



# League of Women Voters Austin Area

# VOTER

April  
2009



Volume 13, #9  
Monthly

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"The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. It shall not support or oppose any political party or candidates."  
The VOTER is partially funded by the League of Women Voters of Austin Education Fund.

## Affordable Housing Tour

The City of Austin has offered to give interested League members a tour of Austin Housing and Finance Corporation's (AHFC) development and projects on affordable housing on Friday, April 10 at 1:30 p.m. The tour will be by van and conducted by Margaret Shaw. The tour will last about two hours and reservations are needed. Please contact Maria Johnson by April 3rd to reserve a place at 345-6242 or mmjohnson6@hotmail.com.

As a result of our excellent Affordable Housing program in January (read about that on page 3), five Leaguers attended an Open House Luncheon in February sponsored by Foundation Communities with Walter Moreau, Executive Director. All of us felt very encouraged by this outstanding example of a program which is more than just affordable housing. We met at the Learning Center of Sierra Ridge Apts., which serves as after-school-care for children and a place for the adult community to meet in the evening. Skills in applying for employment and other information are provided there. A resident told us her story and her plans for her future. I would urge anyone interested in learning more to contact Robin or Walter at Foundation Communities, 447-2026. The future schedule of their monthly Open Houses:

- March 31 Spring Terrace
- April 29 Sierra Ridge Apts. Learning Center
- May 19 Sierra Ridge Apts. Learning Center
- June 24 Skyline Terrace

## Voter ID Update

Following League Lobby Day on March 9th, I was privileged to hear many organizations and Texas State Senators speak out against a proposed Voter Identification Bill. LWV-TX was part of a press conference, adjacent to the Senate Chambers, and our own Anita Privett represented us. The Texas Senate devoted a whole day to this bill to fix a problem that does not exist, according to most authorities. Sadly, the Senate passed the bill on March 11th. We will keep you posted on the final outcome as we continue to follow this issue through the House.

-- Judy Parken, Capitol Corps Coordinator

## Calendar

<b>Fri. Apr. 10</b> 1:30 p.m. - 4	<b>Affordable Housing Tour</b> Reserve your place for the tour.
<b>Mon. Apr. 13</b> Noon	<b>Day Unit Meeting</b> Water & Wastewater Update Howson Library, 2500 Exposition
<b>Tues. Apr. 14</b> 7:00 p.m. Judy Parken's	<b>Evening North Unit Meeting</b> Water & Wastewater Update 7917 West Rim Drive, Austin 78731
<b>Wed. Apr. 15</b> 7:00 p.m. 3911 Manchaca	<b>Evening South Unit Meeting</b> Water & Wastewater Update South Austin Senior Activity Center
<b>Thurs. Apr. 16</b> 6:00 p.m. 301 W. 2nd Ave.	<b>Candidates Forum</b> Mayor, City Council Candidates City Hall, Council Chamber
<b>Mon. Apr. 27 -</b>	<b>Early Voting</b>
<b>Tues. May 5</b>	Mayor, City Council, School Boards, ...
<b>Sat. May 9</b>	<b>Election</b> Mayor, City Council, School Boards, ...
<b>Wed. May 13</b> Evening	<b>LWVAA Annual Meeting</b> Save the Date!

## Successful Lobby Day

Thanks to all who participated in our successful Lobby Day - Jan Williams, Maxine Barkan, Mary Ann Nichols, Mary Finch, Frances McIntyre, Joann Robison, Suzy Reid, Martha Schumacher, Jocelyn Doherty, Betty Williamson, Karen Rankin, Ellie Pelletier, Ann Stalnaker, Shaya Zucker, Natalie Balden, Alison Dieter, Pat Jackson, Nancy Neavel, Nan Clayton, and Barbara Werth.

-- Judy Parken, Capitol Corps Coordinator

## Mayor, City Council, Candidates Forum

Come join us 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 16th at City Hall, Council chambers, for a Candidates Forum for the Mayor and the open City Council seats, moderated by LWVAA. This forum is sponsored by the Austin Ethics Review Commission. We'd love to have you see the candidates in person.

