

Honoring the Center for Public Policy Priorities For Making Democracy Work in Texas

**Monday, March 7, 2011--6:30 p.m.,
UT Etter-Harbin Alumni Center**

We're excited about another new addition to Lobby Days, a Salute to Advocacy on Monday evening, March 7. Our first Making Democracy Work in Texas Award will be presented to the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP). CPPP's unique focus on low- and moderate-income Texans provides an understanding of the impact of government action on the lives of many Texans, an understanding essential for informed government decisions and public participation. CPPP's research is the gold standard on issues of economic opportunity, quality and affordable health insurance, fair and adequate taxation, child well-being, and basic family needs. F. Scott McCown, CPPP's Executive Director and a retired state judge, has been called "the voice of the voiceless" and "the conscience" of Texas politics by *Texas Monthly*.

Join us March 7 as we celebrate advocacy and CPPP's unique contributions to Making Democracy Work for all Texans. The evening will begin with a reception and cash bar followed by a seated dinner and brief program. You will have the chance to network with Leaguers, meet others who share our interests, and learn more about CPPP's work which informs much of the League's own advocacy.



The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) Staff

This is a special event — you don't want to miss it!

Lobby Days and More



**Monday & Tuesday,
March 7-8, 2011, at the Capitol**

All League members from throughout the state are invited to come to Austin March 7 and 8 to attend workshops on advocacy and to visit local legislators to discuss LWV-TX priority issues. League members can play a crucial role during the 82nd general session by lobbying our legislators on Lobby Days.

This is a wonderful opportunity not only to visit the Capitol but network with fellow League members, learn about advocacy and lobbying, and visit with your respective state representatives and senators.

LWV-TX will provide training for advocating on our pri-

orities as well as a packet of tools to assist with lobbying efforts. In preparation for your visit, contact your local Senator and Representative and schedule a time when your local League members can visit the legislator or staff between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and noon on March 8. It may take several appointments to cover all the representatives from your League.

An additional bonus to this two-day event will be an opportunity to stop at the LWV state office, located at 1212 Guadalupe #107, to meet board members, see our newly renovated state office, and enjoy light refreshments. The office will be open from 10 a.m. until noon Monday morning before everyone moves to the Capitol for registration at 12:30.

A gala Salute to Advocacy is planned for Monday evening, details for which will be found elsewhere in this Voter.

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President's Podium

Karen Nicholson, President, Midland



There are two important things I'd like to address in this column.

First, I hope many of you are planning to attend the special event honoring the Center for Public Policy Priorities held on March 7 in connection with Lobby Days. There couldn't be a more deserving group to honor than the CPPP. It's the first time we've done something like this, and it would be wonderful to have the room full. It will be a good night. See you there!

Second, the next months for the LWV will be especially full. A legislative session always does that for us! I ran across an old article by Marion Wright Edelmann where she gave advice about child advocacy. Her points are good for all advocacy: **Don't be blinded or bamboozled by the political, media and cultural staff. Don't give up when you fail the first, second, fifth or tenth time.** (Anybody thinking constitutional revision here?) **Do your homework and keep learning new skills. Don't let politicians or the media scapegoat children, poor women and working families for our budget crisis and other national (and state!) ills.** Good advice, isn't it?

Your Advocacy Team will be working particularly hard in the next months, and you have a role, too. Read the Legislative Newsletter. Respond to Action Alerts. Share information about the issues to friends and colleagues. Do your part so the LWV can be as effective as possible.

Around the State

Judy Hollinger, Houston Area

Wow—what an energizing experience—checking out all our local league websites! We are a busy group! Here are a few highlights to inspire us all:

The **Dallas** League recognized their “Legendary Leaguer” - a member 85 years or older - and had 21 of those venerable members in attendance! The program touched on the political and cultural changes the LWV has worked for, including women's suffrage, equal rights, abolition of the poll tax, environmental reform, etc., and did it all with clever skits and songs.

Wichita Falls will start off 2011 with a forum on Elder Law—How To Plan Your Future. The WF LWV distributed 4,000 printed VGs and had an even greater number of hits on its website.

The **Bay Area** LWV teams up with the Galveston Bay Foundation in January for a presentation on the Ike Dike and Hurricane Surge Suppression.

Trailblazing **Tarrant County** has several new initiatives on its agenda. League volunteers filmed candidate interviews to be included on the on line Voters Guide for the November elections. Hot Topic lunches invite the community to join League members in discussions on tough and timely issues. A January seminar about the ins and outs of running for public office leads off the 2011 calendar.

