October 2012

LWVAA Calendar

Mon. - Fri., through Oct. 8, 10:30 am, Travis County Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training, 5501 Airport Blvd.

Mon., Oct. 1, 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., Oct. 2, 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, or 6:30 pm, Travis County Volunteer Deputy Registrar Training, 5501 Airport Blvd.

Tues., Oct. 2, 5 - 7:00 pm, Voter Registration on National Night Out at four sites of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin. See Voters Service article for locations and to volunteer.

Wed., Oct. 3, 4 - 6:00 pm, Voter Registration at two sites of Greendoor Housing for Homeless Veterans. See Voters Service article for locations and to volunteer.

Mon., Oct. 8, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm, "High Stakes Testing" panel and lunch. See School Testing article for reservations.

Tues., Oct. 9, Last day to register to vote in General Election.

Thurs., Oct. 11, 6:30 pm, Lockhart County Commissioners' Candidate Forum. See Candidate Forums article for details and to volunteer.

Sat., Oct. 13, 2 - 4:30 pm, Texas State Legislative Candidates' Forum. See Candidate Forums article for details and to volunteer.

Sun., Oct. 21, LWVAA 5-County Voters Guide available in the Austin American-Statesman and online at lwvaustin.org.

Sun. Oct. 21, 1:30 - 3:30 pm, AISD School Board Candidate Forum. See Candidate Forums article for details and to volunteer.

Mon., Oct. 22, Early Voting starts for General Election. Registrants may vote at any location.

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

Tues., Nov. 6, 7 am - 7 pm, Election Day. Voters may vote at any Vote Center in addition to own polling place.
Co-President's Letter: Stewart Snider

Our League's Kickoff on Sept. 16 was the best-attended Austin League event in years. A very informative presentation on the health care situation in Travis County was presented which Nancy Neavel summarizes elsewhere in this issue of the Voter.

By now you probably know that Texas' controversial Photo ID law was rejected by a Federal Court in late August, so ID requirements for the November election will not change. Please tell everyone you know that it won't be difficult for anyone to vote this fall. We don't want any registered voter to have the mistaken notion that they won't be able to vote for lack of some new requirement. Also in late August, another Federal Court rejected Texas' redistricting plan, so this fall's elections will operate with the interim districts, drawn by another court, that we used in the Primary. The next Legislative Session will have to redistrict again. Add to this the continuing budget, education, and health care issues, and it's easy to see that the League's continuing call for good governance on the state level has never been more important.

This year's Voters Guide may be the largest document we have ever produced. The upcoming ballot may be the busiest we've ever had - federal races, all state legislative contests, local AISD and ACC boards, judges, and a host of city and county referenda. You can download our Voters Guide by Sun., Oct. 21 at lwvaustin.org.

In addition, the League's Vote411.org website will be a huge help. You provide your address, and it returns a ballot just for your voting precinct, with candidate and issue information. You can even "vote" there and print a summary to carry with you into the poll so you don't have to remember everything or page through a marked up Voters Guide.

There are two ballot items the Austin League has positions on:

City Charter Proposition 3, which calls for a change to geographic districts and a citizen's redistricting commission. We have advocated in favor of that proposition. See Frances McIntyre's article which summarizes the history and rationale of our League's position.

Central Health Proposition 1, which calls for a tax increase to pay for a medical school in Austin and for many other improvements to make healthcare more available to area residents. The League Board could not advocate for this proposal, because so much of the money is about the medical school - an issue on which we have no written position. However, the League does support the expansion of health care services for the indigent and near-poor, as well as for an expansion of mental health services. See Nancy Neavel's article for a summary of the presentation at our Kickoff meeting.

Leaguers continue to register voters at ACC, and are hustling to answer requests from other local organizations for registration events, including public housing venues and facilities for homeless veterans on October 2 and 3. See Jacklyn Williams' article.

Please talk to everyone you know about what you read in the Voter and in our membership "blasts." The more Leaguers talk, the more civic dialogue enters public discourse. Don't you wish more people talked politics like we do?
Co-President's Letter: Carol Olewin

The League office has a new location. After 30 years of being at one office location, the League has moved to a different location, but still in the same building (1011 W. 31st Street, near the corner of N. Lamar.) We are delighted with our new office layout as we now have a window over looking a green belt along Shoal Creek. This is a temporary location until the landlord finishes the remodeling of our building. Our permanent location will be in the same building, and have a window too!

