

# VOTER

APRIL 2011

AMARILLO LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Margaret Peebles, Editor

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

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

### **♠ Candidate Forum**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 19, 2011

**Place:** Senior Citizens Center,  
Main Hall, 1220 S. Polk

**Time:** 6:00—Lite refreshments  
6:30 pm--Program

*Come meet the candidates for Mayor and City  
Commission*

### **♠ Special Event**

#### **Water Marketing Forum with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**

**Date:** Saturday, April 30, 2011

**Place:** St. Andrew's on Georgia & I-40  
1601 S. Georgia in Parish Hall

**Time:** 10:00 am –2:00 pm

*RSVP to St. Andrew's, Barbara Whitton at 806-  
376-6316, ext. 105 or by email to  
[barbara.whitton@gmail.com](mailto:barbara.whitton@gmail.com).*

*For the Water Forum lunch, \$10.00 in advance  
by check to St. Andrew's Episcopal: Attention:  
Barbara Whitton. Lunch, on the day of the  
Forum, \$15.00.*

### **♠ Annual Meeting**

**Date:** Saturday, May 21, 2011

**Place:** Amarillo Club, downtown  
610 S. Tyler, on 30th floor

**Time:** 11:30 am – 2:00 pm

*More information: menu, cost and  
program to be announced*

## **Candidate Forum 2011**

There are 22 candidates invited to the League's spring Candidate Forum. There are 11 candidates for Amarillo mayor and 11 for city commission spots. Our Moderator will be Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, AC vice president in charge of academic affairs. Please let your friends and neighbors know about this forum. The May 14, 2011 city election is shaping up to be a lively affair.

*Sylvia Perkins, Director Place 6, Candidate  
Forums*

## **The State of Water in Texas**

Our League will present with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, High Plains Institute for Applied Ecology (HPI), Amarillo Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Roasters, and the Amarillo Public Library a Water Marketing Forum on April 30, 2011. Attendance is free, but there will be a \$10.00 fee for a catered lunch. At the door on the day of the Forum, lunch will be \$15.00.

Speakers will be Dr. Melanie Barnes of Lubbock, "Water for Texas;" Attorney Marty Jones who represents Mesa Water, "Water Marketing;" Dr. Rick Todd, "Nature's Perspective;" Reverend David Green, "Ethics of Water Marketing;" and Dr. David H. Ciscel, of Memphis, TN, "Water Economy". Three additional speakers will be added to the afternoon panel: C.E. Williams, Manager Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District, Mary Emeny, Regional Environmental Advocate whose family donated the land for Wild Cat Bluff and herself is turning an old caliche mine into a regenerative community using mostly rain water, and Jim Steiert, Naturalist, Author and Region O Water Planning Group.

Following lunch questions and answers will be addressed by the full speaker panel. The LWV Environment Committee hopes this will help us prepare for our fall consensus meeting concerning "Water Marketing".

**Discussion Questions for Water Issues Forum**  
*State and regional water supplies—both surface and groundwater—are being used up more rapidly than they are being replenished.*

*However, there is currently enough water left that we have a “window of opportunity” during which to make changes in how we use, and save, water for the future.*

▶ If we do not make changes in water use, what will Texas look like in 50 years? 100 years?

▶ If we do not make effective changes, can we maintain a vibrant future in the Panhandle that sustains families, businesses, communities, and ecosystems?

▶ What are the most effective, promising, and/or innovative changes that we can make to shift both the State and region toward a healthy future that preserves a good quality of life for all to enjoy?

*Water conservation is the quickest, most effective, and most affordable first step to take, yet most cities and areas are not implementing effective conservation plans.*

▶ What makes people willing to undertake water conservation?

▶ Is it ethical to transport water away from a region in order to support business, industry, and development in another region?

▶ If one city or area plans for, invests in, and manages its water supplies efficiently, is it ethically bound to share its supply with thirsty neighbors in the future?

*The Texas Constitution recognizes groundwater and surface water as natural resources. The State Water Plan is predicting that the population will almost double by 2060. If existing legislation is not changed, a statewide network of locally-controlled Groundwater Conservation Districts will manage the pumping of groundwater by any landowner or entity which has the legal right to the groundwater.*

▶ What form of regulation—if any—do you favor, and why?

▶ What should the underlying mandate of this system of management be?

- To protect the water supply for the common good, for the long term?

- To protect landowner/ownership interests?
- To support growth and business?
- Other?

▶ What results should successful, long-term planning and water management create for the Panhandle? For the State?

Plan to come and let your friends know about this event. It promises to be informative about a very valuable commodity in the Texas Panhandle. Remember, Water is Life.

*Tonya Kleuskens, Environment Committee  
Chairman*

## **President’s Message**

I belong to Delta Kappa Gamma, an international society for women educators, and I have just returned from a meeting of the Texas State Scholarship Committee, where we awarded \$50,000 in scholarships and grants to members and to promising students who aspire to be teachers themselves. The money is used to help with the costs of working toward additional degrees or doing some type of travel that will benefit the recipients and their students or their chapters of Delta Kappa Gamma. The entire process encompassed two full days of going through applications and hours of discussions to decide which of the applicants were to be granted the funds available.