Plano/Collin County LWV members visited two juvenile detention centers to assess the local education and health care system for juvenile offenders. The fall election season found PCC members working with Rock The Vote at Collin College to register over 100 new voters.

Amarillo's fall schedule was a busy one with a “roast” of Amarillo Mayor Debra McCatt in September, two televised candidate forums in October, and a public forum on Human Trafficking in November.

The **San Antonio and Comal County** Leagues helped sponsor an area forum on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Attendees were asked to offer recommendations for improving the agency. The TCEQ is up for Sunset Review in the 2011 Legislative Session.

Austin Area held its Biennial Legislative Reception in November and is now gearing up for the 2011 Legislative Session. LWVAA members keep especially busy during the Texas legislative sessions.

Simultaneous Spanish translation was offered by the **El Paso** LWV at a well attended State Board of Education candidate forum. The EP League also presented a public forum on the decriminalization of marijuana.

Merry Christmas Carrie! The **Denton** League's December meeting featured a presentation of “Carrie Chapman Catt-

.....continued on next page

The Yellow Rose of Suffrage.” One of the quotes from Ms. Catt was “The purpose of the League of Women Voters is not to seek power in organization but to seek power to secure legislation.” What a great reminder going into the state legislative sessions!

LWV-Lubbock County partnered with KCDB on 5 candidate forums which were streamed live online during the week of October 11-15 and available online until the election. One forum was broadcast each morning during the week of October 25-29.

Montgomery County is going strong with the publication of their new Guide to Elected Officials, a “State of the County” forum, and an upcoming water symposium.

The leagues of **Arlington, Dallas, and Richardson** worked with the Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and Texas Campaign for the Environment to cosponsor a public

dialogue regarding the Sunset of two critical agencies that affect environmental regulation: the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Railroad Commission

The **San Marcos** League is beginning a local study on School Nutrition in the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District.

Houston Area hosted two Colombian women participating in the LWVUS Global Democracy Initiative. The women spent 2 weeks in the offices of a Harris County Commissioner and a Houston City Council member. League members housed the Colombian women, served as tour guides and chauffeurs, as well as engaging in numerous conversations about differences and similarities between U.S. and Colombian government and politics.

Now Is the Time to Recruit New Members for the League

Susybelle Gosslee, Membership Chair, Dallas



Why do Texas Leagues need to recruit more members now?

That’s an easy question to answer. Our beloved Texas is falling behind most other states in many areas¹.

Texas, unfortunately, is close to the top among the states in the following and other critical areas.

- ▶ **#1** in percentage of population without health insurance.
- ▶ **#1** in toxic emissions from manufacturing facilities and recognized cancer-causing carcinogens.
- ▶ **#1** in toxic chemicals released into the water.
- ▶ **#3** in teen pregnancies.

Texas, unfortunately, is close to the bottom among states in taking care of the following and other important needs².

- ▶ **#47** in the dollars spent on environmental protection.
- ▶ **#49** in police protection.
- ▶ **#50** in percent of children with emotional, developmental or behavioral problems that receive mental health care.
- ▶ **#50** in residential electric bill affordability.

Texas needs more people working to educate themselves and their communities about issues, to look at fair solutions to problems, and to advocate for legislation and policies that will move Texas forward. For example, within Texas, water issues and regulations vary so much from one area to the next that it is difficult to create one law that ensures wise policies and regulations that meet the needs of the entire state. Still, this is a task that needs to be done.

LWV is committed to just these actions - research, education, proposed solutions, and advocacy. Everything in the League begins at the local level, the grassroots level, where local Leagues engage and motivate participation in making democracy work better.

So, now is the time for you to invite friends and colleagues to join this dynamic, multi-issue, nonpartisan organization. We need reinforcements - and we need them now - to fulfill our mission and thus improve our local communities and make Texas the best it can be.

Voters Service

Janice Schieffer, Voters Service Director, Plano/Collin Co.



