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Annette Lindsey, President, 776-7752

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## December 2008

### President's Letter

Dear friends,

At the end of this Thanksgiving weekend, I continue to feel gratitude for the impressive election experience we witnessed on November 2. A remarkable turnout, a gracious conciliation speech by John McCain and a thoughtful acceptance by President-elect Barack Obama served as powerful reminders of our important democratic process. Thanks to many of you who distributed Voters Guides throughout the county. We helped citizens make informed decisions.

Now we must prepare for significant legislative action at both the state and national levels. The Texas Legislature convenes on January 13, and several issues demand our attention. Once again Senator Wentworth of San Antonio will introduce a bill for effective redistricting. Interest groups from conservative and liberal perspectives call for redistricting that is free from political gerrymandering. A proposed commission with an equal number of members from both parties, none of whom are currently in office or running for office, would be a step in the right direction. Please read more about this issue in the current issue of the Texas Voter.

Last month the Chief Operating Officer of Hillcrest Health System, Jim Gebhart, spoke to our group about the impact of indigent and uninsured patients on health care costs. He gave an excellent explanation of the current dilemma and the need for an improved process. The national Health Care Education Task Force is at work producing materials for the healthcare study. Thanks to Jenice Long for securing excellent speakers for our program meetings.

Please mark your calendars for the meeting on January 13. You will receive a notice about the topic in a few weeks. In February we will not

have a regular program meeting, but will enjoy a membership coffee. Last year we appreciated this relaxed setting for conversation with members and others who have an interest in voter education and effective governance.

Best wishes to each of you for happy holidays and a new year filled with peace, health, and good government.

– Annette

### Waco Area LWV Distributes 21,000 Voters Guides

Thanks in large part to a \$2,500 grant from the Cooper Foundation and hundreds of deliveries made by league members, the Waco Area LWV distributed approximately 21,000 Voters Guides throughout the greater Waco area prior to the November 4 General Election. Members delivered English and Spanish Voters Guides to more than 200 locations including local libraries, municipal buildings, polling places, local colleges, public schools, churches, businesses, restaurants, retail locations, hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices, and non-profit organizations

Voters Guides are intended to inform voters about the candidates' positions on important issues. Voters Guides for the November 4 General Election contained information on candidates in statewide races as well as the presidential candidates.

--Lisa Shaver

### Dates for Your Calendar

Program Meeting - January 13

Legislature Convenes – January 13

Membership Coffee – A Saturday in February

State Lobby Day – March 9 in Austin

## Legislative Interviews

Prior to a legislative session LWV members are asked to interview their local legislators. Ours are Senator Kip Averitt, Representative Jim Dunnam and Representative "Doc" Anderson. Two or three individuals are asked to spend approximately one hour in a directed and planned conversation with a legislator. Following the meeting, the interviewers will write a report and submit it to the state office. On the basis of this information state LWV lobbyists will know how to approach various legislators about issues that are important to the League. We need at least six volunteers. Please contact Annette Lindsey (776-7752) to indicate that you will assist in this important project.

## Lighting the Way for a Greener Environment

*By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS  
Climate Change Task Force Member)*

It's on every Top Ten list of things-to-do to save energy and help fight global climate change: Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs).

The benefits are compelling. CFLs use roughly one-quarter of the electricity of an incandescent bulb to produce the same amount of light. This means savings for consumers through reduced electric bills. And by reducing the demand for electricity, it means less global warming pollution from coal-fired power plants.

About one-third of global warming pollution in the United States is caused by coal plants generating electricity. And lighting accounts for 20 percent of the electricity used. For consumers whose electricity is produced from coal, replacing a single incandescent bulb with a CFL will keep over half a ton of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) out of the atmosphere over the life of the bulb.

Those consumers whose electricity is supplied primarily by nuclear power can make an impact as well. Nuclear power plants typically sell their considerable excess base-load capacity to electrical distributors in nearby regions which otherwise depend on coal-fired power.

Reducing demand for electricity in such cases, therefore, makes more emissions-free nuclear power available to replace carbon-intensive coal-fired power elsewhere.

### Is Mercury a Problem?

CFLs do contain a very small amount of mercury—about 5 milligrams, enough to cover the tip of a ballpoint pen. The mercury is safe while the bulb is intact or in use, and even if the CFL should break, it poses little risk.

Far more serious are the 50 tons of mercury emitted annually from coal-burning power plants in the United States. To generate the average 10,660 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity used by the typical household each year, a power plant will emit about 245 mg of mercury (roughly 0.023 mg of mercury/kWh of electricity produced). By using CFLs instead of incandescent bulbs, homeowners will reduce their electrical demand and cut mercury emissions as well.