A big thanks go out to all the members that pitched in to help with the move: Judy Clack, Frances McIntyre, Sheila Milner, Barbara Myers, Margit Orange, Judy Parken, Stewart Snyder, and Doris Wilhite. Having a man there was a huge help when moving the file cabinets and other heavy, awkward pieces. Thanks, Stewart!

I attended a seminar for 501(c) Tax Exempt Organizations sponsored by the Texas Association of Non-Profit Organizations and conducted by the Internal Revenue Service. I'm proud to announce that the Austin League is in compliance with IRS reporting requirements for an organization of our size.

~Carol Olewin, Co-President, colewin@gmail.com

Reservations Still Open:
"Does High-Stakes Testing Create a Better Workforce?"

During our "Community Conversation on Public Education" on June 16, many participants expressed concerns about standardized testing and educating students for vocations. This is the focus of a joint meeting of the Austin League of Women Voters and the University of Texas Club League of Business Leaders.

Monday, October 8
11:30 am - 1:00 pm
UT Club, 2108 Robert Dedman Drive
$25 fee includes lunch and parking.
Reservations are required.
Email jetta.felder@ourclub.com or call 512-477-5800.

Moderator: Nancy Oelklaus, Vice President for Program, LWVAA; Author of Excellence in Education: Culture and Leadership in Winning Districts.

Panelists include:

- Susan Dawson, President and Executive Director of the Education Equals Economics (E3) Alliance, a regional collaborative created to increase educational outcomes and
lead Central Texas to economic prosperity.

- **Dr. Michael Marder**, Professor of Physics and Co-Director of UTeach (at the University of Texas), who has an innovative method of presenting data that makes it easy to understand how Texas’ education system is working.
- **Susan Schultz**, of Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA), a statewide grass roots organization of concerned parents that supports a more reasoned approach to student testing.
- **Kurt Summers**, president of Austin Generator Service and chair of the education foundation for the National Federation of Independent Business.
- **Adrian Zamona**, a student from Austin High School, who will speak about how the state’s standardized testing system affects students.

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

### Voters Service Activities

#### Voter Registration: September

September was a very busy month for Voters Service and we expect October to be the same. We are fortunate to have a wonderful cadre of over 25 League volunteers who have been deputized by Travis County to register voters in Travis County. Voter registration was held at the First Human Rights Coalition Convention Saturday, September 1. We successfully serviced over 100 individuals at the Mexican American Independence Day Festival and Health Fair sponsored by Univision Radio, Sunday, September 9. Thank you to the seventeen volunteers who worked in shifts throughout the day.

**Susan Morrison** coordinated League members who volunteered to register students at five Austin Community College events under our LWVUS Grant, including ACC Constitution Day, Hispanic Heritage Day, and the National Voter Registration Day. Also on September 25, other members registered voters at People’s Community Clinic. Then on September 29, we’ll conduct voter registration and education to members of the Midnight Basketball Program at Givens Park on the East side.

#### Voter Registration: October

We start the month of October with several voter registration drives leading up to the final registration day of October 9 for the November 6th election. **We need more volunteers on Tuesday, October 2 and Wednesday, October 3.** Please email me if you are available to assist at any of these early October events: jacklynwilliams9615@gmail.com.

**Tues., Oct. 2, 5 - 7:00 pm**, we are joining with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin on National Night Out to register voters at four locations: Lakeside, 85 Trinity, 78701; Thurmond Heights, 8426 Goldfinch Court, 78758; Meadowbrook, 1201 West Live Oak, 78704; and Booker T. Washington, 905 Bedford, 78702.

**Wed., Oct. 3, 4 - 6:00 pm**, we’ll register at two locations of Greendoors Housing for Homeless Veterans: Treaty Oaks, 3700 Manchaca Road, 78704; and Pecan Springs Commons 5800 Sweeney Circle, 78723.

**Please Note:** Cheryl Reese at the Travis Voter Registration Division confirmed that, pursuant to recent court rulings, **we are only deputized to register voters in Travis County** and are required to give white “take away” cards to those who live outside of Travis County. The citizen will then mail in the postage-paid form.
Candidate Forums:
The Austin League has been asked to moderate and/or organize candidate forums for a variety of races in Travis and surrounding counties. Three have been scheduled in October: Caldwell County Commissioners Court, South Austin Texas Legislators, and Austin Independent School District Board Members. See the Candidates’ Forum article for dates, times, locations, and contact the chairperson to volunteer.

