

VOTER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011
AMARILLO LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Margaret Peebles, Editor

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

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

♠Voter Registration Drive

Date: Saturday, September 24, 2011

Place: United Supermarket
4701 S. Washington
5601 W Amarillo Blvd
Amigos 3300 I-40 E

Time: 10:00 am – 02:00 pm

♠League Informal Luncheon

Date: Wednesday, October 12, 2011
(Tentative)

Place: To be announced
Time: 11:30 am- 1:00 pm

☉ *Last Day to Register to vote in November 8 elections is October 11, 2011*

Rainwater Harvest Festival

Date: Friday, October 14, 2011
Place: St. Peter's Episcopal Church
4714 NW 4th Ave
Time: 6:30 pm

No RSVP—Bring a covered potluck dish

♠Amendments Forum

Date: Tuesday, October 18, 2011
Place: Downtown Library
Time: 6:00 pm lite refreshments;
6:30 – 9:00 pm Program

*Featured speakers: State Senator Kel Seliger and Representative John Smithee
Hon. Judge Ernie Houdashell is speaker for Randall county proposition.*

☉ *First day of early voting, October 24, 2011!*

♠Water Consensus Meetings

WATER CONSENSUS #1

Date: Saturday, November 5, 2011

Place: Library Northwest Branch
6100 SW 9th Ave

Time: 1:00 pm

Mina Johnson will lead discussion

WATER CONSENSUS #2

Date: Tuesday, November 8, 2011

Place: Mina Johnson's Home
1615 Bryan St. #10

Time: 2:00 pm

Tonya Kleuskens will lead discussion

President's Message

Tuesday morning about 7:30 I went outside to do a little watering and take care of other chores in my yard. The sun had not yet been up long enough to make itself felt; so the air was cool and invigorating, a sharp contrast to the enervating, fiery temperatures [both figuratively and literally] that predominated throughout the summer. Because I had not yet decided on the message I wanted to include in this issue of the *Amarillo Voter*, I was contemplating several possibilities, but still had not found a suitable theme. Instead of staying at my computer trying to be productive, I was outside "piddling around" (as my grandfather would have said) and feeling guilty over how much I was enjoying myself while slacking off.

Then a thought suddenly struck me: compare the almost-intolerable heat of the summer months to the almost-intolerable political situation that has confronted our country more and more frequently in recent years, with somewhat similar enervating effects on American citizens. In fact, I found the fiery summer temperatures easier to deal with than what we have increasingly been witnessing in both state and national politics: the "my-way-or-the-highway" attitude, the fiery rhetoric, the growing intolerance for diverging opinions, the inability to sit down with one's political opponents to try to work out reasonable solutions to the numerous problems that confront us.

Members of Congress have become so alienated from one another that they are willing to risk our country's well being, it's very future, for partisan politics.

As concerned citizens and LWV members, we cannot continue to tolerate this type of situation. It is our responsibility to tell our political leaders (both state and national) that we expect them to put partisan politics aside and begin working together to find solutions to the problems that confront us. Our nation's future depends on it.

Now to local League matters:

The membership year for Amarillo LWV runs from June 1 – May 31. (People who join in March, April, or May receive a bonus of up to 3 additional months at no additional expense.) If you have not joined since March 1 of this year or renewed your membership since May 31, your membership has expired. That isn't a problem, though, as we have a grace period before your name is removed from our current roster. However, **if you have not renewed your membership by the end of October, your name will be removed from the roster at that time.**

The cost is still \$65 for one person or \$97.50 for two adults residing at the same address. Full-time students 18 and older may join for \$40, but they do not have voting privileges on League matters. I shall be sending an e-mail reminder later this week to those who have not yet renewed their membership. Or, if you don't want to wait for that, you can simply go ahead and mail your check either to Treasurer Kay McMinn (3512 Kileen, Amarillo, 79109) or to me (Joyce Hinsley, 5001 SW 57th Ave., Amarillo, 79109)

Elsewhere in this issue you will find news about our upcoming Constitutional Amendments Forum on October 18 and our November consensus meetings for the LWV-Texas water study. I do hope that you will be able to attend both of these events. Copies of the *Voters Guide* for the Constitutional Amendments election have been ordered and will be available at the Amendments Forum and also at several public locations in Amarillo and Canyon.

May this fall be considerably more pleasant for all of us than was the summer, in terms of both the weather and political affairs.

Joyce Hinsley, President

VOTERS GUIDES Have Been Ordered

Our League has ordered 6,000 copies of the *Voters Guide* for the Constitutional Amendments Fall election. Delivery will be to Mina Johnson's home and will be available for the Forum on October 18, 2011. Alan Abraham is head of the distribution.

