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LWVAA Calendar

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

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

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

Sat., Mar. 14. 10:00 - 11:30 am. Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training, First Unitarian-Universalist Church of Austin, 4700 Grove, Austin.

Sun., Mar. 15, 2:00 to 4:00 pm, 2015 Texas Legislative Update, Trinity United Methodist Church. Open to the public.

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
Make Your Reservation: State of the City, March 10

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

Get Your Tickets Now! The 23rd annual State of the City dinner is fast approaching, Tues., March 10, from 6 to 9:00 pm at Green Pastures Restaurant. Come hear Mayor, Steve Adler speak on moving Austin forward as he settles into office. The League will bestow its prestigious Making Democracy Work Award to the Austin American-Statesman for its continuous and thorough reporting on the historic transition to district representation.

A silent auction benefiting the League's Education Fund will entice your taste buds to enjoy dinners at Eastside Café, Eddie V’s, Fogo de Chao, Guero’s Taco Bar and/or Moonshine Bar & Grill. If you rather do gift baskets, then check out the donations from Twin Liquors, Edible Arrangements and Soy Delites. You may want to bid on a beautiful unique hand marbled silk scarf by Austin's own Cosette Originals; or catch up on reading one of the four signed books by local writer Sarah Bird. These are just a few of the items we will have to bid on.

Don’t delay, get your tickets now. Register here. More than half of the available seats have been sold. We are sure to sell out as we did last year. For more information, contact Eliza May at email below.

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

General Meeting, March 15
"84th Legislative Session"

Sunday, March 15
2:00 - 4:00 pm
Trinity Methodist Church
4001 Speedway

The League has invited all of the Travis County delegation to the State Legislature. Even though their schedules are tight, we hope to have a good group to discuss the current legislative session and their own priorities. So far, Celia Israel, Kirk Watson and Donna Howard said they would come by. Maybe our Travis County delegation will give us information on how the session is going for them, what their priorities are and where we can help.

From the President:
League's 95th Anniversary

This month, the League of Women Voters kicks off a year-long celebration, marking the organization's 95th anniversary. The League of Women Voters of Austin Area joined our nearly 800 fellow local and state chapters in honoring this milestone.

Ninety-five years after the League's founding, members of the League in Austin are proud of the great progress it has made in "Making Democracy Work". The League has involved thousands of voters in electing government decision-makers for our city and state government and in holding them accountable for their actions."

The League has been powered by the efforts of civic volunteers and activists over the decades to successfully take on a range of key issues. Not only have we undertaken sustained efforts to improve the voting process, advocate for citizen participation in government and to protect the environment in Austin over the years, the national League has played widely acclaimed roles in nationwide efforts, including the creation of the United Nations and the protection of Americans' civil liberties from the 1950s on.
This is your chance to visit with your State legislators in person and ask your questions. The public is welcome.

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

League Prepares for Advocacy in 84th Texas Legislative Session

Capitol Corps Organizes for 84th Legislative Session
Activities have been non-stop in the past month as we solidify LWVAA member participation in the Capitol Corps! I'm proud to announce that our cadre of volunteer exceeds LWV-TX's expectations in many ways.

While the Legislature is just beginning to get organized in committees - other than Senate Finance and House Appropriations - the Capitol Corps has met twice in person and actively engaged in the electronic exchange of information. Some members have been able to offer much time and effort. Just as important are the others who have less time to offer, but are standing by to be available when needed. It takes us all to be able to provide such full-service support to LWV-TX Issue Chairs in promoting our positions.

LWVAA members signed up to participate this 84th Session include: Aileen McMurrer, Anne Roussos, Anne Clark, Barbara Frandsen, Betsy Singleton (San Marcos), Brenda Koegler, Carol Olewin, Carol Wood, Chris Frandsen, Davida Bilgrad, Dianne Wheeler, Gwen Santiago, Jane McFarland, Joanne Richards, Judy Parken, Julie Moore, Karen Hayward, Karen Haschke, Kathy Carvell, Laura Sheridan, Lea Masiello, Nan Clayton, Nancy Rowland, Sara Speights, Susan Morrison and Suzy Reid.

