



VOTER

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 2009

- 9 Last day to file for May election
- 9 LWV-TX Lobby Day in Austin
- 25 LWV-R Consensus Meeting – Electoral College
- 28 Luncheon with LWV-Plano/CC

April 2009

- 16 RISD Forum – RISD Ad Building
- 21 COR Forum – Richardson Civic Center
- 27 Early voting starts

May 2009

- 5 Early voting ends
- 9 Election Day – RISD, PISD, COR
- 13 LWV-R Annual Meeting

FROM THE PRESIDENT Jean Richards

As the weather begins to warm and our attention turns to the May election, let's not forget some other important dates on our spring calendar:

Lobby Day: LWV-TX is hosting Lobby Day at the State Capitol on Monday, March 9th. From 9 to 10 a.m., there will be a statewide conference at which delegates from local Leagues will vote on changes to the state positions on *Judicial Selection* and *Child Abuse and Neglect*. From 10 to 12, Senator Jeff Wentworth will speak.

After lunch, attendees will visit with their legislators to lobby for League positions. Susan Majors, an LWV-R member will be attending, and other members may as well. For more information, visit www.lwvtexas.org.

Consensus Meeting: On Wednesday, March 25th, LWV-R will be holding a meeting on the National Popular Vote Compact. The meeting will be at the home of Betsy Delgado (4 Vicksburg Ln., Richardson – off Floyd Road north of Campbell) and will begin at 7:00 p.m. Nancy Wilson's article (below) explains what we will do at the meeting, and she also includes the second background paper on the topic.

Luncheon with LWV-Plano/Collin County: We have been invited to a luncheon on Saturday, March 28th with members of the LWV of Plano/CC, Dallas, Denton and Sherman/ Grayson; AAUW Plano and Richardson; and Plano Business & Professional Women. Patty Jantho of LWV-Plano/CC has been putting this together, and writes: *"We are eager to develop a relationship with other women's organizations in the area. As you are probably aware, during 2010 we will celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and, of special interest to LWV members, the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters. Is there some action we might collectively take to celebrate this landmark occurrence? We would hope to share some initial thoughts on the possibility at this luncheon."* The invitation and response form are reproduced at the end of this VOTER.

May election dates: Election Day itself is Saturday, May 9th. We will be presenting two candidate forums: RISD Board of Trustees on Thursday, April 16th at the RISD Administration Building, co-sponsored by the RISD Council of PTAs; and Richardson City Council on Tuesday, April 21st at the Richardson Civic Center, co-sponsored by the Richardson Chamber of Commerce. In addition, we will be publishing a *Voters Guide*, which should be available around mid-April. Further details about the forums will be available in our next VOTER. If you want more information in the meantime, contact Voter Service co-chairs Ellen Steger and Betsy Delgado at voterservice@lwvrichardson.org.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (CHIP) UPDATE **Martha Dorris**

We have been busy with RISD enrollment events and our regular third Saturday of each month help sessions at St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church. During the last two of those sessions, 17 and 14 families completed application forms and several other families received information on other options. If you are interested in becoming active in this advocacy, we welcome you to join us. We can train anyone at our help sessions at St. Barnabas. In addition, there are formal training sessions. Our schedule of coming events follows:

- March 7 St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 1210 W. Belt Line Road, Richardson, 9:30 to 11:00 am, Training session
- March 13 Dallas County Health Department, 2377 Stemmons, 4th Floor, WIC Classroom B, 9:00 to 10:30 am., Training session
- March 19 Site to be announced, 5 to 6:30 pm., Training session
- March 21 Help session, St. Barnabas Presbyterian Church, 1220 W. Belt Line Road, Richardson, 10 am to 3 pm, in conjunction with E-recycling event.
- April 4 CHIP Coalition area wide enrollment drive, 9 Fiesta Stores, 9:30 am to 2 pm.

Two north Dallas area sites for the April 4 event are 8060 Spring Valley Road, Dallas 75240 and 1200 East Parker Road, Plano 75074. All interested volunteers are encouraged to visit <http://www.childrens.com/Fiesta> to fill out a volunteer registration form. Other store locations and additional details are included on the website. Thank you for your support and for considering signing up to help. Please call or email me for more information and I would appreciate knowing that you have volunteered.

To make CHIP work as intended, Texas must hire and train staff and improve slow computer systems. The outreach efforts should be doubled and resources added for community-based organizations to help more families access CHIP and Medicaid for Children. For families who earn too much to qualify for CHIP but who cannot afford private coverage, there are proposals for families to buy coverage for their children, paying a sliding scale premium that increases with their income. We can decrease the state's work load, relieve backlogs, and improve access to care by reenrolling kids in Children's Medicaid once, not twice, a year. As bills are introduced, please consider writing your elected representatives in support for expanding CHIP. A good source of information is the Texas Finish Line Campaign at www.texaskidswin.org.

