

Voter

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE SAN ANTONIO AREA

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



The President's Corner

I want to thank the membership for allowing me to be your president for another term. I have served on the board in almost every officer position with the exception of treasurer and secretary since 1992. My desire to serve this organization is tied directly to the value this organization has in the community and to the dedication of its members. Despite all of our personal political leanings, we as an organization are absolutely committed to our nonpartisan pledge. I am reminded at each election cycle of how important our efforts in conducting voter registration drives, holding candidate forums, and of course, compiling and distributing the voters guide are to this community. Hats off to all of us for an outstanding job!

I want to particularly thank Elena Guajardo and Phyllis Ingram and her silent auction team for making our annual fundraiser a success. It was very enjoyable and hopefully, profitable evening. I also want to thank every member who manned a table that evening and donated an item for the auction. By working together, we are capable of fulfilling our commitments to the community while at the same time, maintaining a sound financial picture. Thank you, thank you for your continued support.

As always, I want to remind you of our outstanding general meetings. Ms. Bolster works so hard to find the best speakers on the most timely topics of interest. So, please let's all show our support of her efforts by attending one of these events. I assure you that you will not be disappointed!

Ginny Stowitts Traina

October League Meeting

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| President's Corner | 1 |
| October Meeting.. | 1 |
| LWVSA Board Officers | 2 |
| Celebrity Roast .. | 2 |
| Ladies in the Law | 2 |
| Membership Updates | 4 |
| Website Info | 4 |

The October meeting will be a discussion of the nine Constitutional Amendments on the November ballot. It is important that everyone realize there will be no candidates running in Bexar County, but we still should cast our ballots either pro or con for the Constitutional Amendments. They could be more important to every citizen's future than individual candidates. The questions are on the Secretary of the State's website; www.sos.state.tx.us.

We hope to have a speaker finalized by late September, and are planning to hold the meeting at the Girl Scout Headquarters, 811 N Coker Loop, San Antonio. We are currently waiting to learn what date our requested legislator is available.

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Celebrity Roast

The Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance invites you to a Celebrity Roast Honoring Senator Leticia Van de Putte on **Thursday, October 22**. For more information, contact Elena: Elena@AquiferAlliance.org or 210-320-1457.

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LADIES IN THE LAW ...by Tina Torres

When I was a young girl, people would always ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I'd consistently respond by saying, "I want to be my Daddy's secretary!" To me, nothing was better than going with "Daddy" to his law office on Saturday mornings and playing on the typewriters and copy machines. As I grew older, my love of writing and literature (inspired by my English-teacher mom) led me to pursue a degree in English from the University of Texas at Austin. Some years later, my father talked me into going to law school – "After all," he said, "If you're going to be working as hard as you're working – you may as well be working for me!"

Sandra Tamez, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Greater San Antonio, also had a father who helped lead the way to law. Growing up with a 5th grade teacher mom and a high school guidance counselor dad always ensured a focus on education. However, Sandra says it was her father's fair and open-minded nature that initially triggered an interest in the law. Sandra recognized that she wanted to be a lawyer while an undergraduate at the University of Texas and working with at-risk youths in programs such as Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) and University Outreach. "It was during this time-period," says Sandra, "that I realized I wanted to advocate for the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised."

Shortly after graduating from law school, Sandra got that chance when she became an Enforcement Coordinator and later the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Greater San Antonio, an agency whose mission is to promote fair housing and eliminate discriminatory housing practices in San Antonio and its surrounding areas. "Two protected classes that are still experiencing blatant discrimination," Sandra says, "are the disabled and families with children." Sandra's vision is to educate the public about their rights and to do more to bring the public and private sector together in an effort to break the barriers of home ownership in our city. "I just want to make San Antonio a better place to live...for everybody."

My grandmother, who, at a very young age was widowed and struggled to raise four children on her own, also played a pivotal role in my pursuing a higher education. From the time I attended kindergarten (where she happened to be a teacher!) to the day I graduated from law school, my grandma would always tell me, "Mi hija, your education is so important. No one will ever be able to take it away from you."

Monica Guerrero, one of Bexar County's youngest judges when she was sworn in as Judge of County Court at Law No. 7 in January 2003, also had a grandmother who promoted

LADIES IN THE LAW continued page 3

education – so much so that she paid for Monica to attend Incarnate Word High School in hopes that it would better prepare her granddaughter for college. Her investment paid off when Monica decided to attend the University of San Antonio in pursuit of a biology degree.

The pursuit of science did not last long, though, as Monica’s fascination with politics, research, and writing soon led her to change her degree to political science. Once she began an internship with the District Attorney’s office, she knew without a doubt that she wanted to be a lawyer. “Seeing female litigators at the D.A.’s office like Mary Roman, Carmen Kelsea, Catherine Babbitt, Jill Mata, and Beth Taylor – all with so much fire and finesse – made me want to do good for people just as they were doing good.”

