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2013-14 Draft LWVAA Calendar

September 2013 - Fall Kickoff with Keynote Speaker; Voter Registration and Photo ID Education

October 2013 - Panel: LWVTX Study on Human Trafficking and Unit Consensus Meetings; Community Conversation in Public Education; Voter Registration and Photo ID Education

November 2013 - LWVAA Voters Guide; General Election; Program on Health Insurance Exchanges

December 2013 - Program Planning, Party, Volunteer Recognition

January 2014 - State of the City Dinner, Speaker, Auction

The League shall not support or oppose any political party or candidates. It may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest after significant study and consensus is reached.

The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of Austin Area Education Fund.

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Co-President's Letter: Voter ID Requirements

On June 26, I sent you an email about the Supreme Court’s ruling on the Voting Rights Act, announcing that Texans are now required to present a photo ID in order to vote. [Voter registration requirements have not changed.] LWV-US also issued two statements that harshly criticized this ruling and called on Congress to provide a remedy:

- LWVUS: June 25, 2013
- LWVUS: June 28, 2013

You won't be surprised to hear that I’m not optimistic that Congress will act, so I’ve been thinking about what we can do that could make a difference. I considered the challenge: We are at a rhetorical disadvantage when we talk about how this ruling is going to disenfranchise a number of voters. The average Texan is accustomed to producing photo ID for things far more mundane than voting, and is very likely to find the factual pro-photo-ID sound bites to be persuasive:

- There are a handful of validated cases where someone has presented himself or herself as another person in order to vote more than once.
- We can’t know how much of this goes unreported.
- For the majority of Texans, a photo ID requirement won’t prevent them from voting.
- Electoral integrity is important.
- Opposition to photo ID can easily be interpreted as partisan-driven.

You and I know these bullets don’t tell the whole story. I’ve tried (and have watched others try) to persuade average folks that a photo ID requirement will create problems for many voters and will thus undermine, not enhance, electoral integrity. I can’t think of a case where we’ve convinced anyone. Like most political topics that have been framed in the media, it’s hard for both sides to have a conversation on this without impugning the motives of the other. Given that Congress won’t act without a large number of people demanding it, what is our organization to do?

Jacklyn Williams, our Voters Service VP, suggests we take constructive ACTION. She will be organizing some activities this fall that will help people who might not be able to get a photo ID card on
their own. Interested in joining this effort? Please contact Jacklyn at 773-957-5795 or email her at jacklyncw.jcw@gmail.com. She is looking for members to join the Voters Service committee, which will partner with other non-partisan groups to provide this community service. Read her article immediately below.

I'm excited about Jacklyn's idea. Not only will we help individuals directly, but being engaged this way will provide us some talking points about how this new requirement affects people. When we start talking about the myriad ways in which people were disenfranchised by this new requirement, people who previously dismissed our arguments will begin to take notice, and we will gain some much-needed traction. What do you think?

~ Stewart Snider, Co-President, s2snider@gmail.com, 512-345-7047

**Voters Service Committee: Volunteers Needed**

**Voters Service Committee**
The Voters Service Committee needs your help this year to accomplish our upcoming work. We have goals to

- increase the number of citizens we register to vote
- assist those needing help with obtaining a photo ID to vote
- provide training to those wanting to run for elected office
- increase our visibility in the community

The 2013 and 2014 election seasons are around the corner and we want to be prepared to serve the citizens in as many ways that we can. We need your ideas and your participation. If you would like to join the Voters Service Committee to work on these goals, email me at jacklyncw.jcw@gmail.com.

**Volunteer Deputy Registrars**
The League of Women Voters of the Austin Area is committed to helping Bruce Elfant, Travis County Voter Registrar, register 200,000 eligible voters before the next major election in November 2014. We will need a lot of help and a lot of volunteer deputy registrars. To register people to vote, you must first get deputized. It takes a little over an hour of training. Although there are new requirements for voting (photo ID), there have been no changes to the voter registration process.

**Have you done the training** for the new term (Jan. 1, 2013 - Dec. 31, 2014) to become or be reinstated as a Volunteer Deputy Registrar? **If so, I need to know.** Please email me (jacklyncw.jcw@gmail.com) your name, phone number and email address by July 31. If not, **inform me** as soon as you have completed this training so I may notify you of registration opportunities. Thank you.