When we took breaks for meals, the conversation almost invariably turned toward the problems that the severely reduced funding at all levels of education (*as currently proposed in both Senate and House bills*) will cause for schools, colleges and universities, the educators who will have to be dismissed, and the students who will be affected, especially the students from low-income families. The latter will be impacted in at least three ways: by the reduction of programs designed to help them educationally, by larger classes which will reduce or eliminate individual help from their teacher or a class aide, and by the severe cuts that are also being made to many of the social programs through which low-income families may obtain assistance or gain access to medical care.

These disadvantageous changes to education will almost inevitably adversely affect the performance of the schools, the teachers, and the students. What effect will that have in turn on the state's plan to attract important businesses, industries, and researchers to the state to bolster our economy and increase our influence throughout the nation? Who would want to entrust their children's future to a state that places so little value on education? What companies would want to take a chance on a state that may not be able to provide sufficient qualified workers with the knowledge / skills required for the types of jobs those companies would bring?

As I was driving back to Amarillo following the meeting, I recalled a program that I heard several nights ago on HPPR. The discussion centered on the question of whether Texas has a structural deficit in its budget. Though state officials and legislators tend to deny it, a good case was made to the effect that there is indeed a structural deficit. I tend to think that is probably the case.

As I recall, following the legislative session of 2007, some seventeen constitutional amendments were proposed and submitted to the voters for approval. I believe five of them required the state to incur debt and also required that payments be made on that debt prior to the distribution of state revenue to other budget categories. At the Amarillo LWV forum held prior to the vote on the amendments, Rep. Warren Chisum (at that time chair of the House Appropriations Committee) was asked how all those mandated prior obligations would affect the state's fiscal status should they all pass. His reply was that the amendments wouldn't all pass. In fact, however, all five were subsequently approved by the voters. How much did the added indebtedness incurred by the passage of all those amendments remove from the money available to meet budgeted obligations? I have no idea, but I feel sure the state's current budget deficit may be due in part to numerous prior demands on the state's fiscal resources such as those created by the passage of those amendments. How many other such amendments have the voters approved over the years?

Following the 2009 legislative session, voters approved the amendment to establish a national research university fund, which though a laudable goal, required the state to distribute the revenue from the fund thus established among **several** state universities instead of focusing on the one or two that were closest to reaching the tier-one level. Though the West Texas area benefited from having Texas Tech included in the list to be thus assisted, the failure to focus on the top one or two that could most easily and quickly be elevated to tier one may not have been the quickest or wisest way to achieve the desired result of having other tier-one universities alongside the University of Texas and Texas A&M. Moreover, bonds issued subsequent to the passage of other 2009 amendments were sources of additional state indebtedness.

As citizens and voters of the state of Texas, we have a double responsibility: to require that our elected officials inform themselves concerning all the possible ramifications before voting in favor of an amendment proposal that would require spending state funds or would increase the state's debt, and also to educate ourselves before voting in the amendments election, just as we try to become informed before other elections. You may rest assured that if there **is** an amendments election this year, the Amarillo LWV will hold an amendments forum so that you will have the opportunity to ask your local representatives what the passage of those amendments would entail and whether any of them would further increase the state's debt level.

Before closing my remarks, I must tell you that in a couple of weeks you will have the opportunity to hear the candidates for mayor and for the city commission and to submit questions for them: **Tuesday, April 19, at 6:30 p.m., in the main hall of the Amarillo Senior Citizens Association, 1220 South Polk Street.** All of us in the Amarillo LWV hope you will avail yourselves of the opportunity to hear the candidates' positions on some important propositions that will be on the ballot. The votes cast for mayor and for city commissioners, as well as the decisions made on each of the ballot propositions, will determine the course(s) of action Amarillo pursues in the coming months and years.

*Joyce Hinsley  
President, LWV of Amarillo*

## **Two Amarillo Members attend Lobby Day in Austin**

Alan Abraham and Mina Johnson attended the League's 2011 Lobby Day in Austin. Rather than a written report, our members reported to the League at an informal luncheon meeting at Beef O'Brady's pub at 34<sup>th</sup> and Bell. Due to the success of the meeting, the League will be having more informal luncheons with reports or other topics of interest to our membership. Hope to see you at one of these informal meetings. Watch your email for further meetings and if you don't have email, our calling tree will be in touch.

## **League distributes guide to the 82nd Texas legislature**

Alan Abraham brought back brochures entitled "When You Go to Austin: a CAPITOL GUIDE to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session" when he returned from attending League Lobby Days in Austin recently. We have placed about 120 of the brochures, published by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund, in the Amarillo Public Library and its branches. They are free and available to the public.

