



For Immediate Release

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TEXANS SHOULD CELEBRATE WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY WITH RENEWED COMMITMENT TO VOTING

Karen Nicholson, President, League of Women Voters of Texas

Women's Equality Day, August 26, commemorates the 90th anniversary of the day in 1920 when the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified and women achieved the right to vote nationally. Today when many take for granted their right to vote in our democracy, it is easy to forget that our universal suffrage required long and difficult struggles by many.

The League of Women Voters-Texas (LWV-Texas) believes there could be no better way to celebrate Women's Equality Day than for renewed commitment to voting across Texas. Given the historic efforts of so many to broaden the franchise at home and sacrifices of US forces currently extending democratic freedoms in other parts of the world, it is difficult to find a good excuse for not voting.

"Votes for women" was so controversial it took more than 70 years of commitment and dogged effort in the face of ridicule and disappointment to become reality. Once the 19th Amendment was ratified, suffragists knew there was still work to be done and organized the League of Women Voters to continue "educating and agitating" for active and informed public participation in government.

Texas was ahead of much of the country in the battle for women's suffrage. The Texas legislature granted women the right to vote in state primaries in 1918 and ratified the 19th Amendment on June 28, 1919, within a month of Congressional passage -- the 9th state to do so. (For additional information on the suffrage movement in Texas, visit the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/suffrage/index.html.)

Unfortunately, Texas now lags behind most of the country in voter turnout. Texas ranked a dismal 46th among states in turnout of voter eligible population for the 2008 elections. Texas can and should do better!

In the General Election on November 2, Texans will elect state and local officials who will make key decisions affecting Texas over the next two to four years. Texans need to make sure they are registered to vote by the October 4 deadline, become informed about candidates and issues, and make a commitment to vote either during early voting (October 18-29) or on Election Day. After the election, make sure to keep in touch with elected officials and let them know the issues important to you.

Everyone can promote voter turnout by making sure others know about the candidates and issues as well as election processes. Encourage others to vote by making sure they know important dates, such as the registration deadline and early voting period, and sources of information on candidates and issues like candidate forums or the nonpartisan *Voters Guide* posted on the League's website, lwvtexas.org.

It took concerted efforts of many for women to achieve the right to vote. Similarly, working together we can improve voter turnout across Texas. The efforts of each individual are important to making democracy work for Texas.