Dear Stewart,

Please note that your membership expires. If this date is approaching or has passed, please renew soon. You can do this right now by going to the renewal page on the LWV-AA website.

"Engaging Young Voters, 18-35"

LWV-TX Seminar in Austin
Saturday, July 9, 12:30 - 4:30 pm

Presented by LWV-TX. Hosted by LWV-Austin.

$$$ Free registration for LWV-Austin members. $$$*

Location:
Trinity United Methodist Church
Community Hall
4001 Speedway (corner 40th Street)

Directions and Parking:
From Guadalupe, turn east onto 40th Street.
From 38th Street, turn north onto Speedway.
Free church parking lot across Speedway, near entrance.

*RSVP by emailing Interim Executive Director Justine Quinn at jquinn@lwvtexas.org (or call her - 472-1100) at the LWV-TX office with your name, email, phone, address. Indicate you're a member of the Austin League (which has free registration).

Find answers to such questions as:
- Who are the young voters, commonly called "Millennials"?
- How can we reach them, recruit them and engage them in civic life?
Dear members:

This will almost certainly be the longest column I'll write in the Voter. I want to hear from you, so please click the links you see here and respond if you are so inclined at the end of each blog.

First, with regard to Frances McIntyre stepping into another role at the League: many of you know better than I what she has done for this organization, so I have created a place on our website where you can tell her how you feel. Here's part of my statement of affections for Frances: "She is proof that we can have fun in this organization and be effective all at once. I hope to make you glad I'm your successor." Now go to Thank You, Frances! and share your thoughts. Your name and email won't be shared anywhere.

Second, since many of you don't know me, here's the skinny on how I arrived here:

I left the corporate world in 2005 for several reasons - one of which was to get involved politically in a way I thought could make a real difference. I visited several League meetings nearly started a civic participation campaign for LWVAA, but caught candidate fever in 2006 and worked on a Congressional campaign instead. My guy lost, then he started a small advocacy organization that ran during the 80th Legislature in 2007. I did the communications there and learned to write punchy articles about the hot issues coming from the Capitol. When this was over, I stepped out of activism for a while to deal with some family matters.

I was approached in 2009 to be the Voter Editor, which brought me on the Board and oriented me in the goings-on at the League. A year or so ago, I mentioned that I was ready to be more involved (words which I'm almost sure I'll find quaint before long) I thought about the president's role, and after a while realized it offers a unique opportunity to make a difference. Plus, having a male president might even help the Austin League gain attention. Coincidentally, Frances mentioned that she was ready for a break from her 10 years as president or co-president, and allowed me to pry the position out of her hands.

Antiquity: I joined the League back in the 80's, because I wanted to support the people who published the Voters Guides. I still remember how impressed I was with pertinent non-partisan political information. The factual nature of the Guide really impressed me. It was pretty sure this organization's intent would greatly please Thomas Jefferson, and that's all it took for me to join. For my take on the League's name and history, click here.

I find this role a bit intimidating, but also know that this organization is held together by people who have worked hard for decades. At our transition meeting on June 2nd, I was reminded of the vast institutional knowledge that so many members have and so generously share, as well as the caliber of newer members. This means I don't have to worry too much about my own deficits.

President's note: This is pretty exciting to me because broadening our membership base comes up at just about every strategic meeting we have. After this seminar, I'm hoping I'll never miss an opportunity to reach out to possible new constituencies. I hope you'll join me at this event.

- Stewart Snider
I want all members to examine their own civic passion and to be able to act on it. I want our organization to provide tools and direction so all our passions create an instrument of change. If we choose actions that are engaging and lead toward meaningful change, our growth, strategy and tactics become quite clear.

**Third, let's get the gender thing over with.** Does it matter that LWV Austin has a male president? I hope so, because I think having some fun is an integral part of being effective.

For instance: on June 3rd, my third day in "office," when I introduced myself as LWVAA President (while at the Capitol to testify against the horrible Congressional map that is under consideration*), State Senators Lucio and Gallegos razzed me a little. When I mock-protested, stating that the equivalent House committee on Thursday didn't give me any flack, they just said, "Oh, we welcome your testimony, but we're old and just a bit hard of hearing. We just wanted to be sure we had not misunderstood you."

I think our little jostle will help them remember that LWVAA was there to testify.