We are especially pleased to have Sara Speights, a former professional lobbyist, involved and helpful in training those new to these duties. She was greatly helpful in preparing Barbara Frandsen for our first testimony of the session before the Senate Finance Committee in support of Pre-Kindergarten funding and program development. Barbara did an outstanding job! LWV-TX Legislative Director (and LWVAA member) Grace Chimene has testified four times thus far, on the issues of campus carry of guns, open carry of guns, and the Medicare coverage gap.

LWV-TX Lobby Days Prepare Members for Advocacy
A number of Capitol Corps members joined LWV members from across the state Feb. 23-24 for LWV-Texas Lobby Days in the Capitol.

Attorney Chad W. Dunn of Brazil & Dunn opened the informative sessions on the first afternoon. Dunn is Legal Counsel for the plaintiffs in the Texas Voter ID litigation. He presented a detailed description of the case to overturn the Texas Voter ID requirement. While the first court to hear the case ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, it was appealed. Action by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals may happen as early as April, with likely appeal to the Supreme Court regardless of the ruling. Elaine Wiant announced LWVUS filed an amicus brief in the case on behalf of LWV-Wisconsin and LWV-TX, requesting the two cases be heard at the same time.

We will continue to fight voter discrimination and to keep secret money out of our elections in order to ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible. We'll also continue to push for improved access to health care as well as a sustainable planet for everyone. All the while, the League's historic commitment to register, educate and mobilize voters is not only stronger, but more effective than ever, utilizing such tools as VOTE411.org, and ThinkVoting, cutting-edge election information utilized by millions of voters each election cycle.

As we mark the League's 95th anniversary, and see our 100th birthday quickly approaching, we celebrate our many accomplishments. League members throughout Austin are keeping our eyes and our energies firmly on the future and the actions we will be undertaking to realize our goal: A better Austin and a better America. You can be a part by joining and participating in the many committees, activities and studies in which the League engages.

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

From the Webmaster

The web site has been updated with information about the upcoming State of the City dinner and other recent events. We posted on Facebook photos from the Elected Officials Reception. Check them out here, if you haven't seen them already.
State Representative Alma Allen of Houston regaled attendees with her advocacy suggestions and insights into the legislative process. Kathy Miller of the Texas Freedom Network thoroughly discussed the status of legislative efforts related to women's health and reproductive issues. She also previewed the organization's new campaign to be known as "Trust - Respect - Access" launching February 26. Additional information on the campaign can be found at here. New website information will be available as of the date at www.tfn.org.

Dr. Andrew Sansom, Director of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University presented a status report on water issues in the state.

Always a supporter of LWV activities, State Rep. Donna Howard provided support for room arrangements in the Capitol Complex for Lobby Days and provided her Senior Policy Analyst Brooke Bennett to offer best practices for Legislative visits to Lobby Day participants before they each head out to visit their own legislators.

LWV-TX Hosts Online Voter Registration (OVR) Forum
Voting Rights/Elections Issue Chair Cinde Weatherby and Legislative Director Grace Chimene organized an educational forum on online voter registration for House and Senate legislative staffers February 27 in the Capitol.

Samuel Derheimer, manager of voter registration efforts of The Pew Charitable Trust in Washington, DC, presented an overview on the subject based on Pew research.

The forum highlighted:

- OVR basic features and functionality and how to build a good system based on best practices of the 20 states already using OVR
- Proven benefits to voters and election officials
  - Data accuracy
  - Cost savings
  - Security and fraud prevention
  - Voter convenience
- Innovations and current trends, such as mobile-optimized sites
- Pew polling on OVR in Texas, with more than 61 percent in favor (and more than 33 percent thinking it is already in place)

The House Elections Committee is expected to meet for the first time during the first week of March and begin to hear bills the next week.

Online voter registration and other issues will be highlighted at the LWVAA Legislative Briefing Sunday, March 15. State Rep. Celia Israel, one of the OVR bill authors, is slated to attend and discuss this effort and others. See notice above.