## President's Report

The Austin League is very fortunate to have so many members support the work we do by volunteering their time and talent and/or supporting us financially. That is what keeps the League viable, influential, and revered. Thanks to all of you who responded to our Phonathon fundraiser with your generous donations. Now we are able to continue the very important work of promoting "good government" and informed citizen participation. And a special thanks to Adriana Cox who headed up the organization of the Phonathon.

The recent educational programs we have had on Affordable Housing and the Deterioration of Our Water System, and the Unit discussions on redistricting and other legislation the Texas League is pushing, plus Lobby Day at the Capitol, are examples of the Austin League's effort to inform our members and the public. It was a delight to have Mary Wilson, President of our National arm of the League (LWVUS) visit us here in Austin in March. The League has a long arm of influence.

April will hopefully bring showers, but it also brings several activities for Leaguers. In addition to our regular Unit Meetings (more information on water), the Voters Guide for the May 9th city election will be readied for delivery toward the end of the month. If you can help deliver Voters Guides, please contact Mary Sue Neilson at 491-6353. The League will be moderating a Candidates Forum for mayor and city council seats in coordination with the City of Austin Ethics Review Commission on April 16th at City Council Chambers starting at 6:00 p.m. We would love to have a large turnout of League members.

You will also be receiving your Annual Meeting Workbook in April. Because this is our only business meeting of the year, we mail the workbook to every member. We not only elect officers, bylaws and budget, but it is your opportunity to exercise your influence on what programs we may study. Since we are a truly grassroots organization, the members decide the direction the Austin League will take for the next year. In December we had a program planning meeting where members made suggestions for new or updated programs in which they were interested. These suggestions are included in the Annual Meeting Workbook after going through Board of Directors review and recommendation. The membership will vote on them at Annual Meeting on May 13th. Please review the workbook and come with your ideas and suggestions.

-- Regards, Frances

## Send In Your Pledge Card To Support The League Phonathon

The Phonathon is the major source of funding for the Austin Area League. Please send your contribution to the League office. You should have received your contribution card and League letter in mid-February. If you need another card, call the office at 451-6710 to request one.

We wish to acknowledge the offices of Bickerstaff Heath Delgado Acosta LLP located at 816 Congress Ave, Suite 1700, and thank them for hosting the League Phonathon volunteers for the 4th year in a row!

Please call Adriana at 659-5438 if you should need more information about submitting your contribution.

Thank you! -- Adriana Cox, Phonathon Chair 2009

## Welcome New Members!

**State Representative Eddie Rodriguez,  
Patricia Stephens, Dianne Wheeler**

Thank you to our renewing members: Barbara Andre, Robbie Ausley, Heather Becker, Nancy Bene, Terrell Blodgett, Faye Brison, Julie Byers & Lee Leffingwell, Perla Cavazos, Jo Ann & Edmund Farrell, Carol Whitcraft Fredericks, Debby Gardner, Terry Green, Joan Harman, Lisa Harris & Bruce Elfant, David Hume, E. Anne Isenhower, Veronica Johnson, Virginia Kerbow-Moore, Yvonne Khouri, Ethel Kutac, Paul Labuda, Pamela Leighton-Burwell, Karen Lorenzini, Gerald & Maureen McReynolds, Julia Marsden, Catherine & Joseph Nall, Betty Owen, Anita Privett, Jo Reichler, Dorothy Richter, Martha Schumacher, Susan Shelton, Azalee Gray Snow, Deborah Tucker, and Carol Wood.

## Interested In the May Election?

The May 9th Local Election is coming soon. The Austin League will again be involved in educating the community. As an all-volunteer organization, LWV Austin needs your help with:

Voters Guide distribution:

- Mailing to members
- Assistance in the office with distribution

Candidates Forum:

- April 16th City of Austin Ethics Commission – we will be the moderators/timekeepers. This Forum will run on City of Austin Channel 6
- Other forums if we are contacted to assist.

These activities can take only a few hours of your time. If you are interested in learning more about any of these activities and volunteering a bit of time, please contact Mary Sue Neilson (Vice President, Voters Service) at marysue22@gmail.com or 512.491.6353.