By Linda Eichblatt, Director, Place 5, Voters Guides

Statewide Water Study Ready for Next Step

All over the state this fall, members of local Leagues will meet to talk about how to solve Texas' water problems. Discussions will address a series of structured questions on topics such as: which users get priority; and whether the "right of capture" doctrine should be further modified. The last question is open-ended in hopes someone will come up with an idea the state water study committee didn't even think of.

Our local LWV has planned two meeting options:

- Saturday, November 5, 2011, 1:00 P.M., at the Northwest Library
- Tuesday, November 8, 2011, 2:00 P.M., at the home of Mina Johnson

As background reading, the state committee prepared a *Facts and Issues* entitled Should Water Be a Commodity? It is available on our homepage at www.lwvtx.org. (If you have trouble downloading it, contact Mina Johnson at minanell@arn.net.) In addition, LWV-TX has a strong water conservation position, also available on our homepage.

The results of each consensus meeting will be returned to the state office and tabulated to see if there is enough agreement to enable the state League to lobby whenever certain kinds of water-related bills are being debated. This is one way we can have an impact on what happens in the state legislature.

After preparing carefully, it is important to come to the meeting with an open mind. Listen carefully, to what other League members express, but don't be troubled if consensus is NOT reached. That just means we have to keep searching for the best way to deal with our problems. (Note: consensus meetings are only open to League members.)

By Mina Johnson, Chair Water Commodity, Texas State LWV

A Working Summer (unfortunately) for the Environment Committee

In early June, Alan Abraham, who is well-known to the city staff and elected officials because of his work as an LWV Observer Corps representative, conveyed an invitation from Jarrett Atkinson, City Manager for Amarillo, and Ellen Green, City Commissioner, to meet with the LWV Environment Committee to discuss water conservation in Amarillo.

We were very pleased to accept and interested to learn more about the problems the city was facing. The meeting took place on June 22nd.

At the meeting, Mr. Atkinson and Commissioner Green were very informative about the city's current situation – high water demand in May and June already straining the city's infrastructure, with even dryer summer months to come – and shared that the City was going to ask citizens to voluntarily conserve. Mandated water conservation would be avoided if possible. In addition, Commissioner Green had organized and gotten excellent cooperation from area media, city staff, fellow commissioners, and the mayor to do public awareness announcements and news stories. And, Mr. Atkinson and Commissioner Green would like the LWV to undertake a public education and outreach campaign supporting the water conservation efforts.

A few days later, Mr. Atkinson notified us that the mayor and commissioners were holding a press conference to announce the city's voluntary water conservation initiative and asked for our support. The LWV's phone committee went to work and

many League members were present for the press conference calling for watering restraint.

Going forward, there is no doubt that promoting water conservation is worthwhile work to do. But what is the right path?

As all League members know, a public outreach and education campaign would be a huge undertaking – especially for an all-volunteer organization – and probably not an appropriate fit for our limited human resources. In addition, the environment committee feels strongly that any new work we undertake must be in support of conservation efforts that are effective, information that is substantive and accurate, and focused on significant long-term water conservation rather than short-term crisis management.

As we followed the city's initiatives throughout the summer, the committee met regularly to discuss:

- the direction and actions the city was choosing to take
- what we were learning from the responses to the city's efforts,
- ideas to engage citizens in conservation,
- steps the city needs to take, and
- What we still need to learn in order to choose a path forward.

As Chair of the committee, I would like to say that the League has reason to be proud of the remarkable and dedicated people working on this – people full of ideas, willingness to work and research, and a desire to make a difference.

By Beverly Gattis, Environment Committee

RAINWATER HARVEST FEST

In celebration of their newly completed water catchment system, members of St. Peter's Episcopal Church are throwing a party, and they have invited the Amarillo LWV along with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church members, Amarillo Unitarian Universalist Fellowship members, HPI (Institute for Applied Ecology), and all involved in the West Hills community garden, headed by Ellen Green, to join them in celebration. This event will take place on October 14, 2011, at St.

Peter's Episcopal Church, 4714 NW 4th Ave, at 6:30 PM. There will be music, dancing, potluck food, and harvest-fest activities for the children. There is no need to RSVP, just come with a covered dish and plan on being awed by the garden and the water catchment system. In case of rain, the people at St. Peter's say everybody will be welcome to come into their spacious parish hall.

By BJ Oppermann, Environment Committee

OBSERVER CORPS IS STRONG AND ABLE

The League's local Observer Corps has been in operation since May of 2008, and since its beginnings over 120 reports have been filed. I call this collection a "treasure trove" of information. For example, in the League's possession are budgets, contracts, work agreements, diagrams on downtown redevelopment, detailed water proposals and decisions, consultant study results on a variety of local projects, agendas, and source documents from a lengthy list of public venues from City Commission to all kinds of Boards, Committees and Districts in the area.