~Jacklyn C. Williams, VP Voters Service, jacklynwilliams9615@gmail.com

Three October Candidate Forums

The League will moderate three area candidate forums. An outline of each event is listed below. More details will be sent in reminder messages later in October. Please contact the League chairperson if you are willing to help in any way - from greeting candidates and the public, to serving as the timer, to asking the questions.

Caldwell County Commissioners Court: Thursday, October 11, 6:30 pm, Lockhart High School Gym, 1 Lions Drive, Lockhart, TX. To volunteer to assist at this forum, contact Jacklyn Williams, jacklynwilliams9615@gmail.com.

South Travis County Candidates for Texas Legislature (TX Senate 21 and 25; TX House 47, 48, and 51): Saturday, October 13, 2 -4:30 pm, Faith Presbyterian Church, 1314 East Oltorf St. (just off I 35). Co-sponsored with the non-partisan Coffee Party. To volunteer to assist at this forum, contact Stewart Snider, s2snider@gmail.com.

AISD School Board Candidates Forum: Sunday, October 21, 1:30 -3:30, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin, 4700 Grover Avenue. Co-sponsored with the non-partisan Austin City Council PTA. To volunteer to assist at this forum, contact Nancy Oelklaus, nancyoelklaus@gmail.com.

LWVAA Five-County Voters Guide

The LWVAA Voters Guide for the November 2012 election will be published on Sunday, October 21 in the Austin American-Statesman. It will also be available as a PDF for download by October 21 on our League’s homepage: lwvaustin.org.

In the past, the League published information only for Travis County elections. At the request of the Statesman, this year’s Voters Guides are multi-county, covering the entire Statesman delivery area of Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties. It has been a huge undertaking by our volunteers.

Our experienced four-person Voters Guide team led this effort: Lenora DuBose, Frances McIntyre, Jaci Collins, and Donna Pauler*. They each devoted innumerable hours to this project.

3. An understanding of different governmental elections (e.g., local non-partisan elections versus political party primaries and general elections) and how they differ from non-governmental elections.
4. Reviewing different Voter Guides showing ballot issue discussions and candidates questionnaires, and discussing the importance of being an informed voter.
5. Election dates, voter eligibility, registration, redistricting, absentee and early voting, and youth participation.

~Dianne Wheeler, dwheeler3@sbcglobal.net

Community Presentations

League Co-President Stewart Snider, has accepted many speaking engagements over the past month. Stewart spoke to the Professional Women of Williamson County on Aug. 22; the Austin Human Rights Convention on Sept. 1, the South Austin Chapter of the AARP on Sept. 19, and the...
In addition, another group of League volunteers researched pros and cons of each of the ballot measures. Thanks are extended to these League members: Anne Clark, Lisa Harris, Maria Johnson, Nancy Neavel, Carol Olewin, Judy Parken, Suzy Reid, Joanne Richards, and Sonja Suessenbach.

Lastly, office volunteers assisted with phone calls to candidates to get their contact information so that the League’s questionnaire could be sent to them. A big thanks to our fifteen office volunteers!

*Photo by Jane Parsons

Why the LWVAA is Advocating for City Charter Proposition 3, the 10-1 District Plan

League History: In May 2011 at the Annual Meeting of the League, a study committee was formed to review and make recommendations on our position on Single Member Districts, which we have had since 1972. That committee worked for a year, studying and researching relevant information. At the May 2012 Annual Meeting, the study committee recommended a change that broadened the position so we could address Single Member Districts in the various forms in which it might appear. Our main concern was that we wanted to be a part of any discussion of Austin government being changed from at-large to district representation. A large majority of the League membership adopted that position change at the May 2012 Annual Meeting.

10:1 Plan Takes Shape: The Mayor had suggested a 6-2-1 plan early on, but it didn’t seem to be picked up by anyone. By last May, there was already one district plan that was gathering steam. It was the 10-1 plan pushed by a very diverse group called Austinites for Geographic Representation (AGR). They had a petition drive underway that required 20,000 verified signatures of registered voters and aimed to get the petition on the November 6th election ballot. This 10-1 plan had attached to it an important document that directed the way the districts were drawn. It had an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission that was void of any influence from city elected officials and others connected to the city. The famed lawyer, Steve Bickerstaff, was instrumental in putting this together along with other experts on the subject. The 10-1 plan is the only one on the ballot that has this feature of a Citizens Redistricting Commission.

