

### Voter Outreach Explosion!

Elaine Talarski, LWV Director, San Antonio

The synergy created by the state and local Leagues' voter outreach resulted in the highest number of printed and downloaded *Voters Guides* ever. An astounding 640,000 *Voters Guides* in English and 21,500 in Spanish were distributed through newspapers and League printed versions. Libraries in areas not served by local Leagues received 13,400 in English and 6,650 in Spanish. The LWV-TX website received 1,588,427 hits, and the *Voters Guide* was downloaded 145,596 times between September and November 2008 bringing the total to around 795,000 *Voters Guides*.

Many local Leagues distributed *Voters Guides* to local libraries, colleges, universities and, community centers and their local League websites.

Some controversy was generated because the candidates meeting the criteria for inclusion in the LWVUS Presidential *Voters*

*Guide* did not match the candidates on the ballot in Texas. Specifically Libertarian Bob Barr did not meet the LWVUS criteria, while Texas write-in candidate Ralph Nader did. Unfortunately the LWVUS *Voters Guide* guidelines prevented the state office from amending the candidates. The State Board decided that the responses from the major party candidates were important enough that the LWVUS *Voters Guide* should be a part of the LWV-TX *Voters Guide*. There will be ongoing discussion about the inclusion of presidential information in future Texas *Voters Guides*.

Many candidates' forums were sponsored by local Leagues. The only statewide



Raul Salazar, LWV-TX Executive Director shamelessly plugs the *Voters Guide* at an Austin City Council meeting alongside Frances McIntyre, LWV-Austin Area and Mayor Will Wynn

debate involving the League was the U. S. Senatorial debate planned and cosponsored by LWV-Houston Area and Houston PBS. Texas PBS stations broadcasted and replayed the debate further increasing the voter outreach statewide. LWV-TX Education Fund and AARP also sponsored the debate through a generous grant from AARP.

### League Lobby Day and Statewide Conference

Janet Imhoff, Program VP, McKinney



Mark your calendars for the next important League event, March 9, 2009! **Lobby Day** is held in Austin during each Legislative session to give our members an opportunity to hear more about our legislative priorities and to meet and lobby their senators and representatives.

Our Bylaws also allow for a **Statewide Conference** "to give guidance to the state board on program and methods of work," and may "change the program upon recommendation of the state board or a local league." (Article VIII) The time has come to put this rarely used procedure into motion, in conjunction with Lobby Day.

Two of our program positions are in need of minor changes so that we may lobby more effectively, but these changes can only

be made by a vote of our members since we are a grassroots organization. The changes are needed in the areas of Judicial Selection and Child Abuse and Neglect. The statewide conference will be open to all League members, although only two members from each League may vote on the items.

A formal call to Statewide Conference with full information on the issues will be sent to each local League President and Member-at-Large Unit Chair in January. We must have a majority of local Leagues in attendance to have a quorum to conduct business. Plan to come to be part of the deliberations. We need the input of our membership in these important decisions.

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## President's Message

Karen Nicholson, President, Midland



What an election! There was more participation, particularly by young and minority voters, than ever before. Where do we go from here?

I participated in a conference call with LWVUS president Mary Wilson and several state presidents to discuss that very subject: how can we

bottle that enthusiasm? The essence of the conversation was that we need to build on that renewed interest in voting by those usually underrepresented groups by reaching out to them—and to all voters. We need to stress not just the importance of voting, but also the important life long process of civic participation.

As we continue to gather information about the election—what happened and why?—let's use the information to develop some plans for where we go from here. How can the League of Women Voters continue to encourage people to vote and also to give them the information they need to make an informed vote and to participate in other aspects of the political process? Talk about "where we go from here" in your local Leagues. Share your good ideas with each other—and with us on the State Board. We look forward to hearing your suggestions about bottling the enthusiasm!

*Karen*

## 2009 Texas State Legislative Session

Elaine Talarski, LWV Director, San Antonio

On November 4, 2008, the voters elected all of the state House of Representative and half of the state Senators. Elected officials to the legislature do not formally take office until January 13, 2009, when the session begins and elected officials are sworn in.

Most members will be at home in their districts until the Legislative session begins in January. Take advantage of that time period to get acquainted face-to-face with your Representative and Senator and learn what issues they are think important.

Early filing for the 81st Legislature begins November 10, 2008, but the bills are not technically filed until the session begins in January 2009. Early filing does give a bill a jump start by going through the Legislative Council for legal review and being assigned a bill number. These bills also head to committee and hearings earlier.