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

Voter Registration and Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training
LWVAA members staffed VR stations at two events in late January. We responded to a request from the Texas Charter School Association to provide for Voter Registration at the Kipp School campus in south Austin on January 28th and at a Capitol steps statewide rally on January 30th. We did not register but two new voters, but did distribute some mail-in applications and received many expressions of appreciation for the League of Women Voters. Our presence was in a non-partisan capacity and not as a participant in the events. Many thanks to Chris and Barbara Frandsen, Polly Street, Hal Jennings, Julie Moore and Helen Garman for giving their time on short notice to represent the League and our Voter Services.

Citizens may get trained and sworn in as Volunteer Deputy Registrars. VDRs help register eligible citizens to vote by distributing, reviewing, and accepting completed voter registration applications. This training must be repeated every two years. Starting January 1, 2015, all current VDRs and those wishing to become VDRs must get
We agreed to meet on the **3rd Saturday of the month**. The next meeting will be **March 21** from 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 Chair and Voter Guide Editor, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

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### LWVAA Local Program Planning

Despite freezing rain, ten people showed up for the second meeting of the poverty work group on February 28th. After an extremely interesting and stimulating discussion, the group decided the focus of their work would be on “Ladders of Opportunity in Austin” a focus on what barriers people face when trying to advance economically and what policies/services (i.e., ladders) could be put in place that could improve their chances. The draft plan will cover a good deal of the content of the original plan proposed at the Annual Meeting in 2014.

At the first meeting in January, the consensus of the participants was that they needed more information themselves. They decided learning sessions with local experts would improve their understanding of the very complex problems of inequality and poverty. The group chose their priority areas for more research and concentration - poverty wages, unequal education, and segregation by income, geography and education.

The draft concept and plan, which will be shared at the Board meeting on March 2 are still in a pretty embryonic stage. Another meeting is planned for March 28th (more details to follow) where we will refine the plan for presenting to the membership at the Annual Meeting in May.

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

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### Elected Officials Reception Great Success!

At the Elected Officials Reception on Feb. 4, 2015 at Austin City Hall, the League had more than 10 elected City officials, including the Mayor and 10 out of the 11 City Council members. In attendance, were over 75 members of the public. This was the best turnout we’ve had for the Elected Officials Reception! Hal Jennings outreach and advertising was great!

Thanks to Frances McIntyre, and her team, including Jan devault and Sara Seight, for setting up the Reception, and providing great food and drinks.

~ Jaci Collins, Member Records jacic@sbcglobal.net

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### Recognition

Frances McIntyre, League Advocacy Chair, wrote a recent Op-Ed published in the *Austin American Statesman* section “Others Say” regarding open government. See article in this issue of the Voter.
The Austin American-Statesman printed an editorial by Frances McIntyre on Tuesday, February 17 under the headline "Mayor obligated to protect transparency in city affairs." Since that publication and lack of support from most city council members, Mayor Steve Adler backed away from his original position. He graciously called Frances to personally inform her of his changed position. The editorial follows:

"The League of Women Voters has been an active champion of open government throughout its history. The organization's principles include the requisite that "government bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible." Our members are constantly working on ways to ensure that the citizen's right to know is protected.

"The Austin American Statesman editorialized in Thursday's paper that Mayor Adler's proposal that reshapes city government, which was on the agenda for Thursday's Council meeting, should not be rushed to a vote, but should be delayed to accept public comment and discussion. The Mayor did postpone that agenda item. We are pleased that the public will have a longer period to examine this proposal and comment.

"The Austin League is very concerned with transparency as well as with the ability of the public to participate in decisions made by the City Council. The Mayor proposed to expand his office by using a foundation that could collect money from donors (individuals, businesses, foundations, corporations), whom he appoints but who are not responsible to the public in any way. This group will not be governed by city rules and can work in secret with no consequences. This is not transparency. At a minimum, it gives the perception that our city government will be influenced by a group that was not elected to govern the City of Austin. It is our elected Council's and Mayor's duty to see that the public's right to know is protected.