League Decision: The LWVAA Board decided that the League should advocate for this 10-1 plan because, with the best demographic data we could get, it fit within our broadened position on Single Member Districts. Several experts in the field seem to think that it takes at least 10 districts to comply with the Voting Rights Act and provide an opportunity district for African Americans and two or more opportunity districts for Latinos; and most importantly, it contained a Redistricting Commission that would be as independent as possible (something the League has been lobbying for in the Texas Legislature for many years - to no avail.)
City Council: Austin City Council appointed a Charter Review Committee (as they do anytime there are Charter amendments to be considered.) It was advisory only. The Charter committee heard testimony and recommended (by a one vote majority) that council adopt the 10-1 plan and put it on the ballot. The Charter committee minority (1 less vote than the other side) preferred a hybrid system of 10 districts, 2 at-large representatives and an at-large mayor: (10-2-1). There were no votes for the Mayor's plan of 6-2-1.

AGR Petition: In the mean time, Austinites for Geographic Representation members had amassed 33,000 signatures on their petition for 10-1 plus the Independent Redistricting Commission. They verified 22,000 (more than was required) and the City Clerk ruled the proposal would be on the ballot. (The League has been a long-time supporter of citizens’ petitions as a means for citizens to address issues that their government ignores.)

More City Council Action: So, when Council saw there would be a ballot measure for 10-1, they ignored the recommendation of the Charter Committee and many who testified for the 10-1 plan to support the 10-1 plan as the only ballot issue, and the Council decided to put an additional plan on the ballot which is an 8 districts, 2 at-large representatives and the mayor elected at-large (8-2-1). Even the minority of the Charter Committee was in favor of a 10-district plan. Council said they wanted to give the voters a choice. Councilmen Mike Martinez and Bill Spellman voted against putting the 8-2-1 on the ballot. (There are other nefarious reasons that are out there as to why Council did this.)

Why 10:1 and Not 8:2:1? So now, we have a situation where the League's job is to educate the public, not only about voting the whole, long ballot, but explaining why the 10-1 plan is better than the 8-2-1 plan.

- The 8-2-1 plan does not have an Independent Redistricting Commission with it, so the Council itself would decide who draws the lines.
- Experts disagree, but the League concurs with the Charter Revision Committee that 10 districts will afford the opportunity for Hispanic and African American districts to be drawn to satisfy the Voting Rights Act. Eight districts would be challenged in court as not complying with the Voting Rights Act and could turned down by the Justice Department. If that happens, we would be back to the current six-member at-large Council.
- Minorities regard any at-large representatives as a way to dilute their influence on the Council.

Since voters are faced with two separate propositions on the ballot [Prop 3 (10-1) and Prop 4 (8-2-1)], the League of Women Voters of the Austin Area wants voters to:

-vote YES to City Prop 3 (10:1 plus Redistricting Commission)

-vote NO to City Prop 4 (8:2:1 with no Redistricting Commission)

The one that gets over 50% of the vote with the most “Yes” votes will pass.

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

Summary of Healthcare Presentation

Join Us on Facebook and Twitter

To follow our local League's updates on Facebook and Twitter, here are the steps you need to take:

FACEBOOK
--Go to facebook.com and login to your existing account or create a new one.
--Search for "League of Women Voters of the Austin Area" in the search box at the top of the page.
--Facebook will show you possible matches to your search terms as you type. Simply click on the box with our logo and title.
--Once you get to our page, there will be a button that says "Like" and has an image of a "thumbs up." --Click on that button.
--Now you are subscribed to our page and will see our news stories on your Facebook homepage.

TWITTER
--Go to twitter.com and login to your existing account or create a new one.
--Search for lwvatx in the search box at the top of the page.
Ninety concerned residents withstood the (welcome) rain to learn more about healthcare in Travis County at the League's Kickoff event on Sunday, Sept. 16 at Trinity United Methodist Church. Speaking were Regina Rogoff, J. D., CEO of People’s Community Clinic, and Clarke Heidrick, J. D., board member and first chair of the Travis County Health Care District (now called Central Health.) Mary Ann Roser, Austin American-Statesman health reporter, moderated the event and relayed questions submitted by the audience.

Heidrick presented information about the history of Central Health, what the Travis County Health Care District has done in the past and is doing at the present time. He emphasized there's a lack of access to appropriate healthcare for many in our area with over 200,000 uninsured people within Travis County.

Rogoff explained what services People’s Community Clinic (PCC) provides, the impact of funding cuts to women's healthcare in the previous Legislative session, how those women's health needs are being met, and future plans for growing clinical services in East Austin.

Both Heidrick and Rogoff agreed there is a huge need for more integrated health care incorporating more behavioral and mental health facilities and practitioners in our area.