*Footnote: In spite of the overwhelming public testimony that opposed it (including testimony from numerous LWV members), on June 3rd the Senate redistricting committee **passed a Congressional district map that cuts Travis into 5 different districts.** If this map isn't changed by the House (which is still considering it) or the courts, Austin will be, I think, the largest city in the US without a majority population in a Congressional district. I would never ask that Travis County be placed under such an anti-democratic cloud, but I think the silver lining is significant: the Legislature just handed us a publicity platform from which our core principles can be shouted. See Anita Privett’s article in the next block for more on this.

**Fourth,** I want to point you to my **recap of a couple of recent organizational meetings:**

- May 18 Annual Meeting Recap
- June 2 Transition Meeting Recap

**Finally,** I want to share a couple of things that I **hope will provoke your response** in the box at the end of my statement.

- Change the League's name?
- Should LWVUS run issue ads that challenge sitting U.S. senators?

~Stewart

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**League Testimony on Redistricting before Senate Subcommittee on SB4, June 3, 2011**

I am Anita Privett, Advocacy VP, testifying on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX).

This redistricting plan, developed in secret, proposes an unfair and unrepresentative Congressional redistricting map that likely runs afoul of the Voting Rights Act and does not reflect the full diversity of Texas.

Representative democracy depends on voters freely choosing their elected officials. When, instead, officials choose their voters, our system does not work as intended.

"As I discuss this session of the Texas Legislature with others I am saying "elections have consequences." If people don't vote, there are consequences. If people vote without finding out how the candidates they vote for are going to vote on the issues they care about, then legislative sessions like this one are the consequence.

"I don't believe that the majority of Texans would have left $6 billion dollars of the Rainy Day Fund on the table or that they would have so drastically cut public education and health care in this state and yet that is what happened as a consequence of who they elected to represent them.

"It is a very sad day in Texas but LWV-TX has to gear up and be ready to fight another day."

~Anita Privett, Advocacy Vice President, LWV-TX

Legislative Newsletter, May 27, 2011

**Honors and Memorials**

To make a donation in honor of, or in memory of, League members, [click here](#) for the form. Then mail with your donation to LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st St., Austin, TX 78705.

We are grateful for these remembrances:

In honor of **Maxine Barkan's** 60 years of service to the League from...
Although the proposed plan creates two new Hispanic majority districts, it also reduces the overall number of effective minority opportunity districts to 10 of the total 36 districts, compared to 11 in the current 32-member plan. It has been widely reported that Texas's main source of population growth over the last ten years has overwhelmingly occurred as a result of growing Hispanic communities, yet the proposed Congressional districts do not adequately reflect this shift. This suggests political manipulation, as well as significant retrogression in terms of minority representation, which would effectively ensure that this plan would not hold up against a Voting Rights Act challenge.

The legislature has chosen to draw its plans behind closed doors, giving community groups and citizens virtually no access to weigh in about the impact redistricting will have on their daily lives. As a result, the committee has released a plan that fails to adequately represent the diversity of our state, shortchanges minority voters, and fiercely protects powerful incumbents while providing little opportunity for competitive Congressional elections in 2012 and beyond.

If put in place, this map would all but encourage our leaders to be less responsive to constituents, depress voter turnout, and restrict minority voters from effectively advocating on behalf of their communities.

President's note: Anita Privett is Advocacy Vice-President of LWV-TX (in perhaps the League's most demanding and time-consuming role) and a past LWV-AA program chair.

League Office Volunteers Needed

A heartfelt thank you to all the wonderful, dedicated volunteers who have staffed the office during this past 2010-11 year. It is because of all those who give of their time to do this that LWVAA can have an effective presence in the Austin community.

Our all-volunteer office staff, working weekdays from 11 am to 2 pm at our office in central Austin (1011 W. 31st Street, just west of Lamar). Each volunteer signs up to work for one (or more) regular days a month (e.g. the first Wednesday, or third Monday, etc.). Volunteers answer the phone, respond to any phone messages, deal with incoming mail, and record and respond to donations and membership renewals. Each new volunteer gets a training session and the Office Manager as well as all other Board Members and Chairpersons are always available by phone for questions that arise.