"Transparency of public bodies means that everything they do should be available to the public. The best example of transparency of a public body which comes to mind was the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (the 14 Commissioners who drew our district lines). From the application process to the drawing of the district maps, everything was either televised or on the web site. All meetings and deliberations were televised, even the hiring of staff. And minutes of the meetings, as well as comments from the public and the Commissioners were available to the public through their web site. The League applauds this Commission's example of making democracy work through transparency.

"The Austin League of Women Voters supported the citizens' initiative that gave us our current change in governance (10 district representatives and a Mayor elected at large). We believe that representative government in Austin is enhanced when voices from all areas of town are part of our City Council. We applaud Council's and Mayor's efforts to "build more meaningful opportunities for public participation in council decisions and greater transparency," as stated in their op-ed in Thursday's Statesman. We look forward to seeing how their 13 council committees provide "greater transparency and earlier, more meaningful opportunity for the community to participate in the decisions." We know that the Council and Mayor want to serve the people of Austin in a more transparent way and are confident that they will find that way, with a little help from the public."

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

In addition Frances and Jacklyn Williams received a Resolution from the City of Austin thanking them and the Austin League of Women Voters for hosting the candidate forums last fall. See resolution in this issue of the Voter.
~ Donna Pauler, Voter Editor, ddpauler@sbcglobal.net

League Advocates No Guns on Campus

The following message was forwarded from the League of Women Voters of Texas regarding concealed guns on campus. Even though this came from Florida, Texas is considering similar legislation.

"In the wake of Monday's shooting at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, the League of Women Voters of Florida urges Florida's lawmakers to resist efforts to lift a ban on carrying concealed weapons on campus.

"It is striking that unanimously, every one of Florida's university presidents and campus law enforcement agencies oppose the bill making its way through the Legislature, overturning the current ban," said League president, Deirdre Macnab.

"In a recent statement, the State University System spoke out against the proposed legislation, saying that allowing concealed carry on college campuses "is contrary to the values we embrace and could create new challenges in our ability to provide a safe and secure learning environment."
Judge Dietz talks "Education"

On February 8th, the League of Women Voters Education Committee hosted a conversation with retired Texas State Judge John Dietz. The talk was entitled The Whys and Wherefores of Public School Finance. Last August 2014, Dietz ruled in favor of a group of plaintiffs representing 600 of Texas’ public school districts. Together, these districts represent more than three-fourths of our state’s 5 million public school students. For almost two hours, Dietz shared the history of public education in Texas, beginning with an overview of article 7, section 1 of the state constitution in which it is written that it is a state duty to support and maintain a system of public free schools. Article 7 explains that it is a state duty to provide free public schools precisely because “...the diffusion of knowledge is essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people of Texas.” Dietz captivated the audience of more than 50 with historical and current data on how the state has failed to fulfill its duty to meet its constitutional obligation.

In short, the state is providing too little financial support to our state’s schools. Furthermore, of the money provided, it is distributed inequitably and inefficiently. The system, according to the Judge, needs to be studied and redesigned to be deemed constitutional.

The impact on central Texas is devastating. For FY2015, Austin ISD, a property wealthy district, will ask local taxpayers to fork over $175 million in tax dollars to the state general fund. Despite paying more to the state due to ever increasing property values, the state is actually redistributing less of Central Texas tax dollars to Texas property poor public schools. To further compound the injustice, outdated formulas leave a district like Austin ISD short of funds to meet our own high needs. 53,000 Austin ISD students, or 62% of Austin ISD’s enrollment, are on free and reduced lunch. Again, the state is providing less financial support to the entirety of our state’s free public schools and the manner in which it is doing it is both inefficient and, according to Judge Dietz, inequitable.

For more information about the Austin Area League of Women Voters Education Committee, contact Laura Sheridan at lasheredan@sbcglobal.net

Accolades to the League of Women Voters Austin Area

Jacklyn Williams and Frances McIntyre received a resolution from the City of Austin Ethics Review Commission thanking the League for its work on the candidate forums for the city.