Voters Guide Distribution Tops One Million: Congratulations to Texas state and local Leagues for distributing more than one million *Voters Guides* for the November General Election! Here's the breakdown of information from 25 out of 29 local Leagues and LWV-TX:

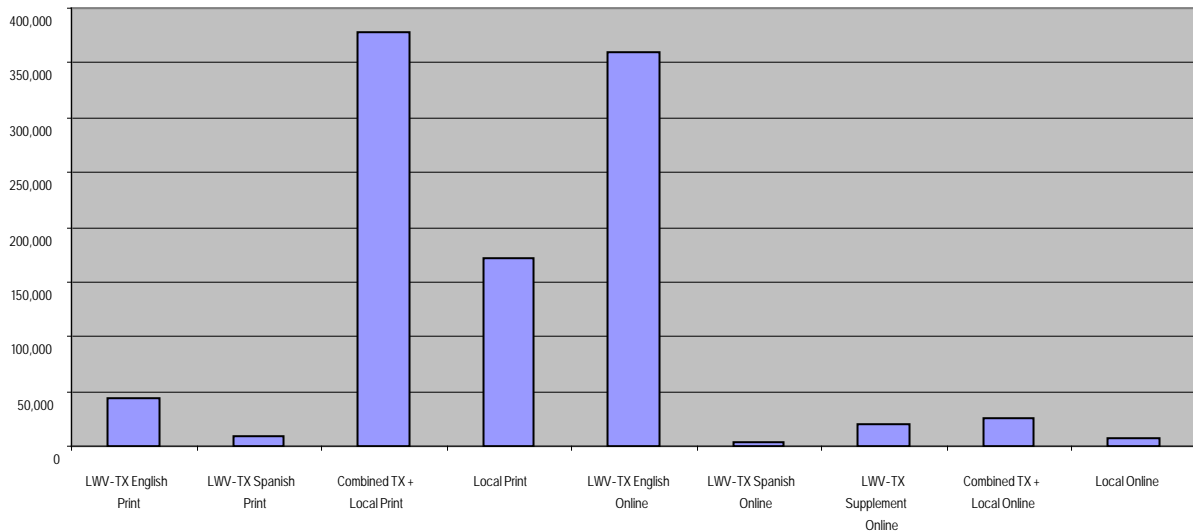
Printed copies, 602,279:

- LWV-TX *Voters Guide*, English: 43,824
- LWV-TX *Voters Guide*, Spanish: 9,225
- LWV-TX plus local League guide: 377,200
- Local League guide only: 172,030

Online copies accessed, 417,669:

- LWV-TX *Voters Guide*, English: 360,215
- LWV-TX *Voters Guide*, Spanish: 3,621
- LWV-TX *Voters Guide* supplement, English: 20,928
- LWV-TX plus local League guide: 24,734
- Local League guide only: 8,171

Voters Guide Distribution



Several local Leagues distributed state and/or local *Voters Guides* through newspapers. Many local Leagues posted the guides on their websites but were not able to provide statistics about downloads, so the online numbers should actually be higher. Houston Area, Tarrant County and Arlington Leagues and LWV-TX provided *Voters Guide* responses in VOTE411, but statistics are currently not available for that online access.

Voter turnout figures for Texas continue to be poor. The Texas Secretary of State's office reports a turnout of 4,919,041 for the election, based on the Attorney General race. This was 38% of the registered voters (13,269,233) and 27% of the voting-age population (VAP) (18,789,238). The VAP includes everyone 18 years and older, including many persons who are not eligible to vote, such as illegal immigrants and felons. Another measure, the voting-eligible population (VEP) as calculated by George Mason University's United States Election Project, is 15,407,666 for Texas; the turnout is 32% of the VEP. Texas's VEP turnout rate is 49th in the nation, with District of Columbia coming in last.

Want to know what's up with the Texas Legislature?

Or what's down? Read the LWV-TX Legislative Newsletter when you receive it by e-mail. The newsletter will keep you posted on bills our Advocacy Team is following. You will learn which bills we support because they conform to our issue positions, and which we oppose. You will also learn what you can do to further optimum results.

Published every other week until the last month of the Legislative session, and weekly thereafter, the newsletter is your window into the workings of the State House and Senate, brought to you by LWV-TX.

Legislative Interviews

Reed Bilz, Director, Tarrant Co.



Shortly after the November election local Leagues were asked to conduct interviews with their Senators and Representatives. The purpose of the interviews was to discuss LWV-TX priorities and to give the legislators a chance to convey issues of concern to them. These interviews also provided an opportunity for local members to get to know their legislators.

We requested interviews with 167 Senators and Representatives. The requests went to 25 local leagues. As of January 15, a total of 15 leagues participated, with interviews of 35 legislators.

The information obtained in these interviews will be extremely valuable to the LWV-TX Advocacy Team. The results identify friends and foes of League positions, helping our lobbying efforts on key issues.

A BIG thank you to all who conducted these interviews in a tight time frame. Please know that your contribution to advocacy is appreciated.

Just Asking is All it Takes to Grow Your League!