Heidrick discussed Central Health’s reasons for support of a medical school and new teaching hospital. He observed that our primary local healthcare services are inadequate. Data from the Texas Department of Health and Human Services shows that we need more doctors as well as expanded care to provide needed preventive, primary, specialty, behavioral health and women's health services.

Funding for a medical school and new teaching hospital would come from several sources: the Seton Healthcare Family has committed up to $250 million to build a new teaching hospital; the UT System voted to put at least $25 million into a medical school at UT Austin plus an additional $40 million over the next eight years; and local support would come from part of the funds garnered if Central Health's Proposition 1 (Prop 1) is approved by the voters on Nov. 6. The plan is that Central Health would own the land on which the teaching hospital is built, and the Seton Healthcare Family would operate the hospital. University Medical Center (UMC) Brackenridge would be kept as an additional medical or research facility.

Both Heidrick and Rogoff supported maximizing available Medicaid 1115 Waiver funds. Heidrick explained that the federal government requires Central Health to provide local funds to bring in matching federal funds. Every new local dollar will be matched with $1.46 in federal funds which means that $1.00 in local money will result in $2.46 to upgrade and expand the healthcare system in Travis County.

The cost of Central Health’s Prop 1 has received much attention. Heidrick enumerated that even with this tax increase, per capita tax rates for Austin (Central Health) would remain the lowest of the major cities in Texas. At present, per capita and tax rates per $100 valuation are as follows: Travis (Central Health), $71 (7.89¢); San Antonio, $162 (27.62¢); Dallas, $172 (27.10¢); and Houston, $122 (19.22¢). If Central Health Prop 1 passes with its 5-cent increase, Travis will be at $115 (12.89¢), which is still lower than all the others.

Many audience questions dealt with women's healthcare. Both Heidrick and Rogoff confirmed that access to women's healthcare within Travis County would stay the same as it is now, with women's health services provided at St. David’s Hospital, People's --On the left hand side of the page, under “People” click on our logo.
--Click on the “follow” button and then you will be subscribed to the LWVAA page and get updates on any of our posts.

I hope to see a bunch of new followers to our Twitter and Facebook pages in the near future! If you have any questions, get in touch with me.
--Brigid Hall
Social Media Intern,
brigid.hall@lwvaustin.org

Randall's Donations

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

Compass Bank Donates to LWVAA

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

Compass Bank also pays the League a small percentage for Internet and phone transactions. For information, contact Paul Sicotte at Compass Bank, 512-421-5741.
Community Clinic, UMC Brackenridge and some other facilities.

Here is the text in full of Central Health Prop 1 as it will be on the ballot on Nov. 6.

CENTRAL HEALTH PROP. 1:  
Approving the ad valorem tax rate of $0.129 per $100 valuation in Central Health, also known as the Travis County Healthcare District, for the 2013 tax year, a rate that exceeds the district’s rollback tax rate. The proposed ad valorem tax rate exceeds the ad valorem tax rate most recently adopted by the district by $0.05 per $100 valuation; funds will be used for improved healthcare in Travis County, including support for a new medical school consistent with the mission of Central Health, a site for a new teaching hospital, trauma services, specialty medicine such as cancer care, community-wide health clinics, training for physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals, primary care, behavioral and mental healthcare, prevention and wellness programs, and/or to obtain federal matching funds for healthcare services.

~ Nancy Neavel, nancynea@austin.rr.com

Maxine's Musings: Eleanor Roosevelt

It's been a while since I wrote for the Voter, but after many years in the League, it’s nice to share some of my reflections.

In the early 1950’s, when we were living in Columbus, Ohio, I met former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. I was president of the League of Women Voters of Columbus. Another Leader and I were thinking of some way for the League to make a big splash to celebrate the birthday of the United Nations on October 24. The League had been a staunch supporter of the UN. We decided to think big. Why not, we thought, ask Eleanor Roosevelt to come to Columbus and speak to the public on the UN? Her credentials were sterling. She founded the UN Association of the United States and was a delegate to the UN General Assembly. We were astounded that she actually accepted.

The United Nations General Assembly officially designated October 24 as United Nations Day in 1947. The original concept of the UN goes back to 1941 when President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, somewhere at sea, signed a document called the Atlantic Charter. In early 1942, representatives of 26 Allied nations meeting in Washington, D.C., pledged their support to the Atlantic Charter by signing the Declaration of the United Nations. FDR suggested the use of the term United Nations. So it was more than fitting that Eleanor Roosevelt should be our first choice for the UN observance.