**Here's a list of times that Volunteer Deputy Registrar trainings will be held:**
(1) Travis County holds training every first Tuesday of the month at their

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Nine local League members traveled to Kerrville, TX on July 13 to attend the LWVTX Regional Training. State board members gave informative presentations. We learned as much about the League in the cars traveling there as we did at the session. Attendees included Judy Clack, Nan Clayton, Mary Cullinane, Eliza May, Frances McIntyre, Nancy Oelklaus, Carol Olewin, Anita Privett (not pictured) and Stewart Snider.

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

**News from the LWVTX Capitol Corps**

Thirty-two League members participated in the Capitol Corps including LWVAA members Grace Chimene, Nan Clayton, Susan Morrison, Nancy Oelklaus, Judy Parken, Joanne Richards, Joann Robison, Anne Roussos, and Stewart Snider, among others. Three LWVAA members served as LWVTX Issue Chairs: Erica Gammill, Criminal and Juvenile Justice; Joyce Robinson, Child Abuse and Neglect; and Stewart Snider, Campaign Finance Reform.

Laura Blackburn, LWVTX Advocacy Vice President reported, “Of the 125 requests handed this Corps to speak or testify on bills before the 83rd Texas Legislature, 113 were completed before committees or on the House or Senate floor... making the League of Women Voters a constant force in the legislative process.”

Stewart Snider, LWVTX Capitol Corps
main office at 10:30 am, 12:30 pm, and 6:30 pm. All sessions are held in Elections Training Room, Travis County Tax Office, 5501 Airport Blvd., between 51st and 2222. Contact: Cheryl Reese, CherylReese@co.travis.tx.us.

(2) The First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4700 Grover Ave. (78756), is hosting a series of summer Saturday training sessions: July 27, Aug. 3, Aug. 10, Aug. 17, Aug. 24, and Aug. 31. Sessions are 10:00 - 11:30 am; arrive at 9:45 am. Enter on the south side of the church through the office door across the patio from the sanctuary.

These trainings have been arranged by League member Mary Patrick, maptrick@gmail.com and will be conducted by Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor/Collector/Voter Registrar. Sign up for a Saturday session by email to volunteerdept.registrartraining@gmail.com. Put VDR Training in the Subject Line. Indicate which Saturday you’ll attend.

~ Jacklyn Williams, VP, Voters Service, jacklyncw.jcw@gmail.com

LWV-TX Convention
Austin, April 24 - 27, 2014

The 2014 LWV-Texas Convention is coming to Austin on April 24 - 27, 2014. It has been ten years since Austin hosted the last State Convention for the League of Women Voters. Our members will join over one hundred League members from around the State to convene in Austin for business, pleasure, training, networking, plenary sessions, and selecting state study issues.

Since the Austin League is hosting the Convention, we will need many hands to provide a successful and enjoyable experience for the participants coming from all over Texas. Many LWVAA volunteers will be needed to help with registration, credentials, office support, silent auction, publication sales, and floor duty during the plenary sessions. Judy Clack and Judy Parken will be asking each member to volunteer for one three-hour shift from April 25 - 27. Make a note in your calendar that you’ll be needed sometime on those dates.

As Convention hosts we will sponsor an evening of entertainment for out-of-town guests (and our members) on Friday, April 25. A planning committee is working on a location and transportation to provide a taste of Austin. We also must sponsor several breakout sessions during the convention and will need sponsors to fund the food and beverages during the Friday, Saturday and Sunday refreshment breaks.

If you’d like to participate in the planning and hosting of the 2014 LWV-TX Convention in Austin, contact Carol Olewin at colewin@gmail.com or call 512-380-0088. We hope to see many of you at Convention and help us put forth a good show for our guests as well as provide a good learning experience for us all. If you’d like to be a presenter at an informational session, let Carol know about that too.