Some dates to follow for the 81st Legislative session are:

- **November 10, 2008** prefilng of legislation for the 81st Legislature begins.
- **January 13, 2009** formal swearing of elected legislators and the 81st Texas Legislature convenes. During the month of January the business of the legislative session is largely ceremony. Legislative committee appointments are in process.
- **January 31, 2009** appointment of Committee Members is usually completed.
- **March 13, 2009** last day for filing bills or resolutions that are not local or governor-declared emergency bills.
- **June 1, 2009** Legislative session ends.
- **June 21, 2009** deadline for governor to sign or veto a bill.
- **August 31, 2009** most bills passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor become law.

Each League member is encouraged to participate. Your voice can make a difference. Your response to action alerts is vital for the League's advocacy efforts. For current information regarding LWV-TX legislative activities contact Mary Finch, Advocacy Vice President. For a specific program question contact the assigned program chair tracking that issue. You can also track legislative activity on line through the official website, Texas Legislature Online, at [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us)

## Golden Oldies-Leagues 50+

Joyce Robinson, Sherman, SLL Committee

We still plan to recognize our Leagues that will be 50 years old by the 2010 Convention, so let us know if yours is one of those! In the meantime, enjoy these facts about some of our honorees.

LWV-Dallas	(1934) •Miriam "Ma" Ferguson was finishing her second term as the first woman governor of Texas. •Dust storms ruined or damaged about 300 million acres of U.S. cropland.	LWV-Lubbock	(1951) •The 22nd Amendment, limiting the Presidency to two terms, was passed. •The first electronic computer became a reality.	LWV-Irving	(1959) •Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states. •Castro seized power in Cuba.
1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	
	LWV-Midland	LWV-Tyler			
	(1940) •Winston Churchill became Britain's prime minister •John Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> .	(1952) •Eisenhower was elected President. • Big Tex made his debut at the State Fair of Texas!			

# Redistricting can be Improved in 2008-2009

Dee Brock, LWV Director, Tyler

Redistricting has been growing in importance as a political problem. From the liberal Common Cause to the conservative CATO Institute, most pundits and activists of all persuasions think taking the process away from party politics would be a positive change. In Texas and many other states, the major stumbling blocks to establishing an independent, nonpolitical process are the members of the state legislatures who are reluctant to give up their traditional hold on drawing new district boundaries.

As LWV-Texas and local Leagues begin their campaign for the establishment of an independent Redistricting Commission, here's what you need to know about the way redistricting works now, why we need change, what kind of change are we pushing for, and what's next in our campaign.

**Who is responsible now for redrawing district boundaries** for the Texas Legislature, the federal House of Representatives, and the Texas Board of Education?

- The Texas Legislature – the Senate Committee of the Whole and the House Committee on Redistricting. Redistricting plans have to pass both houses, and the Governor has veto power over them.

- If the Texas Legislative Committees do not come up with a redistricting plan for the Texas Legislature during the first regular session after each new census report, the Legislative Redistricting Board of Texas composed of five members – Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of House, Attorney General, Comptroller of Public Accounts, and the Commissioner of the General Land Office takes on the task

- If Texas Legislature fails to make the district changes for federal Representatives during the next session of the legislature, the job can be done at a later time in a special session.

- Detailed population data necessary for redistricting must be delivered to states by April 1 of the year following the census. The Texas legislature then has about 60 days during the first regular session to draw and adopt legislative district boundaries.

- As a state listed in Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, Texas must submit all redistricting plans to United States Department of Justice or the federal district court for the District of Columbia for preclearance.

## Why is redistricting necessary?

- Districts are supposed to be drawn so that the votes of all citizens are of equal importance.

- Changes in population or in the number of Congressional representatives for the state require redrawing the districts.

## What principles govern the drawing of districts?

- Districts must have equal or nearly equal populations.

- Districts must be drawn in a manner that does not have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on the basis of race or language group.

- Counties must be preserved within one district if possible.

## Why is the League advocating for an independent Redistricting Commission?

- As it stands now, Texas, like most states, places the power to shape the boundaries of political districts into the hands of politicians. That means our elected officials are picking their constituents, rather than the other way around. If the majority party

draws the districts, they are most likely to draw them to protect their party's power and to reduce the power of the minority party. Consequently, redistricting has evolved into an electoral instrument that serves to protect and strengthen the incumbency advantage, therefore disempowering voters and undermining democratic accountability.