We need more people to fill out the monthly calendar. If you are able to give 3 hours per month to help staff the LWVAA office, please contact our new Office Manager, Judy Clack at 731-0280 or jbcclack@yahoo.com. Be thinking about what day of the week and week of the month is best for you to volunteer in the office. Judy will send both new and continuing volunteers a sign-up form via email, if possible. You will be asked to list your first, second and third best days.

We need and truly appreciate everyone who can help with this.

Jo Reichler, outgoing Office Manager and VP for Organization
Judy Clack, incoming Office Manager and co-VP for Organization

President's note: Thank you, volunteers for being the first stop for callers as well as...
keeping things whirring. I know of no other organization that even comes close to the amount of volunteerism as the League.

Our League in Action

City Council Run-Off Candidates Forum

The LWV-AA moderated a public candidates forum sponsored by Austin's Ethics Review Commission and featuring Kathie Tovo and Randi Shade who are in a runoff for the Council Seat #3. The forum was held on Friday, June 10 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers of Austin City Hall. League members Stewart Snider, Frances McIntyre, Lisa Harris and Bryson McCall Smith participated. The City's Channel 6 carried the forum live, and will rebroadcast the forum frequently until election day on June 18. Click here to see the candidates forum on your computer.

At-Large Districts, Single-Member Districts, Cumulative Voting

Over thirty League members attended a combined Unit Meeting on Monday, June 13 where a panel presented their views on Single-Member Districts, At-Large Representation, A Hybrid of the Two Systems, and Cumulative Voting. Speakers were Susan Morrison, Attorney and League Member, Marcelo Tafoya, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and Nelson Linder, President, Austin Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The program was organized by Stewart Snider and Carolyn Baker.

The LWVAA voted at our May Annual Meeting to review and update the existing LWV-Austin position that supports a combination of At-Large and Single-Member Districts. The LWVAA Study Committee is beginning its research this summer, and is tasked to present a program and consensus to the League before the 2012 Annual Meeting. To join the study, contact Frances McIntyre, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com, or 451-1551.

Role of Federal Government in Public Education

LWV-US has tasked all Leagues to begin a study on the federal role in pre-K through grade 12 public education. This study is limited to issues of equity, funding and standards/assessment. LWV-US provides all the study materials and they are very well written. Here are links to those articles. We encourage all members to read them whether or not you can join the study group. If you wish to join, contact Frances McIntyre, mcintyre.frances@gmail.com or 451-1551.

Background Papers

Leaders' Guide

President's note: Actions like these not only are a service to Austinites, but raise awareness of our organization and give us a chance to form alliances and gain members.

Maxine's Musings

-Maxine Barkan, 231-8523

Compass Bank
Persistence, Perseverance, and Patience

How long must we wait? Many of the reforms the League has worked on for so long seldom seem to materialize. Or at least so it seems. Do we say, "Okay, that's it," fold our tents and go away? I can't think of a time when that has happened. As we wind down this session of the Legislature, let's look at a few perennials.

Judicial Selection, for example, has been on our agenda since 1965. Given the time and energy that has been devoted to removing the election of the judiciary from party politics, we have not progressed. Are we beating a dead horse? Not really. Patience can be a virtue. We do often work in increments. For example, in 1995, due to a lot of pressure, including advocacy by the League, the Legislature passed a bill that limited the amount of contributions that could be received by judicial candidates in an election cycle. The limits were not fabulous, but still they were limits. In another session, judges' base salaries were increased. It was sneaked in during a special session in 2005. The public seems conflicted on the selection of judges. People complain about not knowing anything about judges on the ballot, but yet, prefer to elect them regardless. Some states that have an appointment/retention nonpartisan system now have advocates trying to abolish the system. Is that the public mood or that of the political climate?

In 1991, LWV-Texas Education Fund began a study to evaluate political campaign laws, finances, and ethical practices. The League supported the establishment of a State Ethics Commission although it has not operated as well as we had hoped. We also adopted positions that would control the unbridled amounts of money contributed to candidates running for elected office. Twenty years later, we still have not reached that Nirvana. Maybe that's not too bad. Look how many years it took for women to be able to vote. If you start with Abigail Adams who had plenty to say and even threatened a women's rebellion (1776), 143 years went by before Texas, then the United States, accomplished that goal. In that spirit, we have been chipping away at Campaign Finance Reform with a mandate for campaign finance reports to be electronically filed (1999), some tweaking of the Ethics Commission during their Sunset Review in 2003, and the reporting of the value of cash gifts to elected officials in 2007, to name a few.

