



The Midland

VOTER

A nonpartisan organization that encourages informed participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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League of Women

Voters of Midland

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For LWV-Texas

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www.lwvtexas.org

For LWVUS Info go to

www.lwv.org

The Midland Voter is the official publication of the League of Women Voters Midland, Texas, published eight times a year.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

November 2009

Dear Members,

Monday, October 12, 2009 was an evening that to me reflects the American democratic process. The League of Women Voters Midland held a candidate forum for the City Council District One seat on the council. Eighty people attended ranging in age from eighteen to sixty plus. Jani Davis served as the moderator for Jeff Sparks and Charlie Spence. Both gentlemen were articulate, polite, and willing to answer questions from the audience and the moderator in a polite informative manner. There was no name calling by anyone. How refreshing to learn what each candidate thinks we should do to help our city as it continues growing and developing. Hearing the candidates speak allows one to be better informed as they make their decision as to who will win their vote.

On Thursday evening, I attended the Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein presentation at UTPB as part of the John Ben Sheppard Public Leadership Institute. The title of the presentation was "From Nixon to Bush: What President Obama Can Learn from Presidents Past". The format of question answer by the two journalists was nostalgic, humorous, and informative at all times. I was remarkable to hear two men who were investigative reporters who searched for the truth and what was happening.

Continued on page 2

Midland LWV's Meeting - Monday, November 2nd

VOTING PROCEDURES CONCURRENCE MEETING 11:30 AM TO 1 PM

FAIR HAVENS - 2400 WHITMIRE BLVD. SUITE 100 - MEETING ROOM
BRING YOUR LUNCH!

INCLUDED IN THE OCTOBER VOTER WERE TWO SUMMARIES OF POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED ELECTION DAY CENTRALIZED VOTING AND INTERNET VOTING. IN THIS VOTER YOU CAN READ PAPERS ON VOTE BY MAIL AND ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION. PLEASE COME INFORMED AND READY TO EXPRESS YOUR OPINION!! (NOT THAT LEAGUE MEMBERS EVER LACK FOR OPINIONS)

Special thanks to Key Energy Services for printing this Voter.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Jani Davis

We are still in the process of our Fall membership drive. Our dues remain unchanged this year, at \$50.00 for an individual and \$75.00 for a family. You may give your dues to any Board member, or mail them to P.O. Box 7437, Midland, Texas 79708, Attention: Pat Schneider, Treasurer. If you have joined the League since January of this year, your dues are paid through August of next year.

This is a great time to invite someone to join the League. If you know of someone who might be interested in joining, but you would rather have someone else contact them, please call Jani Davis at 694-3281 and she will get in touch with them.



President's report continued..

I like many others remember Watergate and all the news. I remember Nixon's speech as he resigned from office. The presentation made me think about our government and how we have survived many events that have appeared to have the capacity to destroy our country. Woodward and Bernstein noted that at the time President Gerald Ford pardoned Nixon that action cost him the presidency. But as time passed, Ted Kennedy, who had railed at Ford and called him a traitor if not worse, came to realize along with

a lot of other people that Gerald Ford was a man of courage and principle. President Ford did what was best for the country, not what was best for him. President Ford was awarded the Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award for his bravery in pardoning Nixon and not subjecting the country to even more acrimony.

My point is that our government is one of strength, but its strength comes from the people. We the people need to be vigilant, to study, and to know our candidates at all levels. We must use the greatest power we have and that is to cast our votes in all elections. Yes, it will count, but only if you go to the poles and vote. Early voting begins October 19th for the City Council election, but even more important are the eleven constitutional amendments which will be on the ballot.

Mary Smith

AROUND TOWN CALENDAR



November

Monday 11/2 Join us for a special meeting 11:30—1:00 at Fair Havens. We will come to *Concurrence* on Ways to Increase Voter Participation. Bring your lunch and a friend!

Election Day 11/3 Cast your vote in District One and for eleven constitutional amendments

Monday 11/16 LWV Board Meeting, 11:30-1:00 Fair Havens. Bring your lunch and join us!

December

Monday 12/14 LWV Holiday Gathering, 6:30 at the home of Karmen and Billy Bryant, 1404 Community Lane.

Looking ahead....

**Someone's having a birthday! LWV turns 90!
Make plans to be part of our celebration.**

**Would you like to get your Voter
via email each month? Just
email Mary Smith at
mary5222@grandecom.net**

From Karen Nicholson, President of the Texas LWV



The following is an OpEd I got from the LWVUS website. It gives our history so well, as we are about to celebrate our 90th anniversary, that I thought I'd just share it with you. There is a wealth of information on both the LWV-TX and the LWVUS websites. You may want to go browse and see what's there.