- Excessive zeal in redistricting to empower a party is very divisive and more than once has led to situations that make it difficult for parties to work together for the good of the state. It is easy for all concerned to look both foolish and vindictive.

- This is the year we need to establish an independent commission so that we will have new procedures in place before the next census.

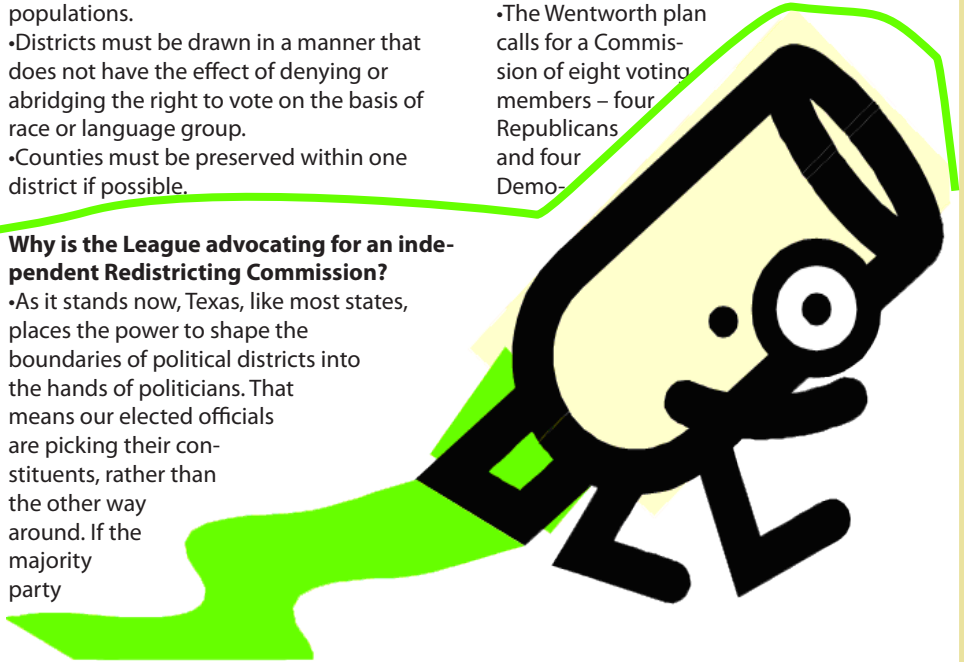
## Why Should We Support Senator Wentworth's bill?

- Senator Wentworth has been presenting a bill for the establishment of an independent Redistricting Commission for 15 years and in the last two sessions his bill passed the Senate, but was never brought to a vote in the House. This year we can make it happen if we all work together.

- His bill calls for a Redistricting Commission to draw the district lines of the U.S. House of Representatives. Of course, we would like to see this Commission draw the districts for the Texas Legislature and the State Board of Education, too. But passing this bill would be a good step forward and might make it easier to give the commission broader responsibili-

ties later. In addition, we might find a Texas Legislator who would push through amendments to Senator Wentworth's proposal.

- The Wentworth plan calls for a Commission of eight voting members – four Republicans and four Demo-



crats, all chosen by members of the Texas Legislature. None would hold or be running for a political position. This group would select a chair who would preside, but never have a vote. Such a structure would force fair and principled redistricting plans, since the process would never be controlled by one party.

## What Are Our Next Steps?

- Each League needs a chair person, and each chair needs a committee to develop and carry out an effort to convince and commit local leaders to support an independent Redistricting Commission.

- A part of each plan would be to secure commitments from local individuals and organizations to support the independent Redistricting Commission and to let their elected officials know of their commitment. Of course, advocating to your elected officials is important, too, and more likely to be successful if you can demonstrate community support for the Commission.

- See a more detailed plan for your local campaign just published in the latest LWV-TX Information, November 2008, an email publication for local League boards, in a piece entitled "Redistricting Again? Yes! We Can Make It Happen!" Consider volunteering to be you League's chair.

- Each local League President should send in the name and contact information of your chair to Dee Brock, [deebrook@faqspress.com](mailto:deebrook@faqspress.com) and watch for the campaign materials you can use in your local efforts. They are coming your way in mid-November.

## Around the State

Barbara Downey, LWV-Dallas

**LWV-Amarillo** officially began its Water Study following State Senator Kel Seliger's presentation to them. He mentioned three specific, helpful approaches to deal with impending water crises in Texas: the passage of legislation that will put teeth in the rules established by water districts and boards, wind energy, and desalinization.