~ Carol Olewin, Chair, Convention Local Arrangements Committee, colewin@gmail.com

There was a lot of LWVTX action on the various state Senate and House bills that sought to limit a woman’s access to abortion. Julie Lowenberg, LWVTX Women Health Issue Chair reported, “On June 20, Capitol Corps member Judy Parken with testimony at ready, registered to be heard on HB 60 and HB 16. Other LWV members were there to present personal statements. After more than 10 hours of testimony, with hundreds still waiting to be heard, the Committee closed the hearing on the 2 bills at 3:40 AM on Friday June 21.” Unfortunately, Judy Parken did not get to present the LWVTX statement.

New LWVAA member, Grace Chimene, a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (RN, MSN), who testified numerous times on bills regarding Women’s Health, made another heroic effort. Before the final passage in the second Special Session, Grace left home before 7 a.m. and stayed at the Capitol for 12 hours waiting for her name to be called so that she could testify...
Annual Meeting: A Time for Planning and Celebrating Achievements

Forty Leaguers gathered on Sunday afternoon, May 19, at Faith Presbyterian Church to celebrate an extraordinary year of achievement and to make plans for another rewarding year.

This year's Annual Meeting was dedicated to Frances McIntyre, who has served the LWVAA in many capacities, including four terms as LWVAA president. Her granddaughter, Lauren Hodges, read her poem entitled "Over Preparing for Standardized Testing." It was a student plea for the League to address the number of tests required of students. Lauren is continuing her grandmother's legacy of activism!

Also recognized were Leaguers who have been members for 50 years or more: Maxine Barkan, Pat Bennett, Mary Blackstock, Nan Clayton, Sylvia Lester, Phyllis Portnoy, Barbara Ruud, Patricia Taylor, and Veta Winick; and outgoing board members Phyllis Portnoy, Lenora DuBose (who will continue to serve off board), and Brigid Hall.

Co-President Stewart Snider recognized the extraordinary efforts of other Leaguers:

-- Jacklyn Williams' work on voter registration, which included 11 events;
-- Nancy Oelkhaus, who coordinated four Community Conversations that allowed stakeholders to provide input and raised awareness of Austin Independent School District issues;
-- Frances McIntyre, who was pivotal in the successful 10-1 redistricting campaign and worked with Austinites for Geographic Representation to help select citizens to work on drawing the new district lines; and
-- Judy Clack, who has organized the Office Corps, in addition to keeping League members informed as editor of the Voter and timely e-blasts.

Concerning our program, members re-adopted current positions and approved a local review and update of the positions on Health and on Mental Health Services. Other programs for the 2013-2014 year include a state League study on Human Trafficking, which is due in December; and a national study on Agriculture, which is due in April. In October there will be another Community Conversations for AISD Districts. League volunteer facilitators and recorders will be needed.

The LWVAA also will need a lot of support from members to plan and raise money for the state League convention (expected to cost the LWVAA $3,000), to be held in Austin in April 2014. To reduce costs, there were suggestions that the League host and cook a Thursday night dinner for state and local board members. In other business, the budget and bylaws, which were proposed in the Annual Meeting Workbook, were adopted.

Officers elected included: Stewart Snider and Carol Olewin, Co-Presidents, 2014; Nancy Oelklaus, 1st VP, Program, 2014; Anita Privett, 2nd VP, Community Relations, 2015; Judy Clack, 3rd VP, Organization, 2015; Jacklyn Williams, 4th VP, Voter Service, 2014; Peggy Stewart, Secretary, 2015; and Carol Olewin, Treasurer, 2014.

for LWVTX. The LWVTX position stated in part:

"These are unnecessary and burdensome obligations that threaten women's constitutional rights to make health care decisions and access to health care. It would seem that the true intent of these requirements is to make unaffordable demands on providers and thus bring about the closure of facilities that are financially unable to comply - in other words, the closure of most of the abortion-providing facilities in Texas.

Rather than protecting women's health, these requirements seem to be aimed at discouraging and making it more difficult for women, especially those living in remote or underserved areas, to obtain abortions legally - and increase the likelihood that they will have to resort to illegal and unsafe procedures."

Grace Chimene had these observations of serving on the Capitol Corps:

"I spoke at the Capitol for the LWVTX for many of the individual items in women's healthcare bills when they were first introduced in various Committees. I was impressed that someone at the LWVTX knew about all the bills. They were really paying attention. Julie Lowenberg (LWVTX Issue Chair on Women's Health) provided me with the written testimony, sometimes within a day. Laura Blackburn (LWVTX Advocacy Chair) approved testimony quickly.