### Assessing the Impact

Let's compare a 23-watt CFL with an incandescent bulb that produces the same amount of light, namely a 100-watt bulb. Since ENERGY STAR-qualified CFLs last five to ten times longer than incandescent bulbs, this example compares one 23-watt CFL with five 100-watt incandescents, equivalent to the minimum expected lifetime of the one 23-watt CFL.

	1 23-watt CFL	5 100-watt incandescent
Cost of bulbs (Home Depot prices)	\$4.00	\$3.15
Lifespan of bulbs	5,000 hours	5 x 1,000 hours
Electricity used over bulbs' lifetime	115 kWh	500 kWh
Cost of electricity (at 10¢/kWh)	\$11.50	\$50.00
CO <sub>2</sub> produced	230 lb	1,000 lb
Mercury (electrical generation)	2.6 mg	11.5 mg
Mercury (in the bulb)*	5.0 mg	0

\* With proper disposal, the mercury in the CFL will not enter the environment.

## Making the Switch

For those who haven't made the switch to CFLs yet or who were unhappy with fluorescent lights in the past, it's time to check out the nearest lighting display.

- CFLs now come in a variety of shapes and sizes—mini-spirals small enough to use in table lamps, sconces and ceiling fixtures; globes for bathroom vanity fixtures; chandelier bulbs; recessed downlights; and more.
- CFLs can replace incandescent bulbs in almost any fixture. Some are specifically designed for use with dimmers or in three-way fixtures.
- The amount of light that any bulb will put out is measured in lumens. A 100-watt incandescent bulb will put out about 1,600 lumens. Replacing that bulb with a 23-watt CFL will also produce 1,600 lumens, but it will require much less power.
- CFLs are available in a range of color temperatures. For a warm (yellowish) light, look for a CFL labeled soft white, with a color temperature of 2,700K (degrees Kelvin). CFLs labeled bright white and daylight will have a cooler (bluish) light and higher Kelvin numbers (e.g., 3,500K or 5,500K).
- Look for ENERGY STAR-qualified bulbs. These have been tested to meet stringent performance criteria; they will use 75 percent less energy than an incandescent bulb and last up to ten times longer.

## Disposing of CFLs

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin, and proper disposal of CFLs is a must. The U.S. EPA is working with CFL manufacturers and major retailers to expand recycling and disposal options. Ikea, Home Depot and some hardware

stores already accept used CFLs, and many states and municipalities sponsor regular household hazardous waste collection programs that include CFLs.

State and local recycling options can be found online at [www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/](http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling/) and at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org).

If a CFL should break, scoop up the glass fragments and fine particles with stiff paper or cardboard and put them in a plastic bag. Do not use a vacuum or broom. Wipe the area with a damp paper towel and place that in the bag, too. Seal the bag, place it in a second plastic bag, and dispose of it properly. If weather permits, open windows to allow the room to ventilate.

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## Online Resources for Additional Information

ENERGY STAR comprehensive CFL web page: [www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr\\_cfls](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls)

Environmental Defense detailed guide to finding energy-saving light bulbs that work for you: [www.environmentaldefense.org/page.cfm?tagid=632](http://www.environmentaldefense.org/page.cfm?tagid=632)

Earth 911 Web site with extensive information about recycling: <http://earth911.org/recycling/>

State-by-state listing of disposal and recycling options: [www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling](http://www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling)

U.S. EPA information on cleaning up mercury spills: [www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm)

*Produced by the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force*

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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS-WACO AREA  
P.O. BOX 7311  
WACO, TX 76714-7311**

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Please check one:  New Member  Renewing Member

Membership dues are \$55.00 per member per year or \$82.50 for household membership. (NOT TAX DEDUCTIBLE). Please make check payable to the League of Women Voters Waco Area and mail with this form to:

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS-WACO AREA  
P.O. BOX 7311  
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For your donation to be tax deductible as a charitable contribution, make check payable to: LWV-Texas Education Fund, a 602c(3) organization, and mail it to the above address. It will be deposited to the LWV-Waco area account and used to support voter services and citizen education activities.

The LWV-Waco Area is a volunteer organization with state and national affiliation dedicated to citizens' participation in government; a major source of non-partisan information on voter registration, election issues and candidates; an organization that studies and takes action, and is open for membership to all women and men 18 years and older. Call 776-7752 to find out where and when you can take the first step in making a difference on issues that matter to you.