The brochure lists all Texas state legislators, including Senator Kel Seliger and Representatives John Smithee, Four Price and Warren Chisum from the Panhandle. Information includes their committee assignments, office room number in the Capitol complex, office phone number, mailing address, and the seating chart of both the Senate and House of Representatives during the current session.

This should be helpful to anyone wishing to express support or opposition to legislation currently being considered. You can also check the status of a bill by calling the toll-free number 877-824-7038 or going to the website [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us), according to the

brochure.

League members who attended our legislative lunch get-together March 15 – and heard reports from Alan and Mina Johnson on Lobby Days – received one of the brochures. We will have some at our Candidates Forum on April 19, or you may pick one up sooner at one of the libraries as long as they last.

Although the current legislative session will conclude May 30, the "CAPITOL GUIDES" will continue to have value through 2012 because of legislative committees and the possibility of one or more special sessions. Our thanks go to the state League and the sponsors listed on the back of the brochure for this valuable resource!

Lou Ann Garrett  
Director, Place 4 (publicity)

## **Amarillo League greets 50 new citizens**

50 New Citizens were sworn in by Judge Mary Lou Robinson on Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011. League volunteers who helped pass out voter registration cards were Wendy Marsh, Linda Eichblatt, BJ Oppermann and Margaret Peebles. Volunteer Wendy Marsh wrote the following letter after witnessing the swearing in ceremony.

Dear Family and Friends,

Today, I had the honor of observing and helping in the Naturalization Ceremony of 50 new citizens in the Court of Judge Mary Lou Robinson. There were people there from more than 15 countries, mostly Mexico, but also from Australia, Somalia, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and many other countries. They had all taken difficult tests on our History and Government and they could all speak English. I was so moved that I almost cried.

I was supposed to be there at 10:30 to help the League of Women Voters prepare packets for the new citizens but when I arrived the guard told me there was nothing going on and to come back at 1:30 for the ceremony if I wanted. Well, I had a meeting at 11:45, so I went to that meeting and

came back at one. That was when the Esther McCrory Chapter of the DAR was passing out Flag Codes. So that is when I returned.

In the dark basement of the courthouse the immigrants were being prepped for the ceremony. They had to line up by number. They were all deadly serious. I passed out Cadillac Ranch postcards for fun and they all seemed to like them.

When we went up to the second floor and to the very bright courtroom, Carol Monroe with the DAR recognized me and asked me to stand with her to pass out the Flag Codes. We still had to wait about 15 minutes. One of the new citizens wanted to put on a tie which he carried and though several people tried to help him, they could not seem to accomplish the Windsor knot. Somehow, Carol Monroe urged me to help him with his tie. So I did, having learned from Stanley and having helped several sons learn how to tie ties. I think he may never take it off, he was so proud.

There was some lovely singing of some patriotic songs and a speech from Judge Dan Schaap of the 47<sup>th</sup> District Court who quoted Kelly Utsinger (our attorney) on the meaning of citizenship, as well as John Kennedy, Teddy Roosevelt and several founding fathers.

The new immigrants had to recite the Oath of Allegiance which is quite different from the Pledge of Allegiance which they also recited.

The whole ceremony took about 45 minutes and was followed by a reception with punch and cookies provided by the DAR. I will always remember it and maybe my citizenship will mean more to me because of this day. It is something every citizen should be able to experience at least once. Mary Lou told me it is one of her most treasured duties as a judge.

With Love and best wishes from Wendy

## **Two League members honored with Distinguished Service Awards**

Two of our League members received the 2011 Distinguished Service Awards at Amarillo Area Women's Forum luncheon on March 26, 2011 at the Amarillo Country Club.

The first honoree is long-time League member, Janette Kelley. Janette is a tireless League member who can do and will do anything she sets out to do. She is described by this quote from Women's Forum program, "When you want a job done and want it done well, the person to contact is Janette Kelley."

The other League honoree is Ellen Robertson Green. Women's Forum characterized her in the luncheon program thusly, "Ellen's most recent work as a concerned community volunteer is exemplary."

Other honorees were Claudette Dove, Kathryn Denko McAfee and Laura Street.

Amarillo LWV had several tables and many were in attendance at the luncheon.

## **Spring Voter Registration**

Saturday, April 2, 2011 our League had a voter registration drive for the city election on May 14, 2011. This time around, we covered 3 venues starting with Amarillo College on Thursday, March 31, 2011. The Saturday venues were both at United Markets on 3400 River Road and 4701 S Washington. Many thanks to our volunteers, Myrna Raffkind, Sue Howard, Wendy Marsh, Carol Forrester, Lou Ann Garrett, Maisie Everett, and BJ Oppermann. This was a good voter registration drive because of AAUW assistance.

*Margaret Peebles, Director Place 3, Voter Registration*

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

Annual Meeting this year is shaping up to be a special affair. We will be having lunch at the downtown Amarillo Club with a magnificent view of Amarillo and fine food. The League has a special program planned and we encourage all members to attend the event on Saturday, May 21, 2011. More details will be forthcoming soon.

*Margaret Peebles, Director Place 3*

## **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.