November 2012

LWVAA Calendar

Fri., Nov. 2, Early Voting ends for General Election.

Mon., Nov. 5, 6:30 - 9:00 pm, Board Meeting, the Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.

Tues., Nov. 6, 7 am - 7 pm, Election Day. Travis County voters may vote at any Vote Center or polling place in addition to their own precinct.

Thurs., Nov. 8, 7 pm, Conference call on education issues. Click here for details.

Mon., Nov. 12, 10 am - 12 noon. Central Unit Meeting, public welcome. "High Stakes Testing." Home of Nancy Neavel, 2905 Scenic Drive, 78703.

Tues., Nov. 13, 7 - 9 pm, North Unit Meeting, public welcome. "High Stakes Testing." Home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr., 78731.

Mon., Dec. 3, 6:30 - 9:00 pm, Board Meeting, the Senior Activity Center, 2874 Shoal Crest Avenue, near N. Lamar and W. 29th Streets. Open to all members.


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

Co-President's Letter: Stewart Snider

This month's memo will be short. All I have on my mind right now is getting out the vote.

At League events around Election Day, we often ask people to take a friend with them when they vote. I have a related request -- please contact the people you know and tell them about the League's website, Vote411.org. You type in your address and a ballot of just the candidates and propositions for your precinct are activated. All the text in Vote411 is the League's text from our Voters Guide. If you haven't already, be sure to make use of it yourself and request that Vote411 email your ballot choice summary to you.

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.

The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of 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 to anyone else.

Contact Us
The vast majority of Austin voters still don’t realize how long this ballot is. As civic educators we need to tell them. A great way to start that conversation is to mention how many items you will have on your ballot, which is the information that Vote411.org provides.

For those who ask your advice on how to vote for all the propositions, I have some thoughts. As Leaguers, we want people to make up their own minds, but sometimes the best way to get people thinking about issues is to express our own views. Our own Vote411 ballot summary can do just that -- it even offers to send your summary to people you know.

If you’re uncomfortable with sharing your summary, I ask you to think of it this way: Everyone's vote is influenced by the views of others. Don’t you want YOUR views included in what your friends and family are considering as they go to the polls? ~Stewart Snider, Co-President, s2snider@gmail.com

Co-President's Letter: Carol Olewin

Help Wanted - Web Site Volunteers Needed: (1) Help is needed with posting items on our website via WordPress. (2) Help is needed in developing our website. Contact Stewart Snider at 345-7047 or s2snider@gmail.com if you might be willing to help with either or both of these tasks.

Help Wanted - Volunteer Speakers Needed: Speakers are needed to answer requests from local groups for presentations about the history and mission of the League. Recommend at least 5 years involvement with a League, regardless of location, and a desire to go out and meet people. Contact Carol Olewin at 380-0088 or c.olewin@gmail.com.

Voter Registration Drives: Over 200 new voters filled out registration cards at the Austin Community College voter registration drives headed by Susan Morrison with assistance from Sylvia Clapp-White and Jacklyn Williams along with many, many other League volunteers. [See Susan's article to the right.] Many League members became deputy voter registrars and were able to help with the many requests from the County Elections Clerk Dana DeBeauvoir for assistance to register voters around the county. Jacklyn Williams coordinated the many requests to register voters at the many different locations around the city and county.

Candidates Forums: We hosted, facilitated or cosponsored three candidate forums. (1) In Caldwell County we facilitated the County Commissioners forum for Precincts 3 and 5, spearheaded by Jacklyn Williams.

(2) In Travis County, we co-sponsored with the Coffee Party a state legislative candidates forum for House Districts 47, 48, 51, and Senate Districts 21 and 25 spearheaded by Stewart Snider and Joanne Richards. A video of the forum is posted on the Leagues website: www.lwvaustin.org.

(3) In Austin, we facilitated an Austin ISD trustees forum for Places 2, 3, 5 and at-large candidates in conjunction with the Austin Council of PTA’s, spear-headed by Nancy Oelklaus. A video of the candidates forum is posted on the League website. www.lwvaustin.org.

Community Meeting: We sponsored a second Community Conversation on Education
in AISD District 1 at Memorial United Methodist Church on October 20. The topic was Middle School Education. The church donated the facility for this event and their pastor was a participant. About 50 members of the community attended along with League facilitators and recorders. Carol Eckelkamp, a new League member who joined as a result of the June Community conversation on Education, spearheaded this District 1 Community Conversation. Nancy Oelklaus is consolidating the recorders' notes so that a final report can be emailed to all participants.