More importantly, a positive "public presence" for the League has been established as our local officials, elected and appointed, become familiar with our observers and aware of our intentional efforts to better inform ourselves on issues of local concern. It is not uncommon for public officials to hand over the actual documents under consideration at public meetings to the observer in attendance.

As Observer Corps Coordinator, I am currently the keeper of the file, and any member of the League at your own request is welcome to take a look. Or, maybe you would like to join the Corps, take some very preliminary training and do some reporting yourself. At either whim, just give me a call at 806 355-1637!

By Alan Abraham, Director, Place 1

DOJ Rules Against TX Congressional Districts

I noticed in the paper that the DOJ (Department of Justice) has ruled that the Texas Congressional Districts and state representative districts do not meet federal standards on maintaining or increasing the ability of minority voters to elect their candidates of choice. The ruling means that the redistricting case must go to a federal court in Washington DC. The DOJ approved the state senate and board of education districts.

This is a victory for the LWV here in Texas. With 90% of the state's 10 year census growth being Hispanic, the redistricting plan as proposed by the 82nd Texas Legislature did not reflect the demographics nor afford this voting group equal opportunity to elect representatives of their own choosing.

By Alan Abraham, Director, Place 1

League registers voters at AC's Constitution Day

League members distributed voter registration cards to Amarillo College students on Monday, September 12, as part of the college's celebration of Constitution Day. Joyce Hinsley, Mary Kay Wells, Alan Abraham and Lou Ann Garrett staffed our table on the outdoor campus mall throughout the morning. At a neighboring table, members of the Student Government Association (SGA) were accepting student ballots cast for their student government officers.

We were pleased to hand out at least 55 voter registration cards (we may have missed jotting down a few) with this breakdown by county: Potter County, 31; Randall, 23; and Castro, 1. Of those, Lou Ann, as a deputized volunteer registrar, accepted 4 for Randall County and 2 for Potter and turned those in to their respective county offices that afternoon. Students will fill out the others on their own and mail them, postage-free, themselves. Special credit should go to Alan, who left the table and mingled with the students, encouraging them to register as voters. Needless to say, that boosted the number of cards we distributed!

It was quite a special morning at the college, as

the students combined Constitution Day activities with remembrances of 9/11— one day following the 10th anniversary. Members of the SGA had planted American flags honoring the firefighters and other first responders on the grassy areas of the mall, interspersed with hundreds of smaller flags bearing the names of the victims who perished in the Twin Towers' collapse that terrible day. At mid-morning a color guard of junior Marine ROTC students from Caprock High School presented the colors, and a student musician played "Taps." Later in the morning the Amarillo College choir presented a stirring rendition of our national anthem.

It's always a pleasant experience to conduct voter registration at the college, as we find students to be responsive and usually interested in getting registered if they aren't already. League members Dr. Paul Matney, AC president, and Ellen Robertson Green, chief communication and marketing officer for the college, as well as other faculty and staff members, stopped by to say hello and express appreciation for our being there. We also want to thank Karen Logan, our new LWV board secretary who works at the college, for alerting us to this opportunity and arranging for us to participate.

By Lou Ann Garrett, Director Place 4, Publicity

2011 Annual Meeting

On Saturday, May 21, 2011 our League had its Annual Meeting. Twenty-two of us met and had lunch at the Amarillo Club. The guest speaker was Rod Schroder, Superintendent of Amarillo Independent School District who informed us of the upcoming cuts to the state education budget.

A new board was installed with Joyce Hinsley continuing as president for two more years.

This year, the Amarillo League honored distinguished members who have given exceptional service to our community. Distinguished members included Alan Abraham who was recently re-elected to Silver-Haired Legislature; Carroll Mack Forrester, member of the Amarillo College Board of Regents; Dr. Brian Eades, Amarillo City Commissioner, recently re-

elected; Debra McCartt, outgoing Mayor and former City Commissioner; Anette Carlisle, AISD School Board President and leader for Panhandle 20/20; Mary Emeny, active supporter of environmental causes and community agencies, including Habitat, and also member of the Amarillo Environment Advisory Committee (AEAC); Lou Ann Garrett, for longtime service to the League and the community; Beverly Gattis, Pam Allison, Jerry Stein and Tonya Kleuskens, for their years of dedication to environmental concerns and their work organizing the water forum sponsored by our League. Lastly, Laurie Ezzell Brown, editor of the Canadian Record dedicated to keeping the public informed.

