



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

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COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS

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AIR QUALITY—A RIGHT FOR ALL TEXANS! Texans are demanding clean, healthy air and are willing to pay the price to have it.

The League of Women Voters supports:

- Regulation and reduction of toxic-air pollutants, specifically through the setting of ambient air standards
- Measures to reduce vehicular emissions
- Regulation and reduction of pollution from stationary sources
- Setting and enforcing standards that are stricter than those required by the federal government
- Reducing greenhouse gases
- Conservation and the use of renewable resources

Air Toxics

The League of Women Voters of Texas has been active in the field of air quality for many years. Recent studies in Houston by the University of Texas School of Public Health have found a 56% increase of acute lymphocytic leukemia among children living within two miles of the Houston Ship Channel, when compared with children living more than 10 miles from the channel.¹ Such substances as 1,3 butadiene and benzene have been high in this area and are known carcinogens. Air toxics are now regulated through the use of “effects screening levels” (ESL’s) which are levels at which health effects are thought to occur. **However, ESL’s are difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.** The LWV supports **ambient air standards**, which would be based on studies of ESL’s and would be enforceable. Senator Gallegos has introduced **SB 93** which establishes a process that leads to standards for air toxics. **HB 148** by Rep. Jessica Farrar, is the companion bill.

Measures to Reduce Vehicular Emissions

Vehicular emissions are frequently the largest source of air pollution. Senator Rodney Ellis has introduced **SB 124**, which would require that Texas adopt the **California Low-Emission Vehicle program**, beginning with the model year 2009. This program has already been adopted by California, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington and seven other states. The bill is also supported by the mayors of Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston, areas that do not meet federal ozone standards. The program would greatly reduce tailpipe emissions, including carbon dioxide, thus reducing greenhouse gases. The companion bill is **HB 344** by Rep. Mark Strama.

Coal-Fired Power Plants

While the League of Women Voters does not oppose any energy source, we support energy sources that have minimum impact on the environment. Thus, we strongly support energy conservation and renewable resources.

Seventeen applications for permit to build coal-fired power plants have been submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), eleven of which are for TXU.² The problem is that TCEQ issues these permits on a case-by-case basis and is not required to consider the cumulative impacts of the proposed plants. We support measures to **require** TCEQ to determine the cumulative impacts of these emissions, including carbon dioxide, produced by all of the proposed plants—**before permits are issued or the plants built.** This is important so that we can accurately predict the impact on the areas of the state that are not in compliance with federal laws,

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particularly those relating to ozone. The current non-attainment areas are Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, Dallas-Fort Worth, Beaumont-Port Arthur, and San Antonio. Furthermore, EPA has set the limit on the amount of mercury that Texas can emit by 2010 at 4.656 tons. It is essential that TCEQ look at the total mercury load provided by all sources, including the proposed coal-fired power plants, to make sure that we meet the mercury limit.

Conservation and Renewable Resources

The League of Women Voters strongly supports energy conservation and the use of renewable resources as a means to protect the environment and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Some cities, such as Houston, have already begun programs and set goals for energy conservation. The LWV supports state-wide efforts to promote energy conservation and use of renewable resources.

SUMMARY

The League of Women Voters of Texas supports:

- **Measures to control the emission of air toxics**
- **Adoption of the California Low-Emission Vehicle Program**
- **Postponing permits or construction of coal-fired power plants until cumulative studies have been done on the overall impact on air quality**
- **The use of conservation and renewable resources**

1. The Houston Chronicle, January 19, 2007, <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/nb/east/news/4482066.html>

2. Applications for permit include: Altura Power, TXU Oak Grove, Formosa Plastics Corporation, Calhoun County Navigation District, TXU Monticello, TXU Martin Lake, TXU Lake Creek, TXU Big Brown, TXU Morgan Creek, TXU Trading House, TXU Valley Unit 4, NRG Limestone Electric Generation Station Unit 3, Nacogdoches Power, Neuces Syngas, San Antonio City Public Service, and Sandy Creek Energy Associates.

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