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**TEXAS DESERVES NOTHING LESS THAN A
BALANCED APPROACH TO A BALANCED BUDGET
AND AN OPEN, TRANSPARENT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET PROCESS**

Karen Nicholson, President, LWV-Texas

The 82nd Texas Legislature must address a significant budget deficit in the session beginning January 11. LWV-Texas and our partners in Texas Forward believe a comprehensive and balanced approach to balancing the budget is the only way Texas can provide for current needs and make the investments necessary for the future of our great state. Because all Texans have much at stake in budget decisions, the Legislature's budget process must be open and transparent.

Texas faces both short-term and long-term budget deficits. Reduced state revenue during the global economic recession has resulted in a short-term deficit that can be addressed with one-time measures. Longer-term there is a structural deficit that will require changes in the Texas revenue system.

A stream of media accounts since the November election attest to the harm, now and for our future, that would result from drastic cuts to education, health care, juvenile justice, and other public services Texas needs to remain a great state. Shuffling money among under-funded programs and shifting the cost of public services off the state budget may conceal these problems but doesn't address them.

We urge the 82nd Texas Legislature to confront the budget deficit more constructively to meet current needs and position Texas for the future. Before reducing any state services in fiscal year 2011 or in the 2012-13 state budget, the Legislature must:

1. Use all of the Rainy Day Fund, estimated to have \$9.2 billion available for spending in the 2012-13 budget. The constitutional purpose of the fund is to maintain vital state services during economic downturns.
2. Maximize use of all available federal funding, including any additional stimulus aid or any new matching funds made available by health care reform.
3. Generate new sources of revenue that are equitable and can grow along with Texas and our needs and eliminate unproductive tax breaks.
4. Carefully look at departments and services that can be cut or eliminated without serious harm.

We hope you will join us in letting the Legislature know that we need a balanced approach to a balanced budget. To join our endeavor or learn more about Texas Forward, see <http://www.txforward.org/>.

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The League of Women Voters of Texas, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.