The University of Kansas School of Law awarded Guerrero a full scholarship, and, in May 1994, she graduated and returned to San Antonio to pursue a career in the same office that initially enticed her into the legal world – the D.A.’s office. This time around, however, instead of volunteering in the family violence unit, Monica was a prosecutor of family violence cases. One might say she came full circle when, in 2003, Monica Guerrero became the Judge of Bexar County’s “Family Violence” Court, where 99% of the case involve charges of domestic violence. “Because I’ve worked in all areas of domestic violence – from interviewing women with fresh bruises and fear in their eyes to arguing crime and punishment in front of a Judge and jury, I feel that I bring a well-rounded experience to the bench.”

Judge Guerrero’s goal for County Court at Law No. 7, which has a heavier case load than any other county court in Bexar County, has always been to work hard to move cases and resolve the domestic violence issues before her. “The citizens of Bexar County put their trust in me for the past six years to run an efficient and honorable courtroom. I have done my best to maintain that trust.”

So, too, did Alma L. Lopez, our recently retired Chief Justice of the Fourth Court of Appeals, have her grandmother’s guidance when she’d tell Alma, “Don’t forget the importance of education. You need to know that you’ll always be able to take care of yourself.” So that Alma could study, her grand-

mother would do Alma’s chores. She’d also set goals for her grandchild, one of which was to complete a four-year college degree, which Alma did at San Antonio College and St. Mary’s, obtaining a B.B.A. in Financial Management in 1965.

At a very young age – and after seeing Alma repeatedly advocating for Alma’s and her sisters’ “rights” – Alma’s grandmother persuaded her grandchild that she’d one day be an attorney. Alma says the path she chose was slightly intimidating. “When I started law school, there were only five females in my law school class. We were a rarity – but, because of my support system, I knew I belonged there.” “After graduating from law school, we were still a rarity. There were only four female litigators in town – Marty Tanner, Jewell Lemon, Hattie Briscoe, and me.” Nonetheless, “I successfully built a family law and immigration practice which I ran for twenty-five years before being appointed to the Fourth Court of Appeals in 1993.”

After nine years with the Fourth Court of Appeals, Alma Lopez succeeded Phil Hardberger as Chief Justice in 2003, and this past year, Justice Lopez retired after 15 years of service on the bench. “My grandmother always said, ‘I want you to be somebody no one has ever seen before.’” As the first female Hispanic Chief Justice in the State’s history, Alma Lopez made this dream of her grandmother’s a reality.

Though I had the pleasure of working with my Dad like I always dreamed I would, I became his associate and business partner and eventually took over the practice after his passing. I see that as much as my dreams changed over the years, so, too, has our legal community. From a law school class comprised of five females when Alma Lopez attended St. Mary’s, we now have a law school with more than 50% female enrollment. From a Brownsville native who long dreamed of helping the underdog get a fair fight, we have a protector of our civil rights. From a southside San Antonian who learned the value of the system by working with victims and their families, we have a diligent humanitarian. And... from a woman who saw the legal profession blossom into a truly diverse calling, we have a hero. With such role models, our daughters and granddaughters will surely have much to offer in the new millennium. As these ladies in the law have proven, the aspirations of our parents and grandparents are now the realities of a new age.



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Membership Update

Because it has been a while since we had our last newsletter, I want to include the names of some of our members who joined us last spring. Virginia Bowden, a long time member of our San Antonio League, has recently transferred her membership back to us, after being a member of the Comal County League for several years.

**William E Merrill • Moya and James Murtagh
Victor Ostrower • Ina M Castillo • Marina Mery
Laura Salinas • Yolanda Torres • Thelma Nunguesser**

We welcome these new members and look forward to having them join us at our upcoming events and meetings.

Marian Edson and I hope to get a new directory out this fall. If you have had any changes in your e-mail or mailing address, please let us know so that we can have it correct. We are planning to have a coffee this fall for all new, returning, and prospective members. We'll let you know as soon as we have the date and place.

Remember, our primary way of reaching you about upcoming events, is through e-mail. If you don't have one, or are not now receiving e-mails from us, you need to let us know. We will call those of you who don't have

e-mails (please let us know whether or not to call you) and we will continue to send out hardcopy newsletters to those without an e-mail. You can be as active as you want to be. If all you want is to receive the newsletters and information from the local, State and National League that is fine with us. We want to provide you with all the information you want as a League member.

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Website Information

We lost access to our prior website. Marian Edson has been working diligently to find new access or reestablish the old one. In the meantime, we have a link through the state office. To reach it, use this address:

www.lwvtexas.org/sanantonio.htm

Voters Guide for Constitutional Amendments

If you would like to see the Voters Guide for Constitutional Amendments go to the state website: www.lwvtexas.org.

If you are looking for your own copy, they should be available by **October 7** (approximate date). The libraries will have copies, and there will be extra copies at the LWV office if you would like some for your church, organization, friends, etc.

