

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of WICHITA FALLS

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Web Page: www.lvtexas.org/local/wichitafalls

VOTER for December 2011

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER BILL PRESSON will discuss
The Role of the Commissioners' Court in our Local Government.**

Wednesday, December 7th, at Luby's Cafeteria

Go thru lunch line prior to the 12 noon, call to order

Bill Presson has been County Commissioner, for Pct. 4, since 1999, and is now serving his fourth term. The four County Commissioners, plus County Judge, make up the Commissioners Court, which oversees county government. The responsibilities of the Commissioners Court are extensive. Among them are: sets county tax rates, approves contracts involving the county, adopts the county budget, oversees county roads, sets employment & benefit policy, and serves as the county election board.

Among these areas, Commissioner Presson will focus on: [1] redistricting of commissioner and justice of the peace precincts, [2] recent complaints about salary increases, and [3] building projects, including the necessity of constructing a new county jail. However, he will be available to respond to questions about every aspect of our county government.

He indicates that the jail is among the most harrowing issue the commissioners deal with. The Texas Commission on Jail Standards has absolute control over jails, statewide, and meeting its determinations can be expensive, time consuming, and problematic.

He grew up in Wichita Falls, attended MSU, and worked for the Texas Department of Transportation 30 years, prior to his election as Commissioner. He, and wife Nan, have four children (two of whom live in Wichita Falls) and 12 grandchildren. They are also supporters of what the League of Women Voters stand for, and have been members in the past.

To gain a better understanding of your county government, bring your questions & a friend to the meeting.

LOOKING AHEAD to our JANUARY MEETING

Lori Bohannon, County Clerk, will be our speaker on Wednesday, January 4th. She will focus on the new rules for Voter Registration and the Voting Process. This issue is presently clouded. A review of the new rules enacted by the Texas Legislature are under review by the U. S. Department of Justice. Whatever they finally approve will be Lori's primary emphasis, and how it affects next year's elections.

LEAGUE STUDIES AT THE STATE & NATIONAL LEVEL

The LWV takes positions on issues only after study, Local League consensus, and final approval at convention. Our League recently held two consensus meetings on studies being conducted at both the State & National levels.

The LWVUS Study focused on the Federal Government's role in public education. **The LWV-Texas Study** focused on whether Water is a Commodity or a Resource. Our consensus meeting was held on Saturday, October 22nd. Our Program VP, Dolores Pratt, has now reported the results of our consensus to State & National. The next step is for the State & National Boards of Directors to review what they receive from Local Leagues, and prepare a proposed League position. However, until such position is presented to the membership convention for debate, possible amendment, and final approval it is not a League position. **LWV is a grassroots organization**, and this process exemplifies that fact.

Another issue is coming up. The LWVUS is presently studying the issue of Privatization of Government Services. **The Scope of such Study:** "The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good." Your Board will set a consensus meeting (probably a Saturday in March) to consider consensus questions posed by National. Our deadline to report to them is May 1st, and the issue will be presented to the National Convention next summer. In the meantime, study reports will be available on the LWVUS web site

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BILL OF RIGHTS DAY is December 15th

Three years after the Constitution was ratified, the first ten amendments (known as the Bill of Rights) were ratified. December 15, 2011 marks the anniversary of this historic event. President Franklin D. Roosevelt first declared Dec. 15th as **Bill of Rights Day** in 1941 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the event.

As we reflect back on 2011 and witness democratic movements take hold around the world, there is much to celebrate. But, we understand that we cannot take our liberties for granted. Every day, League members work in our community, state, & nation to protect those liberties, by encouraging voting, discussing critical issues, and holding elected officials accountable for their actions and decisions. **We encourage all citizens** to join us in making their voices and opinions heard.....it is our right.

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THE TURMOIL OF 2012 ELECTIONS

Legal chaos has erupted in the wake of our Texas Legislature having enacted a new Voter I.D. Law & redistricting for Congress, the State Senate, & State Legislature. The **Redistricting** is being litigated in Federal Court, and the State has filed an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court (which is pending). **Voter I.D.** approval is pending before the U.S. Department of Justice, and their action is also pending.

Therefore, 2012 elections are now "up in the air." Candidate filing for office in Texas began Nov. 28th, and runs thru Dec. 15th. But even the most noted experts do not know what will happen, yet. But here are the 2012 election dates, as of now.

March 6th Party Primary Elections

May 22nd	Primary run-off Elections
May 12th	City & School Elections
Nov. 6th	General Election Day

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LWV VOTERS GUIDES DEPEND ON THE MONEY !!

The cost of the 2010 Primary Election Voters Guide was \$1,230.00. With three elections in 2012, and the rise of prices, the total will easily reach \$4,000. However, our Education Fund balance now is only \$349.67. Since we do not charge for Voters Guides, we rely entirely on donations from League members and other concerned citizens.

Just be aware that a big election year is coming up, and we want to do everything we can afford to provide information to voters. Information is the key to citizen involvement with their government. The League is a non-partisan organization, which never supports nor opposes any political party or candidate. Our goal is to provide information to our fellow citizens, so that we may all participate in the election process, and can cast our votes with as much information as possible.

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THE LEAGUE DISTRIBUTED VOTERS GUIDES for the recent November 8th Constitutional Amendments Election throughout the county. We distributed all but 25 of the 2,000 printed Guides. We also directed voters to the LWV-Texas web site, where they could access, read, download & print the Guide. The State League has advised that a total of 109,783 persons accessed the Voters Guide via their web site.

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MEMBERSHIP DUES are \$55 (or \$75 for a couple). Our League year began July 1st, so if you have not yet renewed your dues, now is the time. If you are new to the League, you may bring dues to a meeting, or mail to the League at P.O. Box 4034, Wichita Falls, Texas 76308.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LEAGUE are always welcome. Anyone who contributes at least \$15 will become a *Friend of the League*. Larger donations will be appreciated.

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***Hope to see you next Wednesday. Meetings are open, and we welcome visitors.
Feedback to this Voter may be made to LaryLambert@prodigy.net or to 767-0129.***