**The League of Women Voters of Irving** began their new season of Education & Advocacy with a panel of women who have served in public office. **Sharon Barbosa-Crain**, former Irving city council member, felt her willingness to learn and ask questions gave her an edge, while **Norma Stanton**, who also served on the City Council, depended on her debating background and her negotiating skills to move forward. **Barbara Cardwell**, the first woman to be elected to the Irving School Board, found being well acquainted with the school system and active in her children's activities gave her a vantage point. **Joann Peters**, trial attorney, had many stories about the early years when she worked next to Judge Sarah T. Hughes, Judge Wright and the "Texas Tornado" Louise Raggio, all of whom were breaking ground by getting laws passed affecting the rights of women. Their stories illustrated that progress has been made for equal opportunity for women, but there is much to do to continue **cracking the glass ceiling**.

**LWV-Plano/Collin County** sponsored a forum on Senior Services in Collin County. With the projected population growth, how will the county accommodate the increase of citizens 60 years and older?



**LWV-Wichita Falls** has already studied and developed a position on Water Resources for the City of Wichita Falls and Region B, Water Access, including Water Planning, Government Responsibilities, and League Participation. They will further probe these issues with Daniel Nix, their city's Utilities Operations Manager and a fierce advocate for water conservation and proper usage, in a session entitled *From the Lake--to the Water Plant--to your House--to the Sewage Plant--back to the River*.

**LWV-Tyler/Smith County** League members will take part in an important study of the local community and the ability of governments and other agencies to meet residents' basic human needs. They will cooperate with the United Way of Tyler/Smith County to survey at-risk populations. The Facts & Issues will not just go to members but also to local governments, non-governmental organizations, health providers, schools, and the media. Members will also participate in promoting dialogues in local high schools where debate teams will ask *Is the Supreme Court Really Supreme?* The series, which examines how the separation of powers and the scope of the Supreme Court are developed in the U.S. Constitution and practiced in U.S. history and government, culminates with public forums in late winter about these important parts of our civic life. The LWV Education Fund series is part of the project called Safeguarding American Democracy through an Independent Judiciary.

"Plunging into the Election Season"

"Getting Ready to Advocate"

"Studies Emphasize Water"

"Forums on Senior Services & Judiciary Issues"

**KEY**

Voter Services Director Charlotte Foulkes led **LWV-Arlington** in forming a GOTV (Get Out The Vote) Coalition to challenge Arlington to be the votingest city in Texas and lead Tarrant County to be the votingest county, as well. The candidates were contacted and urged to submit responses for the Voters Guide and to participate in the Candidates Forum. To ensure that the printed *Voters Guide* was available in every corner of Tarrant County, the coalition solicited donations and raised funds to print more than 200,000 copies. Taking a 21st century step, local candidates were encouraged to submit a video, which was available on the League's web site along with the online edition of the *Voters Guide*.

Gearing up for legislative advocacy, **LWV-Houston Area** shifted some of its attention from the aftermath of Hurricane Ike and the financial meltdown to the upcoming 81st Legislative Session. The November General Meeting and Units focused on advocacy or lobbying. They invited a long-term, respected member of the Texas House of Representatives and an LWV-TX leader active in advocacy at the national and state level.

**League of Women Voters - Austin Area** presented a panel of judges promoting an independent judiciary and discussing the need for public awareness of the judiciary in our system of government. They also reported an especially successful Fall Kickoff Program with an excellent speaker, Dr. Gretchen Ritter, U.T. Center for Women's and Gender Studies, who spoke of the accomplishments and challenges of women in American politics.

At their September program meeting **LWV-Waco** invited Karen Hall, Assistant McLennan County Elections Administrator, to speak on the Administration of the Election Process: the procedures for maintaining security of the voting machines and ballots; chain-of-custody protocols for the voting machines; procedures for verification, backup, tabulation, and possible recounts; training of election workers and voter ID procedures.

## Advocacy Corner

Mary Finch, Advocacy VP, Austin

The Election is now over and so we are focusing our thoughts on the beginning of the new legislative session. The following are some of the advocacy activities happening this fall.