**Voters Guide: Frances McIntyre** and her League of helpers successfully pulled off the largest Voters Guide in the history of the Austin League. This season's guide provided candidate information on the President of the United States; US Senate; US House of Representatives; Texas Supreme Court; the Court of Criminal Appeals; the Third Court of Appeals; Railroad Commissioner; State Board of Education; Texas State Senate; Texas State House; County District Court Judges; County Attorney; County Commissioners, District Attorney; Sheriff; County Tax Assessor-Collector; for Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties; Austin Community College; Austin Independent School Districts; as well as 11 City of Austin Propositions and 7 City of Austin Bond Propositions and the Central Health District Proposition. Whew! A big thanks to the Austin American-Statesman newspaper and the army of people that helped produce and distribute this November's Voters Guide.

**Office Volunteers:** Election time makes the League office a very busy place. The office volunteers were fielding up to 20 to 25 calls a day over the past few weeks from people requesting information on voting. They had requests for Voters Guides as well as requests for information about Voter ID, voting locations, ballots by mail, how to use Vote411.org and how to get a copy of the ballot. The League's email account was also busy, with several questions on those same topics being posed on a daily basis.

If you weren't able to participate in the many League activities this election season, don't worry, the Legislative season is around the corner and starts in January.
~ Carol Olewin, Co-President, colewin@gmail.com

**Unit Meetings:**
"More on High Stakes Testing"

There was a great deal of interest sparked in topics raised by all the speakers at the October 8 panel on "High Stakes Testing" at the UT Club that the League co-hosted with the UT Club League of Business Leaders. Susan Schultz from TAMSA, Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment, was one of the speakers at that event. The League has invited some of her colleagues to continue this conversation at our unit meetings: Julie Cowan, Theresa Trevino, and Laura Yeager. TAMSA, www.tamsatx.org, is a statewide, grassroots, parent organization that is concerned about testing.

Legislation at the state level resulted in the end-of-course (EOC) exams and the high stakes attached to them. Testing has become a concern as the stakes have risen measurably with the new STAAR-EOC system (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness- End-of-Course Exams) that took effect last year. There is a great deal riding on these exams for individual students, schools, and districts. Come learn about the EOC's, the STAAR Exams, NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and much more. With adding two events for a total of seven at different Austin Community College (ACC) campuses during the months of September and October. ACC was very helpful in providing tables, schedules, and rooms for us. The groups LWV-Austin partnered with to accomplish this were: National Women's Political Caucus Education Foundation, American Association of University Women, Delta Sigma Thela Sorority Austin Alumnae Chapter, Travis County Women Lawyers Association, Education Austin, Las Comadres, and Hispanic Women's Network.

We came in under budget of our grant and will follow up with new voters before and after this election, and next year. Our goal is to inspire them to make voting a lifelong habit. The data has been entered into a database that will be reported to LWVUS.

As a draw, we showed Miss Representation, a film that premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, which explores how the media’s misrepresentations of women have led to the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence. For more info, go to: http://www.missrepresentation.org/

Thanks to all the LWV members who trained as Volunteer Deputy Registrars and registered voters across the city, and especially those who helped with ACC!
~ Susan Morrison, Grant Chair, susan.morrison@lawyer.com

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**Education Telephone Study Group**
widespread concern about testing, the Legislature may take a second look in the next session. The League has had several state-wide studies on education, and it is a legislative priority again this session.

**Mon., Nov. 12**, 10 am the Central Day Unit will meet at the home of Nancy Neavel, 2905 Scenic Drive, 78703. [Note location and time change since the Howson Library is closed for the Veterans Holiday.] Speakers from TAMSA are Julie Cowan and Theresa Trevino. Coffee will be served.

**Tues., Nov. 13**, 7 pm, the North Evening Unit will meet at the home of Judy Parken, 7917 West Rim Dr., 78731. Speaker from TAMSA is Laura Yeager, a new League member!

We especially hope NEW MEMBERS can attend one of these two units so we can recognize you. All members and the public are welcome to attend either session.