This event required that we go first class. I don’t remember where we got the money for this, but we engaged a suite for Mrs. Roosevelt and her secretary at the Commodore Perry Hotel, the most upscale hotel in Columbus. We arranged for a motorcade with a motorcycle police escort from the airport to the hotel. I sat with Mrs. Roosevelt in the limousine as we chatted about this and that. A member of one of the political parties was so thrilled that he asked permission to bring his toddler along so they could be part of the parade of cars in the motorcade. He wanted this to be among his child’s memories, even though she was so young!

We arranged for a press conference in Mrs. Roosevelt’s suite after she had her daily nap. One of the reporters asked her how she managed to do all she did for human rights at her

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 have already have a will, you can have your attorney add a codicil to include LWVAEF.

After you’ve added the League, please email the Austin League Education Fund as a beneficiary of a will or trust 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.

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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)
age, 72. She replied in her cultured voice, "One does what one can as long as one can."

The speech drew a large crowd in a large fairly new auditorium. It brought a ton of publicity for the League. We spent two days with Mrs. Roosevelt wining and dining her. It is one of my most cherished memories.

During this time the Columbus Citizen had a yearly "Ten Top Women of the Year" feature. Due to my League activities, I was named one of the ten top women for that year classified under Club! I was both flattered at the honor and dismayed at the category. **Club indeed!**

~Maxine Barkan, mbarkan@austin.rr.com

### Observer Corps:
**Travis County Commissioners Court**

**August 28, Joann Robison:** This meeting involved mostly housekeeping details with extensive time for thanks to fire and EMS, **reminders of the Bastrop fires** one year ago, thanks to the leader of the Spicewood Long Term Recovery group, and a declaration of "National Preparedness Month."

The Court heard reports on what changes were most useful and cost effective in space allocations in the **Granger Building**, and they discussed changes that were made in investment policies in response to federal rule changes.

**September 4, Joann Robison:** The US Fish and Wildlife Service has planned public hearings on proposed rulings on critical **habitat for four endangered salamanders** in Texas. Presentations and hearings will be held in Round Rock and Austin, and comments will be accepted until October 22. Two of the species are found in Travis County and about half of the Jollyville salamander habitats are potentially problematic, the remainder already being in protected areas. Staff was charged with determining what impact the TCCC might want to address.

A program that **delivers food** from the food bank to **veterans** has been in place with support from Travis County Department of Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) for about 30 years. Staff has determined that it would be more efficient to have two full time employees running this program with use of volunteers and requested $86,000 be found for this year, and that the item be placed for consideration as an ongoing budget item in the future.

Money is being found to reinstate the program to replace some old vehicles that fail emissions inspection. The program was cut last year. From the fees sent to the state for emission testing, only 15% of the money is returned to Travis County for air quality programs. About 650 vehicles per year have had emissions repairs at an average cost of $550 over the last five years. To qualify for replacement a vehicle must be over 10 years old, still drivable, have a gas motor and fail the emissions test.

**September 25, Karen Rankin:** The proposed **Fiscal Year 2013 budget and tax rate** for 2012 were discussed again, but there have been no substantive changes since the last discussion.

Public comments regarding possible **financial incentives** and an economic...
development agreement with **HID Global Corporation** were heard. Discussion centered on the Court's view that a designated percentage of the 276 people expected to be hired should be residents of Travis County, not just "local" residents, for the county to agree to a tax rebate that could be as much as 50%. "Local" residents, it was explained, could be from neighboring counties as well as Travis. A final vote is expected to take place in two weeks.

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

### Membership

**Welcome, New Members!**
We cordially welcome six new members to the Austin League: **Pam Bona, Adella Fernandez, Christie Garbe, Donna Green, Amanda Migden, and April Quick** 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.

**Thank You, Sustaining Members**
Special thanks to this month's sustaining members: **Robbi Ausley, Nan Clayton, Donna Howard, Ellen Loeb, Sheila Milner, Nancy Neavel, Pat Oakes, and Bill and Suzy Reid.** 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: **Maxine Barkan, Carole Buckman, Sylvia Clapp-White, Ada Engler, Vickie Kullberg, Patricia La Combe, Susan Morrison and John King, Anne Roussos, and Sonja Sussenbach.** We depend on your support and appreciate your timely renewals.

**New Membership, Renewal Dues Payment, Address Changes**
Please send your name, address, phone number, email address, household member (if applicable), along with your dues payment and/or any changes to the LWVAA office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. Checks may be made out to the Austin League of Women Voters. 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!

**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 anytime.

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