A new Capitol Corps was organized in Austin this fall. These are members of the Austin Area League who volunteer to help one or more state Program Chairs advocate at the Capitol. Our program chairs come from all over the state, so they cannot be in Austin for every coalition or committee meeting. Capitol Corps members are under the direction of a Program Chair when they act for the State League. Judy Parken, Capitol Corps Coordinator, calls them the "eyes, ears, and feet for the State League and our state positions."

Program Chairs and their assignments are listed on page 7, 8, and 9 in the Handbook and Directory which can be found on line on the publications page. *The League of Women Voters of Texas 2009 81st Legislative Priorities* is now available for local Leagues from the State Office. A copy will be mailed to every state Senator and Representative in January.

Legislative Interviews are another very important advocacy activity that local Leagues are involved in right now. Local League presidents have received an interview packet, and are currently scheduling and conducting or assigning those interviews. Completed interview forms should be sent to the State Office in January to be shared with our Program Chairs. The information gained by these interviews is an extremely important part of our advocacy plan.

Legislative Newsletter - Scherel Carver of Tyler, has volunteered to edit our Legislative

Newsletter this session. This newsletter will be sent every two weeks during the session to all League members with an email address. The first newsletter is scheduled to be sent on January 23rd.

Action Alerts will not be part of the Newsletter this session, but will be sent out by separate email. Remember: "The President of the Local League will answer the Action Alert in the name of the local League and return the "Response to Action Alert" form; the president is also asked to send Action Alert information to all members so they can take action as private citizens." See Taking Action: Guidelines for Local Leagues on page 24-25 in the state League Handbook & Directory 2008-2009 for complete instructions.

Women's Legislative Days - Mark your calendars for February 1-3, 2009 as the League is a sponsoring member. League Lobby Day, March 9, will not be held in conjunction with WLD so members who choose to attend WLD can participate in all one and a half days of workshops. Members will receive an official notice and registration for this event closer to the date.

Workshops fill all day Monday and Tuesday morning. Lobbying at the Capitol is scheduled for Tuesday afternoon. Tentative workshops being developed include: Education (one or more on School Finance, Accountability, Science Textbooks, Sex Education), Human Trafficking, Immigration, Environment, Women and Voting, Self Care, Violence Against Women, Equity in the Workplace, and Election Laws. Laurie Vanhoose, a member of our current state study committee "Voting Procedures to Increase Voter Participation," will chair the panel on Election Laws.

LOBBY DAY, LOBBY DAY, LOBBY DAY

The March 9, 2009, date should already be on your calendar! Lobby Day will follow the short Statewide Meeting on March 9. Local League presidents should make afternoon appointments with your legislators before Lobby Day. Don't be disappointed if you end up speaking with a Chief of Staff. We are planning three issues to lobby on in the afternoon: redistricting, county authority and a moratorium on the death penalty. (Complete details and registration for the event will be sent out at a later date.)

We have supported Senator Wentworth's bill on redistricting for several sessions. The 2010 census is almost upon us. This may be the year when, with the effort of Redistricting Chair Elaine Talarski, we see a change in how the Texas Legislature redraws district lines.

Karen Rankin is the Program Chair for State/Local Relations, the League's county authority position. As a member of the Capitol Corps last session, she almost wore out a pair of shoes walking the Capitol corridors and talking to legislators to help push the Sunshine bill through the legislature. She is already working on the county authority issue with the same dedication.

Marjorie Loehlin, a long time respected anti-death penalty advocate, is our Capitol Punishment Program Chair. As a League chair, she will be advocating for a moratorium on the death penalty. Her article in this Voter explains the State League's position for this session.

Plan now to be in Austin March 9 for Lobby Day to work on exciting and important issues!

## Who Cares about County Authority?

Karen Rankin, LWV-Austin Area

County ordinance authority? Sounds a little boring, doesn't it? Why should you care, and why should the League of Women Voters get involved?

If you have ever lived near the edge of a subdivision in an unincorporated portion of a Texas county, you may know why. In Texas, counties have very little authority to manage growth in urbanizing areas. Some border counties and counties with recreational lakes have been granted limited additional authority, but in suburban areas and in the ecologically fragile Hill Country, that's not the case.

What can go wrong? How does a rock quarry, landfill or pig farm just down the road sound--or a high-rise office building in your back yard

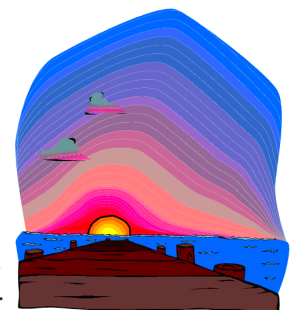
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## Galveston LWV... Bent but not Broken

Despite the 14 foot wall of water that descended on Galveston September 12th, courtesy of IKE, Galveston citizens were able to vote easily on November 4th. There was concern from Leaguers that voting would be a problem because of the devastation caused by IKE, but voting went well.

