March 2018

Calendar

LWV-AA Board Meeting
Monday, March 5, 7:00 p.m.
League Conference Room #202
Members welcome.

Statewide Primary Election
Tuesday, March 6

State of the City Dinner
Wednesday, March 7th, 6:00 p.m.
DoubleTree by Hilton
Click here for more details

Cinde Weatherby, President

Bringing Out the Best in Ourselves & Others

We see it over and over again - people respond to crisis or serious challenge in a way that just doesn’t happen without it. Three current examples are worth noting to LWV-AA members and supporters.

Marching for Their Lives

In the LWV-AA’s First Vote! program we register students turning 18 and discuss reasons for voting and their civic engagement. Nothing brings this home as succinctly as the recent school attack in Parkland, FL. This horrendous event has sparked a student movement across the country, including the Austin area.

The League shouts out our support to all of these young citizens who are taking advocacy into their own hands. The impact is already impressive! Austin area students are organizing a march on March 24th, in coordination with marches elsewhere. LWV-AA will be engaged to support them. Details are still unfolding, but we anticipate LWV-AA will provide voter registration. Adults have not made any significant progress. At every opportunity that we speak with youth groups, we note that they are our future. Let us all hope this is the beginning of a new era of student activism and major reforms to rival that of the late 1960s.

For more details about the march, check the March for Our Lives - Austin Facebook page. To find out about LWV-AA’s involvement, check the LWV-AA Calendar.

Building an LWV-AA Team

You know you can depend on LWV-AA to provide you with the only comprehensive nonpartisan Voters Guide needed before each election. The Primary Guide production, led as usual by Frances McIntyre and Jaci Collins, didn’t end after devising the unbiased questions, contacting all of the candidates
and downloading the candidates’ answers for the Guide. Because the Austin American-Statesman was unable to layout, print and circulate it for us, we undertook all of production and distribution. The adversity of taking on these new responsibilities resulted in two strong teams!

We also owe a tremendous debt to Gretchen Otto, owner of Motto Publishing Services and our new Voters Guide Co-Editor; and Amber Morena and Laurie Filipelli, who also volunteered production services previously handled by the Statesman. We also commend The Community Impact team, who exceeded all expectations for printing and support.

Karen Kelley was a member for less than a day before undertaking coordination of distribution. Other League members - existing and also very recent additions - pulled together in a well-oiled machine to get thousands of printed copies distributed throughout Williamson, Travis and Bastrop Counties. The team also got the word out broadly about electronic access to the Guide. Members Debbi Voss, Joyce LeBombard, Maria Milner, Mary Cullinane, Joan Reams, Cindy Schaufenbuel, Ryann Collier, Dixie Davis and Sarah Carriker all deserve recognition for the many hours spent in planning and executing the distribution plan.

Thanks also to Mary Jane Burson and Gina McCool, who successfully managed to get the League into the Amplify Austin giving program this year. You may make donations to us throughout the year, and also arrange recurring donations. Your support of the annual State of the City Fundraising Dinner/Auction March 7th, is needed more than ever to help cover our increased costs.

Expanding Our Bandwidth with People Power

In January, we officially noted that our LWV-AA membership increased 75 percent over the past 12 months. As of February 24th, membership increased by an additional 30 members since January 31st! Almost every new member indicates they join us in search of the refuge of nonpartisanship. The crisis they confront is the pervasive stalemate of partisan disagreement of national and state elected leaders.

The growing membership diversity and interest in being actively engaged allows us to do more, generally increase the quality of our efforts for Making our Democracy Work, and better communicate those efforts to the public. Membership growth and active participation is why we have more programs and projects such as the Civic Engagement Alliance, First Vote! youth programs, Get Out the Vote efforts, and policy position research and review.

It may be challenging times, but it’s a great time to be a League member!

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**2018 State of the City Dinner and Auction**

**It’s Not Too Late!**

If you haven’t already bought your [tickets](#), we will accept payment at the door. Ticket prices of $100 for members and $125 for non-members include dinner, music, parking, live and silent auctions, and a cash bar. Bring your parking ticket inside for validation.

Our speaker is Travis County Sheriff Sally Hernandez. We will present awards to League Volunteers of the Year: Mollie Snow, JoAnn McKenzie, Hal Jennings and Dixie Davis; to Democracy in Action winner Kassie Barroquillo of the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life; and to Friend of the League Bob Gregory of Texas Disposal Systems, all of whom support LWV-AA efforts to increase voter registration and civic engagement.

**Come Early to Preview the Live and Silent Auction Packages!**

By popular demand, we will open the doors (and the cash bar) at 6:00 p.m. to give you plenty of time to bid on silent auction items and preview the live auction packages.