At the risk of bringing down your wrath, I am going to suggest that redistricting, which we have worked on since 1984, has little chance of meeting our goals. Gerrymandering has been the modus operandi almost as old as our country. Not only the political parties but minority groups want to be represented and it seems to me that there is no way to have compact contiguous boundaries in line with local political subdivisions with all these conflicting agendas. What to do? I don't know. Persist, persevere, have patience?

When I was watching the House proceedings on TV recently, after some ugly exchanges, one of the legislators reminded the body that there are two sides to every story. We may not get what we think is best and it might take a long time to happen, but we have to remember that not all agree on many issues and we need to respect each other. I think it's called "the loyal opposition."

~Maxine

President's note: Maxine is a past LWV-AA president who escorted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt around Columbus, Ohio when she was president of that League.

Observer Corps: Travis County Commissioners Court

Donations

Open a checking account with BBVA Compass Bank and they will make a $50 contribution to the Austin League of Women Voters. Be sure to mention "Compass for Your Cause" when opening the account and tell them to make the donation to the League of Women Voters of Austin.

This account gives you discounts on multiple bank products and pays the League a small percentage for internet and phone transactions. For information please contact Paul Sicotte, at Compass Bank, 512-421-5741.

Charitable Giving

IRA Charitable Distributions

Persons aged 70½ or older can again enjoy tax savings by making charitable gifts directly from their Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) to the LWV Education Fund. Contact Lauren Frank of LWVUS at 202-263-1355 or lfrank@lwv.org for additional information.

Gift to League at All Three Levels!

By making a gift of cash or securities of $5,000 or more to the League of Women Voters Education Fund Pooled Income Fund, you can receive an immediate income tax deduction for a portion of the gift's value and continue earning a quarterly return on the interest earned for life. You
Joann Robison and Karen Rankin, Advocacy

Redistricting Hearings for Travis County: Week of June 27
This summer, Travis County will be engaged in redrawing the boundaries of its commissioners court precincts, districts for justices of the peace and constables, and election precincts. This redistricting process takes into account changes in geographic and demographic distributions of the county's population as reported in the latest US Census data. The 2010 data reveal that our population has grown by over 26%. These changes must be reflected in our districts to ensure an accurate representation of the voting public.

Aside from the Census data, the process will also require community input. Not only will the new boundary lines have a direct impact on your representation on the Travis County Commissioners Court, they will also determine the demographic and geographic characteristics of each voting district. It is crucial that each and every citizen be given the opportunity to be involved in this process. A series of four public hearings will be held throughout the county the week of June 27, 2011: Precinct 4, June 27; Precinct 3, June 28; Precinct 2, June 29, and Precinct 1, June 30. Review of maps begins at 5 pm with formal presentations at 6:30 pm.

Moratorium on Floating Habitable Structures
Major policy action was taken by the Travis County Commissioners Court (TCCC) at its May 24, 2011 meeting. Last month Karen Huber introduced a motion to encourage LCRA to extend a moratorium on "floating habitable structures" on Lake Travis. After discussion with staff and a presentation by a developer looking to build a condominium community of over 100 floating homes, the issue was sent back to staff for further study and recommendations along with a request to coordinate with LCRA.

The staff returned with a recommendation to prohibit such structures. The developer did not appear, nor did he send any representatives. LCRA reported that in their studies they find that regulation is always done in conjunction with local county and/or municipal entities; such communities exist almost exclusively on coastal areas where water quality is not at as much risk; they appeared to have no interest in supporting a change of this magnitude. Over 35 citizens came to speak against the proposal. They reported that Texas has a disproportionate number of flash floods, buildings in flood plains, and damage due to flooding. The problems of potential fire hazard to homes above the proposed development were severe. Safety concerns for both neighbors and residents who might need EMS or fire services were expressed. This is already a difficult area to access. The ability to guarantee secure mooring during the major flooding that occurs regularly to fill the lake (as much as 50 foot rise in 24 hours some years) was non-existent.