Galveston citizens had the benefit of the LWV *Voters Guide* despite the fact that all libraries were closed as well as City Hall. Leaguers placed the Guides where folks could find them, such as Walmart and Walgreens, knowing that they would be picked up and read.

Next step: gathering League members together to continue League activities.



## Getting Out the Vote

Linda Wassenich, PR VP, Dallas

Studies have long shown that young adults and minorities are among those least represented at the polls. Now LWV-TX has developed an action plan to help address this issue.

The League's *Voters Guide* is the natural choice for people who want to make informed decisions about how to cast their votes, but distributing thousands of print *Voters Guides* is costly and requires tremendous effort. Posting the *Voters Guide* in English and Spanish on the LWV-TX website has made access to nonpartisan information much easier.

The next obstacle is how to reach young adults and minorities. Community colleges and universities seemed to be a logical target, so contacts were made with more than 60 schools to develop an email list for their student newspapers. News releases were sent to these campus newspapers about the *Voters Guide* on the League's website and included information about students being able to vote a limited ballot at school if they are registered elsewhere in Texas. The result? The League received 1,588,427 hits on its website in the two months before the November election, 42% more than before the spring primary.

## State Office Staff Aids Seniors

The new study committee on Voting Procedures produced two articles, "Know the Rules for the Vote by Mail Process," and "Early Voting – A Benefit for Seniors," which appeared in the *Senior News*, a newsmagazine for seniors produced monthly and placed for free distribution in senior centers around the state. The article listed the LWV-Texas as a source for *Voters Guides* and more information.

The State office began receiving numerous requests for mail-in ballot applications, so they downloaded and printed the applications from the Secretary of State's website, and sent them to all who requested them. At latest count, they sent applications to 81 seniors. This was only one of the many services our state office provided for voters this election season. Thanks, Raul and Brandon, for all you do for the League.



## Featured Voter Outreach Activity

### Arlington and Tarrant County Get Out the Vote

The Tarrant County and Arlington Leagues worked closely to increase voter participation in the November election. They produced a *Voters Guide* with statewide and local information which was printed in the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram as a special insert. This paper has a weekly circulation of 200,000 copies. An additional 25,000 copies of the insert were distributed to libraries, colleges, community and senior centers, bookstores, and to sponsoring companies, and the Guide was also available online on the Leagues' websites.

Fliers with information about the election and the on-line *Voters Guide* were distributed by the YUM Brands Corporation in all their fast food locations in Tarrant County. These included KFC, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and Long John Silvers.

They also produced five candidates forums which were videotaped, edited into segments for each office, and carried in the Star Telegram's on-line newspaper. Congratulations to these two Leagues for their partnership in innovative and successful efforts to get out the vote.

## Holiday Shopping with LWV

We all look forward to selecting the perfect little something for a friend, co-worker, or family member.

Consider giving League merchandise and supporting the League with your purchase. Look below to see what you can get.



Red LWV Window Cling Decal - \$1  
plus S/H

Red LWV Heart Ornament - \$10  
plus S/H



## Year-End Giving

Many people make decisions about their charitable giving at the end of the year. With the downturn in the economy, there is worry that this year people will cut back on their donations. Time for *Making Democracy Work* doesn't wait. Now is the time to capitalize on the interest generated by the elections and people's realization that government has a necessary role in making our communities better. Please help the League build on the spirit of civic participation shown in this election and reach more people by making a year-end donation to LWV-TX or LWV-TEF.



Metallic LWV Robotic Book Light - \$10  
plus S/H

Go to [www.lwvtexas.org/merchandise.htm](http://www.lwvtexas.org/merchandise.htm) to order.

## Observations on the Death Penalty in Texas

Marjorie Loehlin, LWV-Austin Area

At the LWVUS convention in 2006, delegates voted to adopt the following position: ***“The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.”*** This position was recommended by the LWVUS Board of Directors for adoption by concurrence with the LWV Illinois position, Death Penalty Abolition. The following pros and cons were offered:

### Arguments that support an abolition position:

- The death penalty is inherently flawed and no amount of reform can make it an appropriate sentencing option anywhere.
- The flaws in the death penalty are so many and so deep that any League which engages in a study of the death penalty will inevitably reach the same conclusion.
- Over 100 persons on various state death rows have been wrongfully convicted and subsequently exonerated. The fact that our criminal justice systems will execute or are executing innocent people lends urgency to the adoption of an abolition position.

