greatly to our success.

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

Redistricting Commission - Application Success

Members of LWVAA sponsored several workshops throughout the city, focusing on the Hispanic, Black, and Asian communities. The thrust was to encourage voters to apply for the Austin Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, and ensure the commission would reflect the diversity of Austin.

The outreach by the League, the City Auditor, Austinites for Geographic Representation, and other organizations was successful. 531 individuals applied for the 14 positions. 81 certified public accountants applied for 3 positions. The three CPS's chosen by the City Auditor will narrow the 531-person pool down to the top 60 applicants. The first eight commission members will be picked at random at a public drawing. Those eight members will select the remaining six members of the commission, with an emphasis on rounding out the panel's diversity. Then the 14-member Commission will draw the lines for Austin's ten geographic districts.

~ Frances McIntyre at mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

Co-President's Letter: Stewart Snider

My space this month is all about the Legislative Session. As you may recall, I am coordinating the Capitol Corps volunteers this year in addition to my role as LWVTX's campaign finance chair and local League co-president.

I invite you to read "Maxine's Musings" immediately below for her experience in the Capitol's hallowed halls. As my predecessor on campaign finance, Maxine's fingerprints can be found in a coalition infrastructure and in a very thorough League position on this topic. Although it's good to be as knowledgeable as possible on one's topic, I keep reminding myself I don't have to be at Maxine's level in order to make a difference. Most of us who testify for the League are fully prepared to say, "I don't know: let me get back with you on that." We know we're there to convey a general consensus of what our members believe, and it's not our job to be technical experts. (For background and details about all LWVTX positions, have a look at the Program Perspectives publication. This is a guide to LWVTX issues for 2012-2014.)

I had an opportunity to visit with Members-at-Large (MAL) Leaguers in Wimberly last week. Many of them said they would be attending the League Lobby Days at the Capitol (Feb 25 & 26), and a few agreed to help the Capitol Corps after I reminded them that there is power in numbers. It's always a delight to talk to other League members (almost half were men!) and find so many things in common. (Don't forget that I also want YOU to be part of the Capitol Corps - please call me: 512-345-7047.)

I encourage you to read the LWVTX Legislative Newsletter. It's published every second Friday. Followers of issues around the political campaign process will not want to miss my section in the next issue (March 8), where I'll have over a dozen new campaign and lobbying bills to talk about. If bill filings are any indication, this promises to be a good session for ethics. I'm sure we'll pass fewer bills...
than we prefer, but we'll have more buzz on this topic than we've had in the last several sessions, which is where reform always starts. I hope you'll continue to be a conduit for factual information about public policy -- this really is the duty of every LWV member.

I invite you to contact me if you know or want to know something about the LWV and campaign finance. All questions are welcome. I like getting questions I can answer, as well as questions that stump me.

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

**Maxine's Musings:**

**Hanging out at the Capitol**

I have written about several aspects of my time with the League of Women Voters. I have been a member of the League since about 1950. Most of the public thinks about the League in terms of getting out the vote and providing nonpartisan, nonbiased information about candidates and issues at the ballot box. However, there is another side to the League, advocating legislatively for issues of public policy League members have studied and agreed to support. Carrie Chapman Catt, who founded the League in 1920, that as voters, women were particularly suited to fight for social issues that affected not only women but children and even men. So the League focuses on providing nonpartisan, educational information on issues that affect the public but also is a nonpartisan political organization advocating for issues of public policy.

This dual identity has caused some confusion among those who are not familiar with the League. **How, they wonder, can a nonprofit organization be nonpartisan and yet advocate for controversial issues?** According to the IRS, such a situation requires a division between two entities, one that deals with administration, has a board of directors, members, a budget, and can advocate, but donations to the organization are not tax deductible. That is the League of Women Voters. The second part is the League of Women Voters Education Fund that cannot advocate and donations are tax deductible. It has a separate board of trustees and a separate budget. Both boards hold separate meetings with separate minutes.

Now that the 83rd Legislative Session is in full swing, it might be interesting to have a glimpse how the public interacts with the legislature. I have spent a good deal of time advocating for the League of Women Voters of Texas in the State Capitol and for the Austin League at Austin City Council. In the state legislature, most of the nonprofit organizations that testify are represented by paid staff who work full time and may not have an education component as does the League. The League is represented entirely by volunteers. I often found myself the only volunteer among these other nonprofits when at the Capitol - either for testimony, press conferences, strategy meetings, or meeting with lawmakers. I think my time spent over the past fifteen or twenty years could possibly have put me into the wealthy category if I had been paid!