"There was a wonderful supportive group effort by the Capitol Corps of the LWV to fight the bills limiting a woman's access to abortion. At least two League members, Karen Rankin and Joann Richards, waited over ten hours to be able to testify as individuals (not officially for the League.) Many other Leaguers, including Anne McAfee, Betty Williamson, and Mary Cullinane, were at the Capitol to stand in opposition to those bills. I am very proud that I am a part of the League of Women Voters."

~ Judy Parken, Capitol Corps,
Directors elected to one-year terms until 2014 were: Jaci Collins, Membership Records; Judy Parken, Membership; Judy Clack, Voter Editor; Mescal Evler, Publicity; and Ami Hooper, Social Media.

Off-board chairs, who were approved (not elected) were Lenora DuBose, Voters Guide Editor; Eliza May, Special Events; Dianne Wheeler, Budget; Maxine Barkan, Bylaws; Ami Hooper, Webmaster; and Anne Roussos, Workbook Editor. Unfilled positions are Love Your League Fundraiser and Development. Frances McIntyre will serve as chair of the Nominating Committee. Non-board members elected to serve with her were Margit Orange and Susan Morrison.

Following are suggestions made during the "I Wish the League Would" segment that closed the meeting: attract younger members; encourage and pay members to attend the state convention; make YouTube videos on how to register to vote and how to use the voting e-slates; continue to use Vote411 by donating money to the Education Fund; have a media campaign to say how wonderful we are (the League); have enough money to hire a part-time office and financial manager; consider an update to the Affordable Housing position; provide an update on tax abatements and rebates offered by the city and county; and work hard to get Medicare enacted to cover everybody.

Other wishes included: emphasize public health issues as government changes and abuses continue; study the Texas and local gun control laws; be judicious about scheduling meetings and activities next year so we can allocate time to raising funds for and hosting the state convention; increase membership; put more effort into community outreach and visibility; have more League participation at City Council, Commissioners Court, AISD, etc.; hold new-member orientations; encourage members to stand and give names at meetings; set and announce dates for important League meetings before the Fall Kickoff; and thank this year's board, Stewart Snider and Carol Olewin, especially.

~ Anne Roussos, Editor, Annual Meeting Workbook, roussos@sbcglobal.net

Making Democracy Work Award

June 12, 2013 will be remembered for the LWVAA first "Making Democracy Work Award" presentation to Dana DeBeauvoir, Travis County Clerk.

Through her efforts, Travis County has been recognized across the country for its groundbreaking early voting, a program that is centered on customer-friendly polling locations in high traffic retail locations. DeBeauvoir has been an outstanding local leader as well as a nationally and internationally recognized expert in her field.

Former Texas House member Wilhelmina Delco presented the award to a surprised honoree at Green Pastures Restaurant.

Dana DeBeauvoir movingly accepted to a capacity crowd of one hundred people after an evening of fun and light entertainment led by former Texas Senator, Gonzalo Barrientos, who was emcee for the evening.

A few of Dana DeBeauvoir's accomplishments include:
--- Received a Best Practices Award from the National Association of Election Officials (Election Center) for her work in using risk analysis to implement security measures for electronic voting systems;

Local Study Group: Health and Mental Health Services

Following local study approval at the May 2013 Annual Meeting, a group of members officially began a local review and update of LWVAA positions on Health and Mental Health Services originally adopted in 1987, 2003, and 2008. The Healthcare study committee met on June 19 and began to outline a procedure to follow.

The focus of the study will be on the Austin and Travis County health care services and systems, including the new Community Care Collaborative, the medical school and the teaching hospital. However, because of the countless changes and issues roiling local, state, and federal health care financing programs, the committee will also consider and report on how these forces affect our community.

The whole process is estimated to take at least one year and will involve

~ Grace Chimene, Capitol Corps, grace@chimene.com

Editor's Note: Please let me know (jbclack@yahoo.com) if your name was omitted from this article.
interviews with key policy leaders and operations managers. Interviews with community advocates will increase our understanding of special needs of certain populations (e.g., women, undocumented immigrants, marginalized populations, etc.) and potential gaps or shortcomings in the planned system.

