

VOTER

JANUARY 2011

AMARILLO LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Margaret Peebles, Editor

<http://lwvtexas.org/amarillo.htm>

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

♠General Meeting/About Your League/Brunch

Date: Saturday, January 22, 2011

Place: Northwest Branch Library
6100 W 9th

Time: 10:00 am

New members are especially welcome. Learn what LWV does and how you can help.

♠Amarillo Woman/Man of the Year Luncheon

Date: Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Place: Heritage Room. Amarillo Civic Center, East Side

Time: Noon

RSVP to Susie Self at 345-3363 by this Friday, January 21.

♠SPECIAL EVENT: Water Marketing Forum

Date: April 30, 2011

Details to be announced at a later time!

President's Message

"Come, Let Us Reason Together"

These familiar words have echoed in my mind over and over since Saturday, January 8. I am sure all of you are as weary as I am of hearing and reading the seemingly endless onslaught of incendiary, polarizing rhetoric aimed at first one side and then another. For years I have

complained to myself and to others of the lack of statesmanship that seems to prevail in Congress and in the state legislative bodies. Some twenty years ago or more I voiced that sentiment to a visiting lecturer at Amarillo College, and he promptly chided me and informed me that statesmanship definitely continued to make its presence felt regularly in the United States Congress. He then proceeded to give examples. Undoubtedly, he could still find reasons to chide me today, though I honestly believe that he would be hard pressed to find as many examples to support his argument in the political climate that now exists.

I have grown very weary of the uncivil "discourse" I hear at every turn, or read every time I pick up a newspaper. It seems we can no longer content ourselves with simply trying to prove to every person who disagrees with us on some issue the error of his/her thinking and the rightness of our own convictions. Now we feel compelled to shout it to the highest heavens, to beat our adversaries over the head with our "facts" until they finally acquiesce to our way of thinking, one side or the other beats a retreat, or we come to blows, as the case may be.

I am grateful that the League of Women Voters and some other organizations to which I belong take a different approach. They understand that it is imperative that citizens be truly informed on major issues, with an understanding of both positive and negative implications of certain courses of action. They also understand that we cannot expect to have people listen to us if we are not in turn willing to listen to those who disagree with us so that we can begin to work together to come to a decision or course of action on which we can agree, even if it does not include every single point that we would like.

Let's all vow that henceforth we'll not be guilty of incivility and lack of respect for those with whom we disagree. If we wish to be heard, let us also be willing to listen, to work in tandem with our adversaries in an attempt to find a better way forward. Let's also make it known to those who represent us that we expect them to adopt the same attitude. Finally, let's refuse to give an audience

to those who appeal, not to reason, but to our fears and prejudices.

Our city, our state, our country have nothing to lose and everything to gain if we are successful in these endeavors.

Joyce Hinsley

President, LWV of Amarillo

Woman of the Year 2010 Congratulations, Myrna

We members of the Amarillo League of Women Voters extend our hearty congratulations to League member Myrna Raffkind for being selected *Amarillo Globe-News* Woman of the Year for 2010, and also to Eddie Melin, named Man of the Year. Both of them richly deserve the honor.

Anyone who has followed Myrna around for awhile knows exactly why she was selected. Many people in every part of town have benefitted from her efforts to make life better for everyone with whom she comes in contact, as well as for all those she hasn't yet met, both through generous contributions and through her active involvement in the many organizations and boards of which she has been a part. Her caring spirit reaches out ahead of her in every direction, and this honor is simply the latest in a long string, with assuredly more still to come. We salute you, Myrna, and thank you for all you do.

Amarillo LWV members and supporters, if you can, please honor this gracious lady by attending the celebratory luncheon on Wednesday, January 26, in the Heritage Room at the Amarillo Civic Center.

Joyce Hinsley, President

Goodbye, Mayor McCartt

Long time Mayor and League member, Debra McCartt has decided not to seek a fourth term. The city will miss you, Mayor McCartt, with your outgoing and open style of government. We will miss "Moving with the Mayor" and your attempt to reach out to all parts of our city by moving city

hall meetings to the people. We will all miss your contributions to Downtown Revitalization and your leadership in your presidency in the Texas Municipal League.