During the legislative sessions, it is an exercise in patience and fortitude and sometimes an empty stomach to carry out the agenda for the organization you represent. Not to mention lack of bathroom breaks! Although the opportunity is there, it is not always easy for the general public to access their government to make their voices heard. At the state level, anyone with a computer can look up Texas Legislature Online and find out when the general sessions of the House of Representatives and the Senate are meeting or when committees are meeting that hold public hearings. However, since the Legislature meets for only 140 days every other year, stress starts settling in as the middle of the session approaches and the days are numbered. Generally speaking, copies of the bills in which you are interested can be found online, although it is much easier when you know the bill...
March 2013 Voter Newsletter

Democracy is not always clean and precise, but citizens do have the right to address their concerns and individuals do not provide the written copy. People are elected to pursue these issues, and despite obstacles can and do make a difference. The League presents written as well as oral testimony, although some organizations have no agenda and some do, skip the order of business and your time to speak may be in limbo. This often occurs when the chair asks for resource people to make presentations for information on certain bills which can take a great deal of time. There are no time limits on any of the speakers. Committee members often confer between themselves before any of the signed-up speakers can be called. Committee members can ask the speaker questions on any of the testimony being presented.

A committee has to have a quorum to do business, so the hearing may not start on time while members are gathering. During the hearing, individual committee members often leave the dais, some to go to another committee on which they sit, or to the side rooms for coffee and conversation, so not all the committee will hear what you have to say. That is one reason the League presents written as well as oral testimony, although some organizations and individuals do not provide the written copy.

Democracy is not always clean and precise, but citizens do have the right to address their elected officials and despite obstacles can and do make a difference.

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

Travis County Commissioners Court

February 12, Karen Rankin

(1) A proposal to create a new Emergency Services District in the Pflugerville area sparked a lengthy discussion of many aspects of the proposal. ESD 2A would require a new tax on residents of ESD 2, except those living in the city limits of Pflugerville, which has opted out of the new entity. Points made included whether the petition to form the new district meets state requirements, current service and response times of the existing district, the actual impact on local residents if the new district is created, and possible alternative plans. The court made no decision at this session, but another public hearing will take place on March 1st, and action is scheduled for that date.
(2) Commissioners voted unanimously to join a coalition of Central Texas counties to form the **Central Texas Utilities Development Corporation**. The purpose of this group will be to gain funding from the state, possibly from the proposed Water Infrastructure Fund, which may use the Rainy Day Fund money for water projects. The coalition plans to form a water distribution network to **obtain, develop, and direct water resources** in the Central Texas area. It was pointed out by Judge Biscoe that working together instead of going it alone should be a more effective strategy.

(3) A letter to the Senate Finance committee which requested that the state release funds collected by Travis County for the purpose of **repairing or removing from the road certain high-emission vehicles** was effective, according to Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator, Deece Eckstein, and he requested a similar letter be sent to the House Appropriations committee. This program is credited with helping the county avoid reaching levels of emissions that would trigger EPA sanctions.

~ Karen Rankin, Observer Corps, karenrankin@austin.rr.com

**Membership**

**Welcome, Four New Members!**

We cordially welcome four new members to the Austin League: **Ellen Hansen, Diane Olbert, Donna Raef, and Anne Teich.** 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 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, $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.

**Thank You, Sustaining Members:** Special thanks to this month's sustaining members: **Nancy Dittmar** and **Max Stout; Julia Marsden, Eliza May, Karen Rankin, Jo Reichler,** and **Dorothy Richter.** 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 Arnold, Carolyn Baker, Nancy Bessent, Wilda Campbell, Dana DeBeauvoir, Virginia Kerbow-Moore, Yvonne Khouri, Kathy Rider, Gail Rothe and Myron Hess, Virginia Stotts, Karen Swenson, and Gail and Tim Sulak.** 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 LWV of the Austin Area. 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, jparken@aol.com, 512-502-0278.

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**Charitable 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 Pooled 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.