The group is committed to the success of the new Community Care Collaborative and health care reform. The aim of this project is to provide information that will educate the membership and that may be used to guide ways the League might assist in the implementation of the new systems.

If you would like to join in this effort, please contact me.

~Mary Cullinane, Study Chair, mculli@sbcglobal.net, 512-623-9194

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LWVTX Study: Human Trafficking

An LWVTX consensus study on Human Trafficking kicks off our year’s program. Eliza May has agreed to chair our study resource group. We need more members to participate in this human trafficking study group that will begin meeting in August. Anyone interested in participating in the human trafficking resource group should contact the study chair, Eliza May, elizamay@sbcglobal.net. The scope of the study is defined as follows:

- Understand the nature and definition of human trafficking;
- Consider its extent in Texas;
- Explore how to reduce its occurrence, including considering state and local laws and their enforcement;
- Assess the components of social services for victims to rescue and restore their lives.

Resource materials provided by LWVTX. Our study group will become familiar with those materials and will guide our consensus discussions. A general meeting will be followed by unit meetings in which consensus will be taken.

Join these members who have indicated an interest: Mary Blackstock, Judy Clack, Mary Cullinane, Diane Davis, Eliza May, Frances McIntyre, Judy Moore, and Nancy Oelklaus. Email Eliza May to be part of the study group.

About August 1, LWVTX will post their Facts and Issues on Human Trafficking for anyone to read and study. Go to http://www.lwvtexas.org/.

~ Nancy Oelklaus, VP Program, nancyoelklaus@gmail.com
~ Eliza May, Human Trafficking Chair, elizamay@sbcglobal.net

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Public Education Study Group

In response to findings from the Community Conversations, an education study group is meeting regularly to determine what action or advocacy the League should take in response to what we’ve learned. Our current focus is to learn what is already being done. Sabine (BiNi) Foster, facilitator for the Ready by 21 Coalition of Central Texas, presented data to

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Love Your League

Thanks to all League members and League supporters who contributed to this year’s Love Your League fundraising campaign. While the results were below previous years and what had been budgeted, the amount received will help the League continue our community efforts.

Donations to the LWVAA General Fund totaled $1,140, to the LWVAA Education Fund was $2,880 for a total of $4,020 of our goal of $13,000.

Those wishing to still contribute may mail their check to LWVAA, 1011 W. 31st Street, Austin, TX 78705. Indicate it's for the Love Your League campaign.

~ Ann Stalnaker, Chair, astalnaker@austin.rr.com

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Honors and Memorials

We report with deep sadness the loss of two long-time League members: Rose Lancaster on May 23 and Anne McAfee on July 13.
answer the question, "How are the children doing?" and to relate the work the coalition is doing. (*BiNi is also a new League member.*)

**Kendall Pace**, a member of the AISD Up Close Class of 2013, shared her project that lists all of the special programs that AISD students may choose. She’s working with the AISD Department of Communication and Community Relations to disseminate the information, and the League is studying ways to support this effort.

The next meeting of this group will be in conjunction with the Ready by 21 Coalition on **Thursday, August 1**. At this meeting a presentation will be made by the E3 Alliance, which has just completed research on causes of student absences in Central Texas.

Anyone interested in participating in the education study group should contact me. All are welcome.

~ **Nancy Oelklaus**, VP Program, nancyoelklaus@gmail.com

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**Maxine's Musings: The History of Our League Office**

I recently volunteered to staff the local League office once a month as a member of the Office Corps. It’s been many years since I did so, probably not since the 1980’s or early ’90’s, but when Judy Clack asked for volunteers recently, I responded to the call. Doing so brought back many memories, some of which I will share with you.

_Editor’s Note: We currently have two openings in the office. Contact Judy Clack, jbcclack@yahoo.com, if you can volunteer for one three-hour shift per month._

Our small original office used to be next door to the one we now occupy. We were fortunate to have paid, part-time office staff in the person of League member **Melissa Jones**. She kept our League lives in order and knew everything we needed to know. I recall that Melissa would telephone **Hillbert’s Hamburgers** located then across the street on Lamar to deliver her lunch. I thought that was quite neat! Melissa left the League office to be a volunteer for the Settlement Home for Children that was a time-consuming commitment. We were very sorry to see her go but wished her well in her new endeavor.