Spoiler alert! We have so many exciting auction items, we couldn’t wait to share a few of them with you.

**LIVE AUCTION PACKAGES**

**AUSTIN-TACIOUS STAY-CATION**
Donated by InterContinental Stephen F. Austin, TNT Tacos & Tequila, Shady Grove Restaurant, ...
Esther's Follies.

MADE IN AUSTIN
Donated by Alamo Drafthouse, Kendra Scott, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Tiff's Treats, Hotel Saint Cecilia, Lenoir, Blanton Museum of Art.

AUTHOR CHAT WITH SARAH BIRD
Donated by SARAH BIRD
Join Austin’s favorite award-winning author, Sarah Bird, for an intimate and fun-filled gathering in your home. Discuss with the author her soon-to-be-released novel, "Daughter of a Daughter of a Queen.

SPECIAL VIP TOUR OF THE LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY
Donated by BILL HAMILTON
Enjoy a special VIP behind-the-scenes tour of the LBJ Presidential Library. Tour the exhibits with up to 8 guests. You’ll also take home three autographed books by recent LBJ Library visitors: former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former LBJ Cabinet member Joseph Califano.

SILENT AUCTION ITEMS

JOIN A CONVERSATION WITH FRANCES MCINTYRE
Join longtime League leader Frances McIntyre at her home to enjoy a light lunch, drinks and a lively unlimited conversation on current events. Discussion topics are at the request of the guests.

BEE GOOD
Donated by TWO HIVES HONEY
Learn about the intriguing world of honey bees. You and a guest will join Two Hives Honey for this fun and educational experience.

EAT YOUR WAY AROUND AUSTIN
Donated by AUSTIN EATS FOOD TOURS
Taste quintessential Austin! Enjoy your choice of a unique Food Tour for 2.

HISTORICAL NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING TOUR
Donated by MICHAEL BARNES
Get active and learn! Experience an Historical Walking Tour of your favorite Austin neighborhood, guided by Barnes, Austin American-Statesman Social Columnist and Austin historian. Includes copies of "Indelible Austin," Vol. 1 and 2, featuring selected histories exploring the links between Old and New Austin.

Voters Service
Joyce LeBombard, VP Voters Service

February is a short month. But it was jam-packed!

Voters Guide

This was my first experience with the production and distribution of our Voters Guide, and boy what a learning experience it was!

I learned a lot of details about how our Voters Guide is produced:

It begins with developing our unbiased questions, coordinating with other Leagues when candidate districts overlap, getting the questions uploaded into the VOTE411.org software for candidates to enter answers. Then it requires contacting and re-contacting the candidates to get them to respond, downloading the data to be formatted and laid out for print, matching photos with the right content, getting the LWV-TX statewide candidate information to add to the Austin Area Guide’s layout, translating everything into Spanish, proofreading and editing, proofreading and editing, and more proofreading and editing (of course, not the candidates’ answers themselves as we do not edit those), determining and negotiating with the printer, determining all the who, what, where, when, and why of distribution, scheduling and tracking distribution, receiving the print version and re-bundling it for delivery, physically getting everything where it finally needs to be, getting it up online, developing the communications so people know where and when to find it in print and online, answering calls about the Guides, and restocking supplies while they last.

And I’m sure I missed something in all that. It is quite an ordeal.

But what I really learned, and what everyone should appreciate, is the level of effort and dedication that so many of our members display in the process of getting it into the hands of voters.

Cinde thanked people in President’s "News to Use" so I won’t list them all here again. But I want to add my sincere thanks and admiration to everyone. Thank You to each and every one of you who played any part. Everyone was incredible!
We printed 13,000 English (52 pages) and 4,000 Spanish (60 pages) issues of the Voters Guide. As of this writing, we have distributed all but about 100 of them after restocking many locations.

You can find the complete Voters Guide online at our website LWVAustin.org or to receive a personalized ballot and review those candidates VOTE411.org. Printed copies are in all public libraries in Bastrop, Travis, Williamson counties as well as other locations listed on our website.

First Vote!

Our efforts to educate and register youths continued. Each event was different and a learning experience for us as well. We held three First Vote programs:

- **Gonzalo Garza Independence High School** - This school does a lot with their students about civic engagement. We did our First Vote slide presentation, and the teachers stepped in and created a custom version of our student activities. It was cool! They used this custom version to teach the students who their representatives are. Sixty-five (65) students attended the assembly. We registered 49 and 18 of them opted-in to receive election reminders from us.