Chris Davis Garcia, Director, Corpus Christi



I'm convinced that if someone just asks us face-to-face to do something, we will respond positively. That was the case when my teaching mentor and former high school journalism teacher, Marjorie K. "Ricky" Walraven of Corpus Christi, invited me to attend a League event a few years back, and then asked me at the event, "Why don't you join right now?" Before I could think about it, I whipped out my checkbook, asked for membership specifics, and joined on the spot! I don't believe anyone prior to that evening had ever ASKED me to join! Oh, I was aware of and very impressed by local League activities for more than 20 years prior to Ricky's invitation, and I should have just joined on my own, but I was busy with my career and family and had not taken the initiative. That simple act of being asked by a friend and League member to join the League led me to general League involvement, to

LWV-CC leadership opportunities, and now to service on the state Board. Just ASKING is all it takes to grow your League!

State Board Welcomes Reed Bilz



Anita Privett (L) and Reed Bilz (R)

Reed Bilz was recently appointed to the State Board. She will work closely with Anita Privett on advocacy. Bilz has been a member of LWV-Tarrant County since 1973 when her youngest of six children was three years old; League meetings gave her a chance to speak to adults on occasion. She started on the local board as treasurer and has been on the Tarrant County Board off and on as Program and Action Chair and also President. She's been an issue chair and issue coordinator for LWV-TX as well as being an active participant at many state conventions.

Now semi-retired, she worked full and part time as a paralegal for almost 30 years. Before that she taught school for one year before joining the Air Force. There was a 20-year gap in employment while she was engaged in having and raising six kids as an Air Force wife. She is currently employed part time with

her last attorney boss and the State Bar of Texas. Other activities, besides LWV, include the ACLU and her Unitarian-Universalist Church. Avocations include Mother Goose Nursery Rhyme book collecting, reading, bridge, and travel.

Water Study



The water study is proving to be anything but dull. As information – both statistical and anecdotal – comes in both from the committee and from Local Leagues, the diversity of our state is underscored.

As the League observer at the Panhandle Groundwater District, I was intrigued to learn that Lawrence Hagy, the mayor of Amarillo in the 1940's, allowed his neighbors – all 85 of them – to use the water from a deep well on his ranch without paying him because the water under their land was undrinkable. In the West, there was no question about sharing water with your neighbors who needed it. Today there is a development in Central Texas where residents pay a private water company \$200 per month for water and sewage. Quite a contrast!

The committee is finding that surface water as well as groundwater is beset by complex questions. Some experts believe that revision and tightening of surface water laws

Mina Johnson, Water Study Chair, Amarillo placed extra pressure on groundwater use.

In order to share what various Leagues are learning, some of the Power Point presentations from the Seguin meeting in November, and Denton's meeting last fall are now available on the LWV web site (www.lwvtexas.org). The speakers at the spring forums - LWV-Kerrville Area on February 19th, March 19th and April 16th, and Amarillo on April 30 will be asked to make their presentations available on-line as well. We hope you will watch some of these very interesting presentations.

The Water Study Committee is requesting that each League designate a person to be a liaison with the Committee. This person will receive materials from the committee and be responsible for planning an informative meeting as well as the consensus meeting on water in the fall of 2011.

If you are the designated "water person" for your League, please contact Mina Johnson at minanell@arn.net or call 806-674-8827.



Karen Nicholson and Edie Jones hold the quilt.

Quilt Repaired

In cleaning out closets and files while the State Office is undergoing its facelift, Edie Jones (LWV-Tarrant Co) discovered this quilt with water damage. Some may recall that Linda Krefting (LWV-Lubbock Co.) made the quilt for a live auction item several Conventions ago, and a group of LWV members bought it for the State Office. The quilt was rescued; Linda repaired it, adding more League leader signatures; Edie has the quilt in safe keeping, to be hung when the office is complete.



LWV-TX Summer Seminars

✓ **Pick a Date** ✓ **Save the Date**

May 21 | June 4 | June 25

The dates are set for LWV-TX three Summer Seminars for local Leaguers in 2011 - May 21, June 4, and June 25. Your Services to Local Leagues Committee (SLL) is working now to secure great locations and the best possible speakers and discussion leaders for our summer gatherings.

The focus this year will be on the young voter - high schoolers, college/university students, and young working

adults. The seminars will share some real success stories in engaging young voters, and also help Leagues use their outreach efforts to increase membership, raise visibility, and improve fundraising efforts.

More details follow, but don't wait. Pick your date now, and save it in your calendar. You do not want to miss out on a summer seminar this year.