The League of Women Voters (LWV), a nonpartisan political organization that works to improve our system of government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy, is celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2010. Not coincidentally, the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution that gave women the right to vote celebrates its 90th anniversary in 2010, as well.

“The women who started the movement to give women the right to vote really didn't know where it would end, how it would end, or when it would end,” said League of Women Voters president, Mary G. Wilson. “And yet they persevered. They persevered in a time when it wasn't fashionable for women to speak out on any issue – let alone try to get some rights for themselves. They worked against all odds – and succeeded.” In 1920, after a 72 year struggle, passage of the 19th amendment appeared to be imminent, and members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association met to form the League of Women Voters, the organization to educate the newly franchised women to effectively use the vote.

In 1920, LWV founder Carrie Chapman Catt urged the new organization to “finish the fight” and to work to end all discrimination against women. Initially, the LWV was primarily concerned with the status and rights of women and women's issues, but interests were gradually expanded to include issues affecting men as well as women. Today, the LWV works to effect change on a wide variety of issues in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy. Many men supported the suffragists in the early days of the fight to pass the 19th Amendment, and men continued to be supportive of the LWV over the years. In 1973, the LWV invited men to join the organization, and their numbers continue to increase.

The LWV is organized on three levels – national, state, and local. The national organization has headquarters in Washington D.C. Fifty state Leagues are mostly headquartered in state capitols. The LWV of Midland is one of more than 800 local Leagues in cities and towns all over the United States.

The non-partisan LWV never supports or opposes candidates or parties, but the LWV is also political and takes stands on issues. These stands are based on positions which are the result of intensive study, discussion of the pros and cons, and, eventually, member consensus, all at the grassroots level. These positions and are the basis for advocacy of the government at the national, state, and local levels.

As the organization celebrates its 90th anniversary, it has much to look back upon, but the work is not yet complete and there is much to look forward to. The LWV continues to work towards meaningful citizen participation in the government processes. “For nine decades, the League has worked to ensure our democracy is transparent, effective, and truly representative,” said Ms. Wilson. “Those challenges are as real today as they were for our suffragist foremothers who struggled for their right to vote so many years ago.” All are welcome to join the LWV and become part of our respected and effective organization. The League is where hands on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement

League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund

Voting Procedures to Increase Voting Participation

Vote by Mail (VBM)

What it is: Ballots delivered by postal service to registered voters, who return them by mail to the election administrator for counting.

What Texas does now: Voters may vote early by mail if 65 or older, disabled, out of the county during election day and the period for early voting by personal appearance, or confined in jail but otherwise eligible. Those eligible may request ballots online or by mail to Early Voting Clerk in their county.

How VBM would work:

- Would depend on legislation. All states offer some form of VBM. Oregon provides a model for an all-VBM system, with the following procedures:
 - Registered voters receive ballot packet by mail, fill out ballot, place it in secrecy envelope, insert it into ballot-return envelope, and mail it to election administrator.
 - Ballot return envelope contains voter's signature, which election workers check against scanned copy of voter registration card.
 - Ballot is then taken out of secrecy envelope to be counted without identifying information attached.
 - Record is kept of each ballot received and tallied. Ambiguous ballots or signatures may be isolated for additional review.
 - Ballot packets undeliverable by postal service as addressed are returned to election officials, not forwarded. Those voters are then sent cards, which are forwardable, seeking new residence information.
 - Person without mailing address may use county address and vote in person.
 - Several weeks prior to election, two informational Voters Pamphlets are mailed to each household: 1) ballot measures, 2) candidates with statements from them and political parties
- Options for less than an all-VBM system include:
 - Removing limitations on who may vote by mail (no-excuse VBM).
 - Allowing voters to request to be on a permanent vote-by-mail list ("permanent absentee" list) with no need thereafter to request a ballot.
 - Establishing state guidelines for all-VBM elections and authorizing jurisdictions to choose whether to conduct them.

Arguments in favor of VBM:

- Increases turnout, including among general election voters who find it easier to vote in local and special elections that often draw less interest.
- Assures accuracy in vote count and recount due to paper ballots.
- Reduces opportunities for fraud because signatures are verified before vote is counted.
- Eases work of election administrations (no in-person election)

- Facilitates better training of election workers because fewer are involved.
- Makes it easier to maintain voter rolls.
- Counters voter mistrust of technology.
- Removes barriers that keep people from getting to the polls; e.g. time, transportation, confusion about where to vote.
- Provides voters with ballot before they vote, with time to research and discuss options.
- Reduces costs, despite printing and mailing expenses. No poll workers, polling places, and equipment to buy, deliver, and service.

Arguments against VBM:

- Increases opportunity for error.
- Increases fraud potential.
- May disenfranchise those without a mailing address.
- Suppresses voter participation; e.g. by eliminating sense of community offered by polling place.
- Increases chance that spouse or employee could coerce voter to vote a certain way.
- Encourages voting before facts become known that may affect voters' choices.
- May cost more than current system due to increasingly expensive printing and postage costs.