- **Akins High School** - This was a last minute request. It was an unusual event for us as we were in the classroom for only a few minutes. Teachers then sent students out to the hallway for us to register. We also had a registration table during their Senior Fundraiser assembly. We ended up registering 45 students and 26 students opted for election reminders.

- **Lyndon Baines Johnson Early College High School** - We talked to about 30 students using the full interactive First Vote presentation along with the video of the voting machine and student activities teaching them how to look up voting information. We registered 8 students, with 5 students requesting election reminders.

Thanks to volunteers Maureen Mercado, Donna Pardue, Beverly Millson, Gina McCool, Karen Eikner, Michelle Carlson, Debbi Voss, Mary Jane Burson, Sue Naylor, Parul Desai, and David Reynolds who staffed these events. Maureen has several First Vote events already scheduled during March, April and May. She and Jacklyn Williams are working on scheduling more.

I hope you will consider volunteering because working with the students is so important and fun! We need presenters as well as VDR assistants.

We have two First Vote training sessions scheduled for March 8th and March 10th. If you haven’t received a SignUpGenius email inviting you to attend one of the training sessions, but would like to attend, please contact me at VP-votersService@lwvaustin.org.

Register & Vote

After the February 5th deadline to be registered and vote in the Primary, we began get out the vote events (GOTV) and also continued voter registration.

We did 7 events and registered more than 43 voters in Travis and Williamson County. Some of the events:

- Several Alamo Drafthouse locations during showings of the "Black Panther" movie,
- A Waller Creek Conservancy event
- The LGTBQ Queer Dance Freakout Party.
- And lots more!

All of our R&V events are important. Here are pictures from several of them for you:
**Position Statement Update**
Lea Masiello, VP Programs and Mary Cullinane, Program Director

The Health Care Committee met in February and has made a lot of progress on evaluating and improving on our current position statements. They are still in editing mode but will be ready with proposed changes and research at the annual meeting.

The Affordable Housing Committee has been very busy, first meeting with Walter Moreau, executive director of Foundation Communities, and then with Kathy Tyler from Women in Affordable Housing. Both meetings proved very helpful in understanding the broader picture of developing more affordable housing units in Austin. Mr. Moreau explained the process of securing financial backing for renovating and building housing units that the average working person can afford. Foundation Communities provides a wide range of housing for single adults and families, along with setting aside a percentage of units for the homeless. Their approach to housing is holistic, as seen through their social services, learning centers, and opportunities for residents to get healthy, get educated, and increase their economic status.

Kathy Tyler is on the board of Housing Works, an umbrella organization bringing together a number of affordable housing communities and resources. Ms. Tyler explained the history behind some of the neighborhood community development corporations, such as Clarksville, Blackshear, and Guadalupe, and preserving the neighborhoods for the current residents, rather than seeing them become gentrified. Housing Works offers tours of affordable housing in Austin, and the committee is looking into arranging a tour for LWV members. Take some time to browse the website of Housing Works, at www.housingworksAustin.org. You will learn a lot from their research and publications. We were especially interested in their publication on affordable housing by city council district.

**Save the Date**: Mobility General Program, April 8, 3-5pm, Sustainable Food Center.

The Mobility (renamed from Transportation) Committee has been meeting regularly and establishing key points for updating the LWV-AA position. This program is currently in the planning stages. We should have more information soon, so watch for an email message with more details.

**LWV-AA Provides Testimony to the City of Austin Charter Commission on the Seattle Voucher System**

Feb. 12, 2018

Good evening. I'm Frances McIntyre with the League of Women Voters Austin Area. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The League of Women Voters has been registering voters, educating voters, and trying to encourage them to express their will through their vote since 1919.

We strive to improve methods of financing campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and promote citizen participation in the political process.

In pursuing those goals, we were excited when we heard about the Seattle Voucher System, a system that has already proved itself in several Seattle elections and does, in fact, allow for more...
participation by candidates who are eligible, but not wealthy.

It also encourages, in a meaningful way, a growing number of private citizens to participate in the elections. Vouchers — what a unique way to approach citizens who pay little attention to elections. The League is always trying to come up with ways to get out the vote. It has been a frustrating experience. The number of people who actually get to the polls is shameful. If Mr/Ms Voter can actually give money in the forms of vouchers to the candidate of their choice they may feel that their opinion counts. The records from Seattle elections suggest that this part of the program increases with future elections.

The requirements for candidates who wish to participate in the program and spend the vouchers are reasonable and doable – small contributions, petition signatures and a limit on their campaign spending. How about that – a low cost campaign? Our present campaign financing situation seldom opens the door for those who are eligible, but without means to compete.