### League Day Unit Meeting

Chair: Carolyn Baker, 249-7012  
 Location: Howson Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd.  
 Date: Monday, April 13, noon  
 Topic – Water & Wastewater Infrastructure

### League Evening *NORTH* Unit Meeting

Location: Judy Parken's home, 502-0278  
 7917 West Rim Drive, Austin 78731  
 Date: Tuesday, April 14, 7 p.m.  
 Topic – Water & Wastewater Infrastructure

### League Evening *SOUTH* Unit Meeting

Chair: Michelle Augustine, 892-0947  
 Location: South Austin Senior Activity Center  
 3911 Manchaca  
**Date Change:** Wednesday, April 15, 6:45 p.m.  
 Topic – Water & Wastewater Infrastructure  
 Come early, bring a meal, and socialize.

## April Unit Meetings

For those folks who couldn't make it to the March General Meeting, Raj Bhattarai will show the short, 16-minute version of the PBS "Liquid Assets" video. Then we'll have discussion on the issue of water and wastewater infrastructure.

The Region K group has been invited to our meetings. Region K is comprised of the Colorado River region from up north in Mills County to Matagorda County on the coast.

The Evening South Unit Meeting date has been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 15, due to Passover.

## Member News

Yvonne Khouri, our intrepid Organization Co-VP, had knee replacement surgery in Dallas and is getting along well. She will be recuperating at her sister's home in Dallas. She said it was exceedingly painful the day after the surgery but it's tolerable now. Don't have this surgery unless you really need it, she advises.

## Mental Health Awareness Update

March 4th was Mental Health Awareness Coalition Capitol Day 2009, attended by LWVAA Advocacy Chair, Betty Williamson. She found out that Texas A&M has completed a report on the first year of the Crisis Services Redesign Evaluation. In brief summary, the \$80,000+ used to fund crisis intervention has shown an improvement in services. Future mental health advocacy and funding goals, after crisis:

- need to improve the service system capacity for ongoing services by \$80,000+.
- "Parallel investment in ongoing routine services is (also) needed to prevent a crisis-driven mental health system." This would prevent relapse and would expand services that need funding for a better balance between crisis services and ongoing mental health. This would include additional funding for substance abuse, detox and treatment, and for training law enforcement officers and new professionals, and incentives for those professionals to work in underserved areas.

Take note that our LWVAA study on mental health concluded that ongoing best practice services were lacking.

## Affordable Housing Update

On January 28, 2009 the League held a General Meeting on Affordable Housing. Three panelists, Margaret Shaw, Director of City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department; Walter Moreau, Executive Director of Foundation Communities; and Heather Way, Director of the Community Development Clinic at the University of Texas, participated. A lively discussion was enjoyed by panelists and audience. Here are some of the highlights of the evening:

Most of the General Obligation (GO) Bond money has gone to renters and more money is still to be dispersed. One of the recipients of the GO money is Skyline Terrace, developed by Foundation Communities. Financing for projects like this come from many resources, including Federal government loans that include tax incentive credits. Financing of affordable housing projects can be very complicated. Renters on the lower end of the income scale are most in need of affordable housing

Margaret Shaw emphasized the need for the community to support affordable housing. There is a hidden need for affordable housing in the Austin area and not just the development of condos and hi-rises in the downtown area. Rents have increased over the past years. The City will publish soon a report on the hidden need.

Heather Way talked about the new Transit-Oriented Development Ordinance (TOD) passed by the city to encourage building affordable housing near commuter rail stations. She said there is a move to create an index of affordability for housing to include transportation costs as well as housing.

The development of affordable housing at Mueller airport was discussed and how well affordable housing was mixed into the development. The outside of the homes may look the same, but the interiors may not have amenities such as granite top counters.

League members interested in working on the Affordable Housing Committee should contact Maria Johnson at 345-6242 or mmjohnson6@hotmail.com.

## Observer Corps Update

Austin City Council

Natalie Balden, Observer Meeting 3/5/09

Parks and Recreation Item 10: Approve a resolution approving the alignment of the Boardwalk Trail at Lady Bird Lake as a primary concept for purposes of beginning the planning and design phase of the project. Recommended by the Parks and Recreation Board.

Spirited testimony ensued from the residents of that area against the proposed new trail which would be built wide to accommodate bike riders, increase traffic in front of the lake front, and impact the wildlife by constructing walkways over the water.

Parks and Recreation Board proposed this new trail to connect the lake front from east of I35 to the western walkways area which is currently not accessible. The proposed study and design were to take into consideration public concerns. City Council approved the resolution.