We thank you for all you have done and wish you well in the future.

Margaret Peebles, Director, Place 3

The Roast of Mayor Debra McCartt

Thanks to ALL MEMBERS who belong to our great organization, the cooperation of Mayor Debra McCartt, the wonderful businesses that bought tables and provided items for our Silent Auction, and those who bought individual tickets for September 30, 2010. The Roast was a great financial success for our League. Although some were unable to attend, please know that everyone is important to our group.

An early activity, which consumed hours of volunteers' time, involved consolidating lists from the Mayor' office, from the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, and from Amarillo League lists of past financial supporters into a single mailing list IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER. Members who helped with typing labels and stuffing envelopes (for Save-the-Date-Cards, and invitations) were: Barbara Cheek, Lou Ann Garrett, Joyce Hinsley, Sue Howard, Mina Johnson, B.J. Oppermann, Margaret Peebles, and Sylvia Perkins. This was a very important part of the Roast!

Joan Levy was my co-chair for a roast of then Mayor Kel Seliger in 1996. Thank goodness that she remembered two businesses that were a tremendous help. Joan was again able to get their support. These businesses were McCormick Advertising, who designed the Save-the-Date Cards, the invitations (with return information) and the programs, and Whitney Russell printers (who printed the previous items at a great discount). Once again, Joan had great success selling tables. Sylvia Perkins also helped greatly with this part.

A very special THANK YOU to the wonderful businesses that bought a table for eight people for the event. They were: Amarillo Air Conditioning, Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, Atmos Energy, Bell Helicopter, Big State Remodeling, Education Credit Union, First Bank Southwest, Happy State Bank, Hastings, Interstate Bank, Dr. Richard Jordan, McCartt and Associates, McDonald's, Merrill Lynch, PAC Production, Panache, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission, Underwood Attorneys & Counselors at Law, Wells Fargo, and Xcel Energy.

Other businesses and individuals who helped: Amarillo Postal Employees Credit Union, Budweiser, artist Steve Cost, and Pete's Greenhouse.

A very important part of this fundraiser was our Silent Auction. Over one hundred merchants provided items, and their names were listed on the program. League members who provided items were: Laksmiwati Cortes, Leslie Crawford and Pauline Robertson. Several members were a great help in picking up donations, and grouping them, and organizing and displaying the items on the Big Night. Helpers were: Alan and Nancy Abraham, Barbara Cheek, Lou Ann and Doug Garrett, Joyce Hinsley, B.J. Oppermann, Ann Hicks, Sylvia Perkins, Laksmiwati Cortes, Leslie Crawford and Marilyn Van Petten.

HATS OFF to our wonderful treasurer, Kay McMinn. Although enduring serious health problems, she handled the monetary end of this project. Her husband, Dwayne, helped with the Silent Auction.

Much of the Roast's success was due to our MCs, Wendi Finney Swope and her husband, AJ. Our clever and entertaining "Roasters" were Dr. Steven Berk, Billy Krause, Dr. Paul Matney, Gary Molberg, DJ Stubben and Jodi Thomas. Additional entertainment was by Bob Davis and Dean Kelley.

Kudos to Lydia Davis at the Amarillo Country Club. The food was excellent, served in the dining room, served on time-thanks to the efficient staff. The Roast was well attended,

around 260 people, and a great time was had by all.

If anyone was left out, I sincerely apologize.

Janette Kelley, 1st Vice-President and Co-chair, Roast 2010

Citizens Speak to Their Elected Officials

By Alan Abraham

The "Public Forum" segment at the end of Amarillo's City Commission session has come under scrutiny recently by the city commissioners. Not that they want to do away with it. Our commissioners very much want to hear from citizens. A public comment period provides them timely access to what's on the minds and in the hearts of their stakeholders, including suggestions, criticisms, and even accolades.