~ Judy Parken, Membership Chair and North Unit Chair, japarken@aol.com

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**League Advocacy:**
**Where Are We on Prop. 3 (10-1)?**

We are nearing the end! I’m talking about the election, of course. Even with all the speculation, we don’t know how it will turn out. The Austin League has been supporting one proposition on the ballot, Proposition 3 (10-1). I want to thank all the League folks who have generously contributed to our efforts to inform voter and persuade them to vote for this proposition. You have contributed in many ways: making donations, putting yard signs in your lawns, hanging door-hangers explaining and promoting Prop. 3, and talking to your neighbors and friends about this ballot measure.

This 10-1 movement is larger and more diverse than any that I have seen in Austin. A coalition of 30 organizations and many, many individuals came together almost a year ago. They were centered on having geographic representation for our City Council. Several months later, after considering many plans, they agreed that a 10-1 plan was the most fair and representative of the city. They obtained 33,000 signatures on a petition that was put on the ballot and that is what the Austin League supports. The efforts of educating the public began and included many strategy meetings of the coalition, speakers went to many organizations, debates were held in many venues with the 8-2-1 (the Council’s plan), press conferences, op-eds and letters to the editor, a rally, a web site was launched and kept up, signs and door-hangers were printed and distributed, videos were made. The work continues with folks working early voting places and precincts on Election Day.

The biggest effort has been toward educating the public, and it isn’t easy. The League has been working to encourage informed voting for over 90 years and we’ve done a pretty good job, but challenges are still out there. The Austin League is respected and admired. The 10-1 coalition was thrilled to have our endorsement and it furthered the cause.

Since you will be getting this Voter before the November 6th election, I hope you will help with the last effort to get Prop. 3 passed. If you stay 100 feet from the election...
area in your precinct, you can stand with a sign or hand out little cards that promote Prop. 3. Contact me if you want any materials (451-1551 or at the email below.) Keep your fingers crossed too.

~ Frances McIntyre, Study Chair, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com

Viewing Voters Service

October was a very challenging month as we engaged in numerous voter registration drives, candidate forums and voter education activities. We could not have done everything we did without the support and participation of our many volunteers who answered the call to serve in great numbers. Thank you to all who were able to come out, and to all who did work behind the scenes to make every effort a success. Our special thanks to Dana DeBeauvoir, Ginny Ballard and Michael Winn from the Travis County Clerk’s office for providing the Powerpoint presentation we used to educate voters on the lengthy ballot. November 6 is almost here and we hope everyone will exercise his or her right to vote.

One of the things I was constantly reminded of as we met with candidates and citizens of Travis and surrounding counties was the great reputation that the League of Women Voters has for our professionalism, being non-partisan and fair in all of the work we do. Many indicated an interest in joining the league while others asked how they could support us in other ways.

We learned in the process that voters rely on our information to educate themselves about issues that are important to their daily lives during an election season. Our position on single member districts was recognized by many as a very forward-thinking action. This year, citizens were waiting for the Voters Guide to be published and have been very complimentary of the work that went into publishing it in the Statesman. Thank you to the team who diligently worked on it to ensure timely and accurate information.

~Jacklyn Williams, VP Voters Service, jacklynwilliams@aol.com

Building the League's Name on the UT Campus

The UT Campus Unit of our local League is off to a busy start since becoming an official student organization! For our first meeting, Ashley Shew (another League member) and I organized a debate viewing and pizza party. We wanted to host an event that would draw some interest, so we screened the Jon Stewart/ Bill O’Reilly debate. The comical nature of the program allowed students to come, relax, and meet new people while still learning about the important work of the League. We ended up with 27 attendees and even registered a voter!

In addition, the UT campus unit assisted co-president, Stewart Snider and member, Dianne Wheeler to give on-campus presentations. We spoke to the Latino Leadership Council and to a group of international exchange students studying at UT. They were both great opportunities to spread our name on campus and to distribute Voters...
are needed to be knowledgeable. Two years are required by state law, but this year may apply to continue, there will be opportunity for applications for two-year terms - with two expiring at the end of 2012, and three expiring at the end of 2013. While the hope and expectation is that the two members with expired terms this year may apply to continue, there will be opportunity for applications for interested parties. There will be a long learning curve for members of the authority: two years are needed just to get up to speed and to complete the many courses that are needed to be knowledgeable. Two years are required by state law, but

The UT unit thanks LWVAA Education Fund for purchasing 2,000 copies of the Voters Guide that we distributed across the campus.