Discussion question: How well would VBM achieve goals of voter convenience and participation in the election process?

For more information: See LWV-TEF *Facts and Issues on Vote by Mail*.

To read all the studies log onto <http://www.lwvtexas.org/issues.php>

The study of governmental issues is one of the basic functions of the League of Women Voters. Study is undertaken at all three levels: national, state, and local, and leads to both education and advocacy, two of the basic missions of the organization. The League's process for study has acquired a solid reputation for its in-depth and unbiased exploration of an issue submitted to its grassroots membership for informed discussion.

During this exploration, members draw on balanced, pro/con materials, develop their own resources, turn to technical experts and public officials for information, and reach out to the community through public meetings, surveys, and media coverage. This is all part of the study and consensus process upon which League position is based.

Once a position is reached, the League uses its grassroots strength to influence the shape of public policy. Work is focused on priority issues every year, in order to channel the League's citizen power for the greatest effect.

Studies are conducted and funded by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund, the 501(c)3 organization

League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund

Voting Procedures to Increase Voting Participation

Election Day Registration (EDR)

Also known as: Same-Day Voter Registration (SDVR)

What it is: Allows voters to register and vote on the same day.

What Texas does now: Registration deadline 30 days prior to election day.

How EDR would work:

- Would depend on legislation. Iowa implemented EDR in 2008, requiring the citizen to appear in person; be determined eligible to vote; provide proof of identity and proof of residence in precinct; and complete and sign a voter registration form and an “Oath of Person Registering to Vote on Election Day.”
- Models exist in 9 states allowing EDR. Minnesota has had EDR for 33 years.

Arguments in favor of EDR:

- Increases voter turnout, based on experience in EDR states. Minnesota always has turnout higher than other states (~78% in 2008 Presidential Election).
- Reduces chance of fraud with in-person registration requiring a higher level of identification.
- Decreases need for provisional ballots, easing burden on precinct officials.
- Allows convenience of changing address on election day.
- Makes it easier for those who move a lot, such as the young, to stay registered.
- Reduces travel burden on those with disabilities or transportation needs.
- Entices those who get enthused late in a campaign to exercise their right to vote.

Arguments against EDR:

- Encourages fraud.
- Is costly.
- Leads to partisan advantage.
- Is not needed because there are already so many opportunities to register.
- Burdens poll workers who must deal with registration *and* voting, increasing voter time at busy polling place
- Increases risk that temporary residents, such as college students, will influence local elections.
- Lacks time to cancel out of state registration for those re-registering, who could cross borders and vote twice.

Discussion question:

- How well would EDR achieve goals of voter convenience and participation in the election process?

For more information: See LWV-TX *Facts and Issues on Election Day Registration*.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS IS...

the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Add your voice to over 150,000 League members and supporters across the country in making democracy work.

[JOIN THE LEAGUE](#)

LWV-TX Convention 2010

Please save the date for the upcoming state convention in San Marcos, TX. April 23-25, 2010. (more information to come)



Special Thanks To The Midland Reporter Telegram for printing the LWV's Voter's Guide!

You may take it with you to vote. Unfortunately, constitutional amendment elections usually draw fewer than 10% of the registered voters. Can you believe we've amended our constitution 456 times and have 11 more possibilities?

VOTE on November 3rd!



Join the LWV Today!

Annual memberships are \$50 (with \$25 of that going to the State League and \$25 going to the National League). Family dues (2 persons at the same address) are \$75. Please note that memberships dues are not tax deductible. Please send your checks to PO Box 7437, Midland, Texas 79708. Attention: Pat Schneider, Treasurer.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Amount \$ _____

Donations to LWV-Midland

For a donation to be tax deductible as a charitable contribution, make your check payable to LWV-Texas Education Fund (TEF), a 501(c)3 organization and mail it to the above address. Your check will be deposited to the LWV-Midland Area account and be used solely for the support of voter services/citizen education activities in the area. Donation to the LWV-TEF: \$ _____.

General (non tax deductible) donations are also accepted. Please mail your donation to: LWV, PO Box 7437, Midland Texas 79708. Donation to LWV \$ _____.

The LWV-Midland Area is a volunteer organization (with state and national affiliation) dedicated to citizens' participation in government. LWV strives to be a source of nonpartisan information on voter registration, election issues, and candidates, and an organization that studies and takes action. Voting membership in the League is open to all citizens (women and men) 18 years and older. Non-citizens may join as Associate Members. If you received this mailing and are not a member but wish to join, call Jani Davis at 694-3281 to find out more information about LWV and how you can make a difference on issues that matter to you!

the VOTER

League of Women Voters of Midland

P.O. Box 7437

Midland, Texas 79708

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