Atoie Horton, our League's Community Outreach Director and President Joyce Hinsley presented certificates and roses to several League members who were specially honored by our community. These were Mina Johnson, former Amarillo League President and now the chair of the Texas State League study of "Water as a Commodity"; Janette Kelly, former Amarillo League President and winner of Distinguished Service Award from the Women's Forum; Myrna Raffkind, Amarillo Globe-News Woman of the Year for 2010 for her work with the Teen Pregnancy Coalition, the Hispanic Community and many other community groups including our League; and Letitia Goodrich, winner of the Senior Ambassadors Coalition's Jim Holston Award for her leadership and dedication to adults over 40 years as a professional Geriatric Case Manager, and as founder (17 years ago) and current (volunteer) executive Director of the Amarillo Area Breast Health Coalition and organizer of the WISE Woman Program.

Honorees who could not be present were Ellen Robertson Green, winner of Distinguished Service Award from Women's Forum and newly elected City Commissioner; Claudia Stravato, winner of the national Community Health Leader award and grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation stemming from her years of dedicated service as executive director of Planned Parenthood of the Texas Panhandle and the Distinguished Alumna Award from Texas A&M University, both awards in 2009.

By Margaret Peebles, Director, Place 3

Louise Daniel Women's History Luncheon honors teachers

Women teachers have come a long way from the days when they were advised not to play cards or go to dances, with many now occupying administrative positions in their school districts, but many benefits won over the years have now been set aside by Texas legislators.

That was the mixed message expressed in talks given at the 2nd Annual Louise Daniel Women's History Lecture Luncheon held August 27 at Amarillo College. Rita Haecker of Austin, president of the Texas State Teachers Association, gave some history of women educators in Texas and then told of the improvements in education and teacher benefits that were lost in the 2011 legislative session, along with cuts in education funding. A dynamic speaker, she urged those present to stand up for education and our teachers.

The luncheon was a wonderful event—both inspiring and challenging—with 86 people attending. The League of Women Voters took the lead in its planning, but we were delighted to have five other organizations as co-sponsors: Amarillo Women's Network, American Association of University Women, Women's Forum-Amarillo Area, Amarillo College Foundation and West Texas A&M University Foundation. Steering committee members were Claudia Stravato, chair; Joyce Hinsley, Janette Kelley, Kay McMinn, Susan Coleman, Marilyn Van Petten, Lou Ann Garrett, and Jane Harlan, secretary.

Janette Kelley, LWV first vice-president and elementary teacher for more than 30 years, spoke on "The Journey of Panhandle Women Educators," giving interesting points of history as the Amarillo Independent School District developed and relating stories from some longtime teachers. When Betty Solis, retired principal from Glenwood School, began teaching here in 1959, she had to have her father sign her contract. A year later she was married, and her husband had to sign her contract! When Janette moved here and began teaching in 1970, that requirement had just been done away with and she

signed her own contract.

The event was a special tribute to Louise Daniel, longtime science teacher at Olsen Park School who had served as president of the Amarillo Classroom Teachers Association and lobbied on behalf of students and teachers. Louise, who had also served on our League of Women Voters board, died in 2003. Her last wish was that something be established to remind women of all ages of the efforts of earlier women to overcome barriers to equality. Her friends, including many of us, established a fund to sponsor an annual women's history lecture to achieve her wish.

All our speakers at the luncheon were excellent—from Dr. Paul Matney and City Commissioner Lilia Escajeda, who welcomed attendees to Amarillo College and the City of Amarillo respectively, to Claudia Stravato, who explained the "Occasion" and its relevance to Women's Equality Day; former teacher and now insurance agent Kay McMinn, who introduced our guest speaker, and AAUW President Maury Roman-Jordan, who gave rousing closing remarks.

The two teachers present who had been named Texas State Teachers of the Year, Mary McFarland of Amarillo High (retired) for 1991-92 and Cindy Lewis of Whittier Elementary (at that time) in 2005-06, were introduced. And teachers who had taught for more than 10 years were asked to stand and be recognized. We also had two special handouts. One was a listing of 15 women who had served as school superintendents in the Panhandle, beginning with Millicent Griffith in Hereford from 1920-24 and ending with the six who are currently serving. The other listed the first female principals in the 18 area school districts we were able to obtain information from. *By Lou Ann Garrett, Director Place 4, Publicity*

NEW CITIZENS CEREMONY

Monday, August 8, 2011 approximately 70 new citizens were sworn in at Amarillo's Federal Courthouse at 5th & Taylor. Our League members, Mary Kay Wells and Laksmiwati Cortes were on hand to help me with passing out voter registration cards.

By 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 dedication shown by our League members 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 BJ Oppermann, Chair of the Scholarship Committee at 353-3583 for details!

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

Joyce Hinsley, President
5001 SW 57th Ave
Amarillo, TX 79109.