Police Item 11: Approve a resolution authorizing the application for \$19,674 in grant funds from the State of Texas Governor's Office, Criminal Justice Division, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Grant Program for the operation of the APD Gang Prevention Project. The grant period is September 1, 2009 - August 31, 2010. This is the third year of a 5-year grant project. There is no required match.

Police Item 12: Approve a resolution authorizing the application for grant funding from the State of Texas Governor's Office, Criminal Justice Division, Violence Against Women Act grant program for three (3) existing full-time equivalent (FTE) Victim Service Counselors for the Austin Police Services for Victims of Domestic Violence Project from September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010.

Mr. Gus Garcia thanked for the allocation of the funds. However, he asked that more funds be sought from the Federal Stimulus package. He reiterated that gang violence prevention is more cost effective than subsequent incarcerations.

Purchasing Office Item 16: Council members approved the execution of a contract with Gemini Solar Development Company, LLC, San Francisco CA, to purchase up to 30 megawatts of solar-generated power over a 25-year term at the estimated annual amount of \$10,000,000. Funding will be provided through the Electric Fuel Charge revenue or future Green Choice revenue. Recommended by the Electric Utility Commission.

In the testimony against this project, it was noted that conservation of energy and stricter controls of carbon emissions could meet the no-cost targets without the need for an outlay of expensive projects in this struggling economy. Concerns were expressed regarding what would be additional costs and liabilities of this project to the taxpayers vs. to the stakeholders.

Gemini representatives pointed out that Texas would be a leader in solar energy production. Solar panels are being produced locally and 50% of the construction labor would be Texan. However, it was not clear what stimulus funds would be available for this project and whether the Electric Utility Commission would qualify to receive some as well.

Travis County Commissioners Court  
Joann Robison, Observer Meeting 2/24/09

Item 14: [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/commissioners\\_court/agendas/2009/02/vs090224.asp](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/commissioners_court/agendas/2009/02/vs090224.asp)

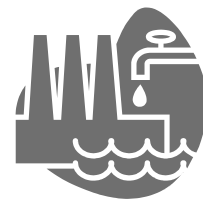
Report on Health and Human Services and Veterans Services: The Commission is looking at ways to address increasing demand for "basic needs services." The report outlined multiple reports of increasing requests for services. Food stamp recipients are up 50% over last year, CHIP applications are up 34%. While school enrollment is up 10%, those enrolled as economically disadvantaged are up 19%. The problems of job loss and housing loss have related increases in stress, leading to substance abuse, school drop-out rates, and family disturbances. Capital Area Food Bank reported giving out the largest amount of food in their history last October. Caritas has seen a 500% increase in requests for services.

HHS had been asked to come up with a plan to distribute \$450K to help with basic needs services. The recommendation is to raise the subsidy to several sectors by 10%. The Commissioners asked them to fine tune their proposal, verifying with recipient providers that the funds could be put to effective use and look at their budget to see if there might be other funds to help further supplement. The report should be finalized soon as the Commissioners are eager to get this funding to the needy.

A related request came from Frameworks. This is a group that managed a program to counsel homeowners at risk of foreclosure. Requests are up 58% this January. Last year, 117 families received counseling. The Commissioners suggested they bring a written proposal for their request in the near future. All agreed this program did not fit under the basic needs services HHS is currently working on and should receive separate consideration for funding.

Items 26, 27 & 28: Through an agreement with the City of Austin, there is a transitioning of facilities to the Travis County Healthcare District. Most of the city clinics were involved in this transition and the Commissioners accepted the properties. Item 10: The county is developing their plan for The Big Push. They are working with other entities including the City of Austin, CAMPO, the Clean Air Force, and local businesses to address concerns that our ozone levels put the county at risk with EPA standards. Next the staff is to prepare a Resolution that the Court can use to advertise and get community support for changes that will address ozone production.

Legislative concerns include proposed changes in condemnation procedures and valuations under eminent domain statutes. Also a proposed increase in the minimum cost triggering the requirement for comparative bidding. This ruling would bring most entities into alignment with a \$50K requirement. At this time many entities use \$25K.