Melissa's replacement was League member **Billy Passmore**, who also served as Treasurer. Billy thought we needed to improve our modest office space and become more prominent and professional looking. She negotiated a large two-room office in the same building that was accessed from the front patio. The first room was the office and could house small group and board meetings. The second room was large enough to hold general meetings of about 30 members. There was also space for refreshments and coffee. After a while it became apparent we could not afford such luxurious spaces and we gave up that office. We also determined we could no longer afford part-time paid staff and would rely totally on volunteers. We moved back to the main building in the small two rooms across the hall from the first office where we stayed until recently, and are now in the more spacious two rooms again across the hall.

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**Anne McAfee** was a decades-long fighter for voting rights for all and for many rights for women.

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

The League thanks the following for their donations: **Jo Reichler**, for a speedy and complete recovery for **Karen Haschke** after her knee replacement; **Joann Lovelace** and **Judy Parken**, in memory of **Rose Lancaster**.

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**Implementation: Affordable Care Act**

Beginning October 1st, 2013 until March 31st, 2014, there will be new Health Insurance Marketplaces that will allow people to compare prices and shop for health insurance.
In the early years, our meetings included refreshments provided mainly by Willa Mae Hardesty. In my previous League experience, refreshments were taboo. We were there for business only. Willa Mae had a wonderful decadent dessert she always made. I think it was called No-Bake Graham Cracker Bars. The recipe was included in the League's very attractive cookbook, Capitol Cooking, published in 1985. Among the many League members who provided recipes were Maria Johnson, Joann Lovelace, Frances McIntyre, Nancy Bene, Margit Orange, Mary Blackstock, Karen Haschke, Melanie Malewitz, Barbara Hankins, Nan Clayton, Libby Doggett, and even Lady Bird Johnson!

Speaking of Margit Orange, she was the anchor for our annual sale of UNICEF cards and gifts that we distributed from the office. She did all the ordering and set up a schedule of volunteers every day in shifts to distribute the cards and gifts, some ordered in advance and others from drop-ins. Margit also had a full time position at the University of Texas, but her management skills and attention to detail were remarkable. We did this for some years, but the burden got too heavy and we were only making about 10% from the sales that was not enough for the effort, so it was abandoned.

For many years, Melanie Malewitz was our Organization Vice-president responsible for the management of the office. We did not have a computer yet, but we did have an answering machine to take calls. Like many electronic gadgets, the system sometimes broke down. When I was president, I can remember having to call Melanie sometimes at odd hours to fix the machine. Some of us were technically challenged! Melanie would cheerfully drive north from South Austin where she lived to take care of the problem. This was especially critical during elections when communication to the public for information was part of our service. Melanie was at hand for many other items related to a smooth functioning of the office including staffing, especially during election times. Phyllis Portnoy, Yvonne Khouri, Jo Reichler, and now Judy Clack have carried out the same service Melanie did, for which we are grateful. We could not maintain an office presence without them.

Our annual Phonathon (now the Love Your League Campaign) was our biggest and most successful fundraiser but we could not do it from the office. We did not have enough phones (actually only one) so we were fortunate to have donated space on a Sunday. For some years, we were at Pat Brown Real Estate office in a converted small cottage on 29th Street. We brought potluck food to share during the long telephoning hours. Joann Lovelace organized the event as did others. Diane Radin, League member and fund raising expert, gave us an inspirational pep talk to get us started. I often thought that was why we were so successful! Now the Phonathon is gone but I look back on it as good times and lots of bonding.

As a local League, we are fortunate to be able to maintain an office. Many Leagues, especially the smaller ones, have to make do with the office located in the home of whoever is the current president. We are very fortunate to have building owners (the Phillips family) who charge us very reasonable rent we can afford. I call this an in-kind donation to the League!

~ Maxine Barkan, Past-President, mbarkan@austin.rr.com

Observer Corps:

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
Travis County Commissioners Court:

Editor’s note: This is a summary of the main points reported by Karen Rankin and Joann Robison from their attendance at the May 28, June 11, June 25, and July 9 meetings of the Travis County Commissioners Court.