Be on the lookout for more updates from the LWVAA UT campus unit. Ashley Shew and I are working hard to plan events that will get young people civically engaged.

~Brigid Hall, UT Unit Leader, brigid.hall@gmail.com

Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

October 9, Karen Rankin: A proposal was made to share with the City of Austin the cost of hiring a consultant for preparation of a regional community wildfire protection plan in coordination with the Joint Wildfire Task Force. The Court agreed with the recommendation to the Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) department to use a maximum of $100,000 of that department’s budget toward that expenditure.

Information regarding the four salamanders being considered for the endangered species list by the US Fish and Wildlife Service was shared with the Court. Members of the TNR department explained that only two of the four exist in Travis County, and used maps to show the areas in which they can be found. They further explained that, of those areas, only three or four are in unincorporated portions of Travis County, and that only a small part of those areas are developable. TNR stressed that the quantity and quality of water in the habitat of these salamanders is the most important factor for their survival. Private landowners on whose property the salamanders are found must obtain a permit if they do anything that will affect any springs on their land. The Court approved the final draft of the contract with HID Global for a rebate on county taxes if certain provisions are met. Commissioner Eckhardt voted against the agreement.

October 23, Joann Robison: The Court is looking for three to four people to appoint to a joint subcommittee of the Family and Children’s School Task Force. The County will be looking to add diversity including possible representatives from county school districts outside AISD. If you have recommendations, they should be addressed as soon as possible to Shirley Fleming.

Terms of service for appointments to the five-member Housing Authority were discussed along with the need for more stability. The recommendation is to have two-year terms - with two expiring at the end of 2012, and three expiring at the end of 2013. While the hope and expectation is that the two members with expired terms this year may apply to continue, there will be opportunity for applications for interested parties. There will be a long learning curve for members of the authority: two years are needed just to get up to speed and to complete the many courses that are needed to be knowledgeable. Two years are required by state law, but

Brigid Hall, UT Unit Leader, brigid.hall@gmail.com

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 the League a small percentage for Internet and phone transactions. For information, contact Paul Olewin.

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appointments have no term limits.

Getting added to the list for affordable housing is now restricted; and the list would increase by thousands if it were opened to the public. Commissioner Davis put out a call to the city to provide more tax relief in an effort to keep affordable housing in Austin.

There was a hearing on the F1-5K run November 4 at the F-1 Circuit of the Americas track. Everything seems to be in place. They are expecting five thousand runners on the track. If the fire department has issued a certificate of occupancy, there will be an open house in the grandstands for runners and an invited group of box holders and other VIPs. This will provide a small-scale test of traffic control, EMS, etc. for the Formula 1 Circuit of the Americas race two weeks later, November 16-18.

~ Karen Rankin, karenrankin@austin.rr.com
~ Joann Robison, gatorgunk@gmail.com

Membership

Welcome, New Members!
We cordially welcome three new members to the Austin League: Sharon "Shay" Blankenship, Delpeha Jester, and Laura Yeager. 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 the links below for an abundance of educational information.

All who have joined the League during the past year will be recognized and welcomed at upcoming Unit Meetings.

Thank You, Sustaining Members
Special thanks to this month's sustaining members: Shelly Baumgartner, Sharon "Shay" Blankenship, Karen Haschke, Delpeha Jester, Betty Owen, and Doris Wilhite. 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: Kathy Akers, Natalie Balden, Mary Blackstock, Debra Danburg and Randy Chapman, Linda Friedman, Brigid Hall, Emma Hampton, Hugh Moore, Judy Moore, Belia Nichols, Margit and Arnold Orange, and Joann Robison. 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 St, Austin, Texas 78705. Checks may be made out to the Austin League of Women Voters. Or you may instead click here to pay your annual dues online while providing all the above information. 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. In either case, the League is grateful for your support!

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 LWVAEF’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 LWVAEF.

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

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

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**League Websites**

There is an ABUNDANCE of excellent information on the three League websites. Do check them out.

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

Any member or prospective member may contact me with your League questions.

~**Judy Parken**, Membership Chair, [japarken@aol.com](mailto:japarken@aol.com), 512-502-0278.

**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](mailto:plannedgiving@lwv.org).