## National *Voter* Magazine The Effects of the Economy on LWV

At its January meetings, the LWVUS Board of Directors decided to suspend publication of *The National Voter* magazine (paper and digital) until the League's finances are healthier. Publication costs for the *National Voter* are prohibitive in a time of budget cutbacks. The Board and the LWVUS staff are committed to finding new ways to deliver information to our members and supporters. We will keep you informed as we move forward. Please log on to [lwv.org](http://lwv.org) and register to get email updates. Questions and comments can be sent to Board Member Nancy Eitreim at [neitreim@speakeasy.net](mailto:neitreim@speakeasy.net).

Here in Austin, our printing and mailing costs have also gone up. Our portion of your yearly dues does not even cover the costs of this *Voter* newsletter for a year. We are also struggling. We are looking at ways to decrease our printing and mailing costs by using the Internet more. With our all-volunteer organization, your Phonathon donations, and your other financial support throughout the year, we do expect to be able to continue. We would appreciate some feedback from you on any corporate or business support you can recommend, along with other fund-raising ideas. Send an email to [lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org](mailto:lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org).



## State of the City was Great! Many Thanks to the Auction and Raffle Contributors

At this year's State of the City, Austin City Manager Marc Ott gave an interesting talk about his gaining familiarity with Austin and what was ahead for the city. This year's State of the City event, held at the University Club, had the highest attendance ever! Mary Gordon Spence kept the raffle and auction lively and entertaining! Many former, present, and future elected officials joined the members and guests for the wonderful evening. Kudos go to the Special Events team Chair Barbara Andre, Carolyn Baker, Alison Dieter, Yvonne Khouri, and Phyllis Portnoy.

We very much appreciate the support of those businesses and individuals who contributed items to our 2009 State of the City auction and raffle! The funds raised will be used to fund our work throughout the year. LWVAA Membership Co-Chair Susan Morrison graciously provided her Llano River house and Ben Sargent provided one of his original cartoons to our auction. The auction winners were Marti Bier and Adam Gregory.

Thanks to following who donated raffle items: LWVAA member Terrell Blodgett, State Rep. Elliott Naishtat, Esther's Follies, Wild Basin, Jim Hightower, Twin Liquors, LWVAA President Frances McIntyre, LWVAA member Alison Dieter, LWVAA member Bob Gregory of Texas Disposal Systems, State Rep. Valinda Bolton, County Commissioner and LWVAA member Sarah Eckhardt, State Rep. and LWVAA member Donna Howard, City Council member and LWVAA member Lee Leffingwell, LWVAA Community Relations VP Carolyn Baker, Galaxy Café, Diane McIntyre, LWVAA member Marj Loehlin, LWVAA member and past president Karen Haschke, Shakespeare at Winedale, LWVAA Treasurer Carol Olewin, LWVAA member Jewel Hudson, State Rep. Lon Burnam, and State Sen. Kirk Watson.

Pictured left is our State of the City speaker, Marc Ott, Austin's City Manager. Below shows our members and guests listening to Mr. Ott speak.



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF THE AUSTIN AREA**

1011 West 31st Street  
Austin, TX 78705  
(512) 451-6710

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Are your dues due? →

**ATTENTION MEMBERS:**

Please fill out the form below and send with your dues renewal and/or any changes in your information to the LWV-AA Office, 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705. **The League is grateful for your support!** If you do not wish to renew, please email **Mary Sue Neilson, Member Records**, at [marysue22@gmail.com](mailto:marysue22@gmail.com) or call 491-6353, as soon as possible. This will save time and expense in sending follow-up reminders. Thank you for your cooperation.

**For new and renewing members and for address changes: \*\*\* Not for Women Only \*\*\***

Name \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of household member (if applicable)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (Fax) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_  I'd like to receive the *Voter* newsletter via email.

<b>Dues</b>	<b>Individual</b> \$ 58.00	<b>Household</b> \$ 90.00	<b>Student</b> \$ 20.00	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>I'm an existing member and this &lt;--- is a change to my information.</i>
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<b>Additional Donation</b>	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	MAIL TO LWV-AA OFFICE: 1011 W. 31st, Austin, TX 78705
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<b>Total</b>	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	
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(How your individual dues are allocated: National \$27.15; State \$22.80; **Local \$8.05**; Total \$58.00)

*You can also PayPal your dues to [lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org](mailto:lwvaustin@lwvaustin.org)!*