### Arguments that oppose an abolition position:

- The death penalty is justified as punishment for those who commit heinous crimes.
- The death penalty serves as a deterrent to violent crime. Without a death penalty, murder rates would soar.
- Only the death penalty provides closure for families of murder victims.

Unfortunately this vote put the LWV-Texas in an awkward position, as we already had a state position on the death penalty. We adopted our study in 2001, and our position in 2003. Our position specifies, “provide the option of life without parole, **in addition to execution** and life imprisonment, to juries in capital cases.” Additionally we want to “establish a moratorium on all executions in Texas while an official study of the capital punishment system is conducted.” Life without parole was subsequently passed by the legislature in 2005, but a bill asking for a moratorium on executions did not pass in 2007. With execution as part of our state position, we cannot lobby for the abolition of the death penalty in Texas.

Background: In January 2003, Governor Ryan of Illinois pardoned four inmates on death row and commuted the death sentences of 164 others to “Life Without Parole.” The death penalty had been reinstated in Illinois in 1977. In the years following, Illinois had had 12 executions and 13 exonerations.

Texas has long led the nation in the number of prisoners executed. In 2008, executions nationally were put on hold until the Supreme Court reached its decision on the legality of lethal injection as a method of

execution. With approval of the method, Texas resumed executions. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice has executed eleven persons as of October 16. Ten more executions are scheduled through November 20.

The possibility of wrongful convictions persuades many people to have another look at the death penalty. In Texas, perhaps the three most notorious such cases were those of Randall Dale Adams, Clarence Brandley, and Kerry Max Cook. Adams spent 13 years on death row. After his release, Adams wrote, “I never received monetary compensation from the State of Texas nor even an apology.”

Clarence Brandley served 9 years, 4 months, and 25 days in prison for a crime he did not commit. Kerry Max Cook was sentenced to death in 1978 for the killing of a young woman in Tyler, Texas. After 21 years in prison he was released on the basis of DNA evidence in 1999.

The so-called “modern era” of Texas executions began with that of Charlie Brooks on December 7, 1982, the first person put to death by lethal injection. Since that time, Texas has executed more than four hundred individuals (416 as of October 2008), far more than any other state. The Supreme Court has decreed that persons under the age of 18 at the time of the crime may not be executed.

Though supporters of the death penalty maintain that it is a deterrent to crime, many statistical studies indicate that it has no measurable effect.

David R. Dow, professor of law at the University of Houston Law Center and founder and director of the Texas Innocence Network says, “The death penalty we have today is as arbitrary as it was a generation ago when the Supreme Court briefly condemned it as unconstitutional.”

LWV-Texas now faces a choice: Vote to delete the reference to execution from our state position so that we may lobby for any bill opposing the death penalty or keep our position and only support bills for a moratorium on the death penalty.

The death penalty issue is very important. Since only two members from each League can vote at the Lobby Day/Statewide meeting in March, we will consider the death penalty position at the next state Convention in 2010 when more voting members are in attendance. LWV-Texas will continue to support any legislation calling for a moratorium on capital punishment in the next session.

## Continued from page 5....County Authority

with floodlights shining into your bedroom at night--or 2,000 new homes in an area served only by sleepy rural roads? There is very little to keep such things from happening.

Why would anyone oppose better planning? Who wouldn't favor adequate roads and water for new development? Developers and builders are concerned that impact fees to help pay for the necessary infrastructure will drive up the cost of building. Long time owners of family land don't want their property values lowered because they are limited in how their private property can be used. Citizens at large are skeptical that county commissioners will exercise new authority fairly. No one wants to fund more bureaucracy to handle the additional work load.

These concerns help explain why so many county authority bills have failed to make it through the legislative process, but the problems aren't going away. In fact, the call for additional county ordinance authority is growing stronger. Fifteen Hill Country counties are uniting with environmental groups to ask for solutions. Travis County has surveyed stakeholders to determine their positions and concerns. As growth impacts more and more counties in the Dallas-Ft. Worth, Houston and San Antonio areas, they are also calling for the authority to deal with their specific issues. Reasonable compromise is called for, and the League of Women Voters will be working in the upcoming legislative session to achieve more authority for counties that will be fair to all involved.