The Amarillo League of Women Voters has a role to play as well in keeping this communication channel open and useful to the public by making certain that citizens understand its value and its limits.

First, understand its place in the structure of the Commission's session. It falls at the end of the session; speakers may present any topic "...pertaining to City policies, programs or services," in civil language, with a time limit announced in advance by the Commission. However, according to the Open Meetings Law, commissioners are limited in their responses. Other than a statement of fact, a reference to an established City policy, or a referral of the speaker to an appropriate City department, commissioners may not offer an opinion or debate the issue. They can, however, vote to put the item on a future agenda, but they cannot pursue any other action at that time.

On the other hand, every item on the regular agenda is open for comments from the floor and for debate by the commissioners. Again, it is a requirement of the Open Meetings Law that agenda items be published in advance, thus giving the public time to come prepared to speak to any item on the agenda. Civility in discourse, of

course, and time limits on debate are sometimes imposed.

Commissioners are considering changing current policy by implementing a sign-in card for the “public forum” portion of the session. Included on the card would be an explanation of the rules governing this “comment” period which might help attendees understand the restrained responses by commissioners. Limiting the “public forum” time is another possible measure under consideration.

The Commission will make their decision on rules in a matter of weeks.

Observer Corps Report

The Amarillo League of Women Voters’ “Observer Corps” puts trained League observers in audiences where public meetings are convened. Using a prescribed Observer Sheet, an “observer” will record in cursory fashion the business transacted and who were the participants present. And from these organized contacts, our elected leaders become familiar with the “faces” of our League, and our members become more informed citizens.

In the months of November and December, our “observers” were present at 2 City Commission Meetings, 1 City Commission Work Session, 1 Hospital District Meeting, and 2 Environment Advisory Committee Meetings. No Water District sessions were convened during this period.

Alan Abraham,
Observer Corps Coordinator

54 New Citizens!

On December 6, 2010, three League members, Janette Kelly, Laksmiwati Cortes and Lou Ann Garrett, distributed voter registration cards to 54 immigrants who had come to take their oath of citizenship in naturalization ceremonies conducted by Federal District Judge Mary Lou Robinson at Amarillo’s Federal Court House.

This is always an exciting time for these individuals, who have met all the requirements asked of them to take on the rights and responsibilities of U. S. citizenship. It’s a pleasure for us to give them the information they need to be able to exercise the privilege of voting in their newly adopted country. We also gave each one a League pen and a copy of our “Facts for Voters” brochure.

Thanks go to Margaret Peebles, our voter registration chair, for preparing all the materials needed, including address labels for each Panhandle county’s voter registrar, which the new citizens could affix to their application card before mailing.

Lou Ann Garrett, Director, Place 4

2011 Legislative Interviews

Our League has finished our 2011 Legislative interviews. League members who interviewed Senator Seliger were Joyce Hinsley and Alan Abraham. Representative Four Price’s interviewers were Janette Kelly and Marilyn Van Petten and Representative Smithee’s interviewers were Sylvia Perkins, Lou Ann Garrett, and Tonya Kleuskens.

Legislative interviews are not published. Results of questions and discussions are compiled and sent to LWV Texas via email for League for use as League members work with legislators on issues of concern to the League throughout the legislative session. Our League shares our information from Senator Seliger with the Midland League.

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS** is open to all women and men who subscribe to the League’s purpose and policy.

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The hard work and dedication shown by our League is what keeps our organization strong and well respected.

Amarillo League of Women Voters

P. O. Box 19333

Amarillo TX 79114-1333

TEL: 806 372-5438

Dues are as follows:

\$65.00—single membership

\$97.50—family membership

\$40.00—student membership

The Amarillo League of Women Voters supports member- scholarships. If you cannot afford regular dues—please call Mina Johnson, Chair of the Scholarship Committee at 373-6976 for details!

To join, please send your check made out to Amarillo League of Women Voters to:

Kay McMinn, Treasurer.

3512 Kileen

Amarillo, TX 79109.