After more than an hour of fact-filled testimony, Judge Samuel Biscoe declared that "instead of letting you have your say, the court will let you have your way." The measure was passed unanimously to prohibit floating habitable structures. Commissioner Huber clarified that this relates only to permanently moored structures and did not in any way change the use of houseboats. She further requested that LCRA be encouraged to make their moratorium permanent.

President's note: The Observer Corps reports on things that hit us right where we live. Joann Robison and Karen Rankin are providing us a valuable service by telling us what's happening in Travis County government. Thanks to you both for keeping members of our League aware of our own community.

Member Recognition
- Frances McIntyre, Past President
Many League members gave generously of their time and expertise to the Austin League during the past year in a wide variety of ways. At the Annual Meeting in May, some of these members were recognized. We give our thanks to members who contributed time, talent, and/or financial support during the past year to promote the mission of the League. Whether you gave by renewing your membership, by volunteering your time, or contributing to the Phonathon, we thank you.

The reason we have such a vibrant League is because all our members give to us in a variety of ways: by maintaining their membership; making a financial contribution; serving on the Board, Capitol Corps, Office Staff, Observer Corps; organizing or attending Unit Meetings or General Meetings; assisting with or attending the Elected Official Reception or State of the City; serving on Study Groups, registering voters or preparing the *Voters Guides*. Thanks to each of you for making ours such a vibrant League, able to continue our mission of promoting voter education and civic participation.

~Frances

[We apologize if we missed anyone. If your name is not listed, please contact Voter editor, Judy Clack, jbclack@yahoo.com.]

Thanks to each of the following for the gift of your time and talent.

**LWV-AA Officers and Directors**
Carolyn Baker, Anne Clark, Lenora DuBose, Mescal Evler, Terry Green, Lisa Harris, Frances McIntyre, Carol Olewin, Judy Parken, Jo Reichler, Stewart Snider, Betty Williamson

**LWV-AA Off-Board Chairs**

**Capitol Corps**
Wilda Campbell, Kathy Carvell, Anne Clark, Mescal Evler, Helen Garman, Karen Hayward, Belia Nichols, Judy Parken, Anita Privett, Suzy Reid, Anne Roussos, Gwen Santiago, Martha Schumacher, Ann Stalnaker, Dianne Wheeler.

**Office Staff**
Carolyn Baker, Natalie Balden, Judy Clack, Jocelyn Doherty, Marina Grant, Julia Marsden, Barbara Myers, Margit Orange, Judy Parken, Phyllis Portnoy, Janet Reed, Jo Reichler, Anne Roussos, Barbara Ruud, Ann Stalnaker, Barbara Werth, Dianne Wheeler, Doris Willhite, Janice Williams.

**Observer Corps**
Karen Rankin, Joann Robison, Betty Williamson.

**Projects, Meetings and Studies**
Membership
- Judy Parken, Membership Chair

Welcome, New Members
We cordially welcome Jill Barada and Nancy Oelklaus to the Austin League. We are delighted you have joined us. In doing so, you are also a member of the national (LWVUS) and state (LWVTX) leagues. I hope to see you at the LWV-TX July 9th program in Austin focusing on attracting more younger voters and members. Call me with your questions: 512-502-0278.

League Websites: For new and not-so-new members there is an ABUNDANCE of excellent information on the three League web sites. Do check them out.

www.lwvaustin.org - our local website has our calendar of events, our recent newsletter, and our president's blog under News.

www.lwvtexas.org - our state website has great information about our state positions and past and present studies.

www.lwv.org - our national website has six categories to access: News and Events; Projects; Issues; Take Action; Electronic Library; and For Members - including a Glossary of League Lingo.

Thank You, Renewing Members
Many thanks to those who recently renewed - Jaci Collins, Toye Goodson, Terry Green, Lisa Harris & Bruce Elfant, Louisa Hoberman, Clark Jobe, Jon Kay and Blake Locklin, Judi Nudelman, Dorothy Richter, Robert Rutishauser, Otis R. Schmidt, Randi Shade, Stewart Snider, Jan Soifer, Dorothy Wasserman, Barbara Werth, and Carol Wood. We truly 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 LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705.

Checks may be made out to Austin League of Women Voters. Or you may instead click here to pay your annual dues online while providing all the above information.
The League is grateful for your support!

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(Dues allocation: National $29.15; State $22.80; Local $8.05; Total $60.00)

~Judy