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

*Thank you to all the members and nonmember individuals that have recently supported LWV-TX and LWV-TEF:*

### LWV-TX:

Adams, Bridget  
Augustine, Michelle  
Bartha, Gregory  
Boyle, Karen  
Brock, Dee  
Cheong, Pat  
Clayton, Nan  
Eckel, Avis  
Edington, Doris  
Finch, Mary  
Fredericks, Caol  
Garcia, Catalina  
Gaupp, Dieter  
Gosslee, Susybelle  
Hendrix Bryant, Karmen  
Hennis, Nancy  
Hoffman, Nancy  
Houston Hyde, Bridget  
Imhoff, Janet  
Jones, Edith  
Krefting, Linda  
Lambdin, Dolly  
Lamnek, Joan  
Lerner, Elisabeth  
Lester, Sylvia  
Macisaacs, Rosemary

Madden, Jensie  
Marsden, Julia  
Melsha, Robert  
Mendelson, Janice  
Mullan, Carolie  
Newell, Charldean  
Nicholson, Karen  
O'Neal May  
Orange, Margit  
Pillinger, Nan  
Price, Velva  
Ranney, Judy  
Roberts, Bruce  
Robinson, Joyce  
Schriever, Gerhard  
Story, Dee Ann  
Sund, Eldon  
Swanson, Rosemarie  
Swartz, Barbara  
Talarski, Elaine  
Tang, Eugenia  
Thuss, Emily  
Wassenich, Linda  
Weinman, Monica  
Weinstein, Barbara  
Westbrook-Youngblood, J.M.  
Wirsdorfer, Sydney

### LWV-TEF:

AARP  
Anschutz, Everett  
Ashby, Marie "Sandy"  
Association of Texas  
Professional Educators  
Barickman, Patricia  
Branum, Kay  
Brown, Sylvia  
Cheong, Pat  
Clayton, Nan  
Dodds, Jeanne  
Duke, Joan  
Folz, Ann  
Fritz, Eugenia  
Galvin, Margaret  
Greiner, Dolores  
Gutierrez, Isabel  
Hanratty, Linda  
Harold Simmons Foundation  
Hendrix, Nina  
Hirschi Investments  
Hockstedler, Clara  
Hidges, Frances  
Imhoff, Janet  
James, Martha  
Johnston, Mary

Jones, Edith  
Killmer, Grace  
Lacombe, Patricia  
Locklin, Blake  
Lowenberg, Jule  
Marsden, Julia  
McMahan, Myrtle  
Mendelson, Janice  
Mittag, Erika  
Moser, Jansen  
Nicholson, Karen  
Pape, Mavis  
Rankin, Karen  
Releford, Helen  
Schwartzman, Jane  
Spaeth, Jane  
Talarski, Elaine  
Texas AFT  
Texas Freedom Network  
Texas State Teachers  
Association  
Wassenich, Linda  
Wasson, Melinda  
Wilbur, Jan  
Wild, Linda

## HONORS & MEMORIALS

- Julie Lowenberg donated to EF in honor of Linda Wassenich.
- Nancy Hoffman donated to TX in honor of Justine Bennett.
- Linda Wassenich donated to EF in memory of Barefoot Sanders.
- Elisabeth Lerner donated to TX in

- honor of Linda Wassenich.
- Pat Cheong donated to EF in honor of Marjorie Montgomery.
- J.M. Westbrook-Youngblood donated to TX in memory of Dorothy Kneupper.
- Jan Wilbur donated to EF in honor of Karen Nicholson.

- Janet Imhoff donated to EF in honor of Julia Marsden.
- Myrtle McMahan donated to EF in honor of Linda Hanratty & Edie Jones.
- Velva Price donated to TX in honor of Karen Nicholson.

## Go Green!

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[bspennrath@lwvtexas.org](mailto:bspennrath@lwvtexas.org)

Thank you for being a member of the League of Women Voters of Texas and for your efforts toward being a more "green" member.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### NOVEMBER

26-28 State Office closed  
27 Thanksgiving Day

### DECEMBER

22-31 State Office closed  
22-29 Hanukkah  
25 Christmas Day

### JANUARY

1-2 State Office closed  
1 New Year's Day  
13 81st Legislative Session begins  
16-18 LWV-TX state board meeting  
19-21 Women's Legislative Days  
30 Legislative Interview deadline  
31 3rd QTR PMP due