We believe this is the time for Austin to join Seattle in the Democracy Voucher Program. Recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of people interested in active engagement in the political process and the numbers of new people (particularly women) who are running in the primary is amazing. The League’s Voters Guide for the Primary Election, which will be online sometime this week, (we hope) is 52 pages long because of the contested races.

The proof is in the pudding and Seattle has proved that this pudding is yummy. And it works. Now is the time for Austin to join up. Making Democracy Work is an ongoing goal of the League and we urge the Charter Commission to support this effort and build a better campaign finance system like the Seattle Democracy Voucher System for Austin.

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**Membership Report and Interest Survey**

Brenda Koegler, Membership Director

*Welcome New Members!* Hope you have had the chance to attend one of our new member monthly coffees. We hold new member coffees to serve as a mini-orientation to help you get involved as soon as possible. If you have not had a chance to attend one or would like another opportunity to learn more about the League, please let me know. And a special thank you to this month’s Renewing and Sustaining members! We are grateful to Sustaining Members for their additional financial support for our local League.

**Welcome, New Members:** Pamela Abee-Taulli and Jane Parker, Kathleen Boyd, DeeAnne Bullard, Therua Calbournes, Judith Daniels, Sarah Davidson, Kathleen Doviken, Kaitlin Ekberg, Rachel Elberg, Alan Ferguson, Edna Fuller, Michael Keller, Stephanie Land, Sarah Jowinly, Kathryn Kitchen and William Coats, Kitty McKinney, Sharon Moore, Carolyn Osborne, Karen Phillips, Mike Polston, Carly Reffirm

**Thank You, Sustaining Members:** Mary Jane Burson and Mike Polston, Debra Danburg and Randy Chapman, Nancy Dittmar and Maxwell Stout, Sandra and Lawrence Fox, Bill Hamilton, Louise Hasty, Michael Keller, Yvonne Khouri, Kathryn Kitchen and William Coats, Sharon Moore, Karen Phillips, Gail Sulak, Doris Willite, Ruth Yanoff

**Thank You, Renewing Members:** Heather Becker, Amanda Boudreauilt, Nancy Busbev, Kathleen Hackett, Melanie and Tim Mahoney, Kathi Miller, Karen Nafe, Anne Rioux, Paula Wiesner, Jacklyn Cooper-Williams, Robyn Simonettmeaux-Williamson

As a member of the Austin League, each of you is also a member of the national and state leagues. See the links below for an abundance of educational information.

[www.lwvaustin.org](http://www.lwvaustin.org)  [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org)  [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

**Member Interest Survey:** We are very interested in seeing what in particular interests you and why you joined the League. Click on [Select Your Action Involvement](http://www.lwvaustin.org) to complete the survey. Please fill it out and hit submit. We will then connect you to the appropriate League leaders.

**Need more information?** Visit our webpage for more information on new memberships and membership renewals.

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**Thank you for supporting the League!**

**Memorial/Honorary**

Cynthia McColom in honor of Michelle Milford Morse
Kristina Trotta in honor of Dee Jackson
Donations: John C. Loehlin, Frances McIntyre, Ruth E. Yanoff, Melissa Miller, Guadalupe Sosa, Heather Bexer, Sarah Davidson, Katherine Richards, Janice Cooke

Voters Guide: Meg Wilson, Nancy Neveal, Barbara Frandsen, Lonny Stern, Tricia Berry, Kay Taebel, June Conway, Otis Rhea Schmidt, Peter Uhrig, Sula Howell, David King, Judy D. Coker, Benny Souder

Randall's Good Neighbor Program gives the Austin League a percentage of sales from members who link the League to their Remarkable Cards. Complete this document and return to any Randall's store. Our account number is 465.

Making a legacy donation to the League of Women Voters Austin Area in your will is the easiest way to offer support of the League's work for years to come. Learn how to leave your legacy and become a member of our League's Legacy Society.

Open Government, Engaged Citizens: A Conversation of Texas' Public Information Act

Presented by The Texas Public Policy Foundation, the Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas, the Texas Press Association, the Texas Association of Broadcasters and Public Citizen

Texas once led the nation in government transparency, but a series of recent developments have stymied the public's ability to access information and provide opportunities for public comment about how your tax money is being spent and about who is acting on your behalf. This new dynamic has spurred many to call for change. Join the Texas Tribune's Ross Ramsey and our panel of policy experts to discuss what changes, if any, can be made to strengthen the Public Information Act and how Texas can let more sunshine in. This is a free event, so register early to get a ticket - Open Government, Engaged Citizens: A Conversation on Texas Public Information Act.

When: Thursday, March 29, 2018 from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM (CDT)
Where: Texas Public Policy Foundation

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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.