RESOLUTION NO. 20150127-02B

WHEREAS, the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area and the City of Austin staff provided extraordinary service to the citizens of Austin during the 2014 election period leading up to the City Council November general election and the December runoff election; and

WHEREAS, a total of eleven general election in-person candidate forums were held on seven different dates in all parts of the City of Austin, were attended by 73 candidates out of a total 78 candidates, and were attended by a total of 1221 members of the public; and

"While three students suffered only minor injuries during the Bethune-Cookman incident, the situation could have ended tragically had "concealed carry" been allowed, said Deirdre Macnab, LWVF president.

"Campus law enforcement officials have said that arming students creates a situation where they cannot know the ‘good’ guys from the ‘bad’ guys and can quickly escalate an already deadly situation.

"The bill, HB 4005 and its companion in the Senate, SB 176, would allow those ages 21 years and up who hold concealed weapons permits to carry concealed firearms on all public college and university campuses. So far, the bills have passed both the House and Senate Criminal Justice Committees and are now awaiting hearings in the Higher Education Committees. The League’s Gun Safety Committee has joined the state university presidents, college presidents and campus law enforcement, faculty and student organizations in strongly opposing these bills.

"Concealed carry’ on college campuses is prohibited in 41 states. In some cases by law, in others, by university policy” said League Gun Safety Chair Patti Cookman. "In Texas, where similar legislation is pending, it has been estimated that the economic impact of campus carry (on the University of Texas and University of Houston systems) could reach nearly $47 million over six years."

Honors and Memorials

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,
WHEREAS, runoff election in-person candidate forums were held at City Hall on November 21 2014, were attended by all 16 candidates for the eight Council seats involved in the runoff election, and were well attended by the public, and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Communications and Public Information Office staff-in particular Lara Foss, AXTN Manager Keith Reeves, and Patricia Fraga, the City of Austin Communications and Technology Management Department staff-in particular Gary Luedecke, the audio visual and ATXN support staff, as well as staff of the City of Austin Convention Center provided excellent planning, implementation, and coordination for each of the in-person candidate forums; and

WHEREAS, the members of the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area lead by Frances McIntyre and Jaclyn Williams, played a key role in producing the live, in-person candidate forums, including assisting with scheduling the forums selecting the questions to be asked of the candidates at the forums, and moderating the forums; and

WHEREAS, The League of Women Voters of the Austin Area developed, facilitated, and published the results of candidate questionnaires that was sent to all candidates in the City Council general election prior to the November general election; and

WHEREAS, staff of the City of Austin Communications and Public Information Office and ATXN, in particular Laura Foss and Keith Reeves, facilitated the scheduling, taping, and airing of five-minute candidate statements for all general election candidates who chose to participate, prior to the November general election; and

WHEREAS, the forums were well attended, informative, and provided the citizens of Austin an opportunity to see, hear, meet, and learn about the candidates for each of the districts in this unusual and historic year of introduction to a 10-1 single member district city Council system; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ETHICS REVIEW COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City of Austin Ethics Review Commission expresses its sincere appreciation for the dedication of the League of Women Voters members, City Communications and Public Information Office staff, and City Convention Center staff to the electoral process and for their superb organization of the 2014 City of Austin candidate forums.

ADOPTED: January 27, 2015.

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: Two more individuals have joined our ranks as new League members: Katherine Winternitz and Sara Groff. 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.
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: Mary Blackstock, Sara Groff, Cheryl Hazeltine, Charlotte Herzele, Ruth Koenig, Catherine and Joseph Nall, Anita Privett, Jeannie Stanley, Cinde Weatherby and Dianne Wheeler. 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: Sonia Colorito, Carol Ecklekamp, Jo Ann and Ed Farrell, Barbara and Chris Frandsen, Shelley Koegler, Yvonne Khouri, Eliza May, Betty Oertel, and Karen Rankin. 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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<td>$20.00</td>
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Contact me anytime with your League questions.

~Judy Parken, Membership Chair, japarken@aol.com, 512-502-0278.
* 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, lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org, so we can list you as a member of our League's Legacy Society.