Beyond Election Day: Young People Getting Involved in Democracy

Dee Brock, Organization VP, Tyler/Smith Co.



When a friend and I decided on the spur of the moment to attend the Rally to Restore Sanity and visit old friends in DC, I immediately checked to see if LWV was doing anything special during the time we would spend in the capital city. To my delight, the League was hosting a major forum entitled “Beyond Election Day: Young People Getting Involved in Democracy” on the evening we arrived.

The forum was the culmination of the 2010 high school registration project. Texas was one of the five states included in this groundbreaking project. Thus, I immediately registered myself, friend, and cousin/host to attend.

A fabulous slate of speakers delivered heaps of facts about high school students and other young voters and a host of workable ways to grab and hold their attention and participation in civic life over the long haul. Speakers included the following:

- Elisabeth MacNamara, LWV national president;
- Monifa Bandele, Senior Programs and Outreach Manager for the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP);
- Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director of the Pew Hispanic Center;
- Matthew Segal, Executive Director of the Student Association for Voter Empowerment (SAVE).

Each speaker had a distinctive perspective about ways to engage high school students in civic life. All agreed, however, that these efforts must include registering young people (whether in or out of formal educational and training institutions) to vote and motivating and developing their desire for ongoing involvement beyond elections. The speakers did not make these tasks seem easy, but they did make them seem imperative.

The LWV board of directors, national staff, invited guests from other organizations, young delegates from Brazil and Columbia working with LWV to learn more about how democracy works here in the U. S., and members of local Leagues, including two from LWV-Texas, applauded the thought-provoking and motivational seminar and attended the festive reception afterward.



Unknown; Zaida Arguedas, LWV Deputy Executive Director and Senior Director of Global Democracy; Dee Brock, LWV-TX Organization VP; Elisabeth MacNamara, LWV President; Elaine Wiant, LWV-Dallas. (L-R)

The rally was great fun. It was surprising and uplifting to see thousands of people happy and willing to accept all the differing viewpoints as expressed by other attendees through song, speech, and signs. It was also wonderful to visit with friends I knew from my past career at PBS national headquarters. Amidst those memories, the LWV forum still shines as a terrific example of LWV’s ongoing sanity in action and in educating members and others about working with and for young people.

A recent telephone chat with Maggie Duncan, LWV youth program specialist who coordinated the high school effort last year, confirms that an analysis of the work of the five states in the 2010 high school project and a manual for reaching high school students will be available later this year.

Lobby Days and More (continued from page 1)

Bottom Line: Come to Austin March 7 for an office meet-up and tour followed by workshops; a banquet that evening then a night at the Drury Inn; and visits with legislators Tuesday morning. A fun, educational, rewarding two days doing what LWV members do best.

Registration materials have been emailed to members and are available on our website, lwwtexas.org.

Help the League Save Trees and Money!

In a cost saving effort, LWV-TX will send the *Voter* via email to everyone for whom we have an email address. If you would prefer to receive a copy via the US mail, contact our state office at lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org or (512)472-1100 and they will be happy to send you a hard copy of our *Voter*.

If you are a board member, ask at the next board meeting if your League has sent email addresses for all members to the state office. The more people who receive the *Voter* via email, the more money we will have for other projects. In addition, LWV-TX sometimes sends job specific information only to appropriate people; it's very helpful to have local League email addresses.

Thank you to our Donors

November 01, 2010 - January 15, 2011

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Honors & Memorials

November 01, 2010 - January 15, 2011

- Linda Berthelsen donated to EF in honor of Alice May & Don Berthelsen
- Kathleen Gammill donated to EF in honor of Sharon Cunningham
- Michelle Licater donated to EF in honor of Tonya Presley
- Barbara Materka donated to EF in honor of Linda Wassenich
- Susan Morrison donated to EF in honor of Frances McIntyre
- Brooke Mueller donated to EF in honor of Pat Stanley
- Carolie Mullan donated to EF in honor of Karen Nicholson & Linda Krefting
- Donna Snow Robinson donated to EF in honor of Hank Evans

- Pat Stanley donated to EF in honor of Karen Nicholson
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- Dario Salinas donated to EF in memory of Ellen Swanson
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- Roxanne Tyroch donated to EF in memory of Donald Richards
- Reed Bilz donated to TX in honor of Edie Jones
- Dieter Gaupp donated to TX in memory of Fannie Belle Gaupp

Give Today! Donations can be made to either fund by credit card at our secure website: www.lwvtexas.org or submitted by mail to 1212 Guadalupe St. #107, Austin, TX 78701