Thanks again for all of your help and support for CHIP.



FINANCE DRIVE **Jane Daboub**

(Finance Committee – Jane Daboub, Gayla Von Ehr, Susan Majors and Roxanne Rhinehart)

The Finance Drive is underway. The letters were mailed on February 19th. Thanks to the members who attended the signing party and to those members who are making calls to potential contributors. Your calls can make all of the difference as to whether or not we receive a donation.

Member contributions are greatly needed. These contributions make up about one-fourth of our budget. Thank you to those loyal members who have already contributed. If you have not contributed yet, please consider doing so. Your contribution shows that you believe in our mission.

PROGRAM OF EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY **Nancy Wilson**

I. LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING

LWV-R members took the first step in the planning cycle for the 2009-10 League Program at the Local Program Planning meeting. Recommendations from this meeting will go to the Board and then to the members at Annual Meeting.

The group recommended keeping all of the current local program positions as shown in the Handbook Pp.26-30. There were no recommendations to Drop or Review any of the positions.

Some suggestions concerning local positions:

- In the next Handbook, note with an asterisk or some marker which positions are currently in force and which have not been achieved. This would indicate which positions support the status quo and which are supporting a change.
- Historical notes on each position would be helpful in general understanding of the position. e.g., when the position was adopted or reviewed, etc.
- A unit meeting with a brief overview of each position would raise member understanding of the local positions.

The following topics were discussed:

- Video recording City Council meetings and making them readily available to the public. It was suggested that the position title be edited to reflect the 2008 edits.
- CHIP – continued support.
- Rumored expansion of the COR Solid Waste Transfer Station at Lookout & Owens Blvd.
- Integrity of the voting process. Points included equipment (hardware and software), instructions to voters, etc. This could tie in with the LWV-TX work on Voting Procedures to Increase Voter Participation, an update of the LWV-TX Voting Rights/Election Laws position to consider various procedures to increase voter participation.
- Livability issues in Richardson.
- Disaster preparedness in Richardson. This could be the topic of a meeting discussing such points as how COR fits into regional plans, how communications are coordinated among the various responders, citizen preparedness, etc.
- City oversight of contract workers, especially in residential areas.

The recommendation was that there be no new study. Topics for member and/or public education or advocacy include, but are not limited to the issues discussed.

II. CONSENSUS MEETING

Electoral College - Is the National Popular Vote Compact a viable alternative?

LWV-R will hold a discussion and consensus meeting on March 25 on the national study topic of the National Popular Vote Compact. Articles in the January and February VOTERS have provided background information.

The first part of the meeting will be a discussion of the issue led by Dr. Barbara Presnall, LWV-R member and Professor of Government at TWU. The consensus portion will be led by Nancy Barlow, LWV-R member and professor at Brookhaven Community College.

Read the background articles and come prepared for an interesting, educational League evening.

III. BACKGROUND PAPER ON LWVUS STUDY - National Popular Vote Compact

PROS & CONS (Article 2 of 2 Articles. Refer to the January 2009 LWV-R VOTER for the previous article.)

On March 25, LWV-R will hold discussion and consensus on the national study topic – the National Popular Vote Compact.

This VOTER will present some pro/con information. Additional papers, including the text of the compact, are available at www.lwvrichardson.org. Please contact Nancy Wilson at program@lwvrichardson.org if you have questions or comments.

Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states—a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

Opposition to the National Popular Vote Compact

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NVP Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The

NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

To prepare for the consensus meeting, please read the complete version of this paper (available at www.lwv.org) by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

© 2008 by the League of Women Voters of the United States, with minor edits



The League of Women Voters of Plano/Collin County

Invites Members and Friends of

LWV Richardson, Dallas, Denton and Sherman/Grayson

And AAUW Plano/Collin County and Richardson

And Plano Business & Professional Women

to a

Luncheon Celebrating Women

Saturday, March 28, 2009, 12 noon at

Ralph & Kacoo's,

401 Central Expressway S, Allen TX 75013

Program:

Celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Founding of the LWV Plano/Collin County

Readers Theater program about the First National Women's Rights Convention in 1850 in Worcester, Massachusetts

Presented by LWV P/CC members

Reservations requested by **Friday, March 20, 2009.**

Please mail reservation and check for \$22 per person,

payable to LWV P/CC, to:

Patty Jantho

1100 Meredith Lane 418, Plano, TX 75093

469-737-3626, pnjantho@gmail.com.

RESERVATION FORM ON NEXT PAGE!!!!

Reservation for Luncheon Celebrating Women

Saturday, March 28, 2009, 12 noon

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Organization _____

persons _____ @ \$22, Total \$ _____

Check payable to "LWV P/CC"

Mail to: Patty Jantho, 1100 Meredith Lane 418, Plano, TX 75093.

Deadline: Friday, March 20, 2009