

President's Message

By Chris Davis Garcia

Dear Members and Friends:

LWV-TX asked Leagues throughout Texas last fall to recruit and designate a local member to help promote the League's push for creation of a bipartisan Redistricting Committee in this legislative session. I wrote a story in the November VOTER about the advocacy plan and invited interested members to consider taking a leadership role. I also spoke to a couple of our members about the role but both cited other activities they needed to accomplish and the lack of time to take on a new assignment—reasons I certainly understood and appreciated.

After Christmas, Sylvia Samaniego, LWV-CC secretary, suggested the name of a new member and volunteered to make the phone call. And that new member accepted! Thank you, Lisa Hernandez! Born in Alaska and reared overseas, Lisa Hernandez was a Buccaneer cheerleader before attending the University of Houston. She is an educator, artist, voting rights activist and public relations professional who has directed community outreach projects to increase political participation for more than 20 years.

Lisa has served on local, state and national campaign staffs providing grassroots and media consulting for women and communities of color throughout Texas and the southwest United States. She is a cultural folk artist who constructs multimedia installations and original works of art celebrating Dia de los Muertos, a centuries-old tradition honoring ancestral spirits. She has participated in more than 50 solo and group exhibitions in museums, galleries and arts centers throughout Texas.

Lisa has prepared an excellent information flyer to advocate approval of legislation this session (see page 6). Please take time to read the information and share with others. LWV-TX is encouraging every League to help support legislative action this session. Thank you again, Lisa, for helping the League address this current issue and monitoring what's happening in Austin.

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Let's talk recycling



By Peggy Duran

Thinking About Water at Home and Work

If just 2 percent of the U. S. population turned on the bathroom faucets to a fraction of full blast when washing their hands, nearly 12 million gallons of water could be saved every day.

Turning off the water while brushing your teeth saves 2 gallons of water.

Swapping a bath for a shower can save up to 2000 gallons of water a year. Improve on that by upgrading your showerhead to a low-flow water-saving version.

The average shower uses 20 gallons of water compared to 40 gallons needed for a bath.

Nonconserving showerheads let up to five gallons of water flow per minute.

Cost Benefit: Low-flowing showerheads can save \$10-\$20 per person each year. They can reduce your water consumption by up to 50 percent..

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Top Priority for LWVUS

Consensus Meeting in April To Address National Popular Vote Compact

A story in last month's VOTER provided details for the LWVUS Consensus Meeting requested before May 1 by the National organization. LWV-CC will honor the request by scheduling an information meeting in April, providing both pro and con information to members, and answering the seven consensus questions below.

The League believes that the Electoral College should be abolished. It supports uniform voting qualifications and

procedures for presidential elections as well as changes in the presidential election system—from the candidate selection process to the general election.

The National Popular Vote Compact proposal offers a method of achieving the election of the President and Vice-President by popular vote without amending the Constitution. The method uses the Electoral College to ensure that candidates who receive the most popular votes are elected.

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS for National Popular Vote Compact

Amending the Constitution

1. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
- b. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

2. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
- b. Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as

- a way of achieving an important goal.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

Congressional Consent

3. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
- b. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
- c. The group could not reach consensus

Enforcement

4. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.
- b. Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure

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READ TO SUCCEED

Redistricting

10 Reasons Texans Must Act Before 2010

By **Lisa Hernandez**, Redistricting Committee Chair

Of the three Texas redistricting bills filed – two in the House and one in the Senate – Senate Bill 315 marks the best and last opportunity to create an independent, bipartisan redistricting commission during this 81st legislative session. The League has stepped up its campaign to enact this legislation before the 2010 Census and needs your help.

1. Putting Texas Voters First

S.B.315 addresses only U.S. House of Representatives districts. However, it's an important first step in drawing fair and just election boundaries and serving as a model for state and local government jurisdictions.

2. 2010 Census Countdown

Census numbers set the stage for Texas to receive billions in federal funds and services. An independent redistricting commission removes politics from the redrawing of boundaries to equalize populations among districts.

3. Three New Districts

Texas is expected to earn three new seats in Congress and must therefore reapportion its current 32 districts – 20 Republican and 12 Democrat. (Only two women serve in the Texas delegation: Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston and Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson of Dallas.)

4. Fiascos Avoided

Previous redistricting battles have too often benefited incumbents at the expense of voters. The results have led to hostile takeovers, walkouts and lawsuits. Passage of S.B. 315 avoids another partisan redistricting fiasco after the 2010 census, unlike the proposed House bill and joint resolution.

5. Section 5 State

Texas enjoys a long rich history of discrimination and gerrymandering, particularly as it relates to communities of color. This practice places Texas among the states who must submit all election plans for preclearance with the U.S. Justice Department per Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

6. Justice Delayed is Justice Denied

Encourage local Representatives to introduce a House version of S.B. 315 before the March 13th deadline to file bills in the 81st session.

7. Ready, Willing & Abel!

Coastal Bend Representative Abel Herrero sits on the House Redistricting Committee and should play a vital role in safeguarding Nueces County interests. Give him a call at 512.463.0462.

8. Public Debate Can't Wait

Time is short! Write a letter to the editor, contact your legislator, tell your colleagues and friends about this bill and ask for their support.

9. Nine Members v. 181 Members

The Redistricting Commission of four Democrats, four Republicans and a non-voting Chair should better manage redistricting than the 181 members of the Texas Legislature – 150 in the House and 31 in the Senate – who seem reluctant to relinquish their role in redrawing their own boundaries.

10 Minutes Today...Better