An update and review of projects being developed using HUD Community Development Block Grants revealed that the outreach by the county department in administering those funds is part of what makes Travis County a model for the rest of the country. Results of that outreach reveal that water infrastructure was the primary area of interest for county residents last year.

Deece Eckstein, the county's Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator, presented a legislative session update and outlined examples of areas in which counties can expect to see benefits:

**Mental health services**—Additional funding and an advisory committee for coordinating spending should be helpful in raising the state from 49th nationally in handling mental health services.

**Transportation**—Money from the Rainy Day Fund will no longer be diverted to other purposes, but spent on transportation, as intended. Overweight truck fines will be increased, aiding counties that are seeing heavy wear and tear on roads from overloaded vehicles.

**Water**—With the creation of a state water infrastructure fund, which must be approved by voters in November, locally designed and approved projects can apply for capital.

Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt resigned from the Court since she has announced her candidacy for County Judge.

Safety improvements along a 5-mile stretch of two-lane Hamilton Pool Road were considered. A few residents expressed their concerns about widening to four lanes, losing the rural character of the area, and attracting more visitors to the local parks. Ultimately, commissioners voted to begin design work on widening the two existing lanes, adding shoulders and left-turn lanes because of the history of accidents. Funds for this project were included in the 2005 bond election.

The burn ban and whether to allow fireworks this 4th of July season were discussed. Due to recent rains, there is no burn ban in place and that decision will continue to be reviewed each week. There will be no fireworks ban this year either. By statute, a fireworks ban is allowed only if a particular dryness threshold is reached by June 15, and that will not occur this year, but it is expected to be near that number around July 4th, which is too late for cancellation.

Three state legislative issues that TCCC has followed:

Regarding redistricting, the Legislature has adopted maps suggested by the courts. Then the Supreme Court gave a new ruling on voting rights that may validate those redistricting maps.

A constitutional amendment to provide money from rainy day fund for public highways has passed house. Commissioners are waiting on senate passage on this last day of the session.
Governor Perry vetoed funding for the **public integrity unit**. This unit is within Travis County jurisdiction and will be brought up for funding by the county when all members are present.

~ **Karen Rankin**, Observer Corps, [karenrankin@austin.rr.com](mailto:karenrankin@austin.rr.com)
~ **Joann Robison**, Observer Corps, [gatorgunk@gmail.com](mailto:gatorgunk@gmail.com)

### Membership

What a wonderful member turnout we had for the Annual Meeting in May and the Making Democracy Work Award Reception in June! I enjoyed seeing so many of you at these events. Let’s also celebrate attracting eight (8) new members!

**New Members:** A warm welcome to each of our new League members: **Shelley Koegler Chapman, Diane Davis, Rhonda Douglas, Chantal Eldridge, Sabine Foster, Angela Koegler, Marilyn McCarthy,** and **Ariati Singh.** As a member of the Austin League, you are also a member of the national (LWVUS) and state (LWVTX) Leagues. See these links 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)

**Regular and Sustaining Memberships:** Of your $60 in 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 ($100) greatly benefits the Austin League because the extra money stays in Austin and supports our local League’s activities. The entire amount is paid to LWVAA and not to the Education Fund.

**Thank You, Sustaining Members:** Special thanks to this month’s sustaining members: **Susan Bell, Nancy Bene, Jaci Collins, Margaret Gomez, Karen Hayward, Joan and David Hilgers, Karen Huber, Julie and Jodie Moore, Pamela Reed, Edward Silha, Joyce and Dan Wilson.** 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: **Cecelia Burke, Nancy Busbey, Bruce Elfant and Lisa Harris, Louise Hasty, Ami Hooper, Clark Jobe, Anne McAfee, Mary McCallister, Diane Radin, Stewart Snider, Jan Williams, Betty Williamson,** and **Carol Wood.** We appreciate your 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 LWV of the Austin Area. Choose an amount below. Or [click here](http://www.lwvaustin.org) to pay dues online by credit card via PayPal while providing all the above information.

**You may renew or join using PayPal:**

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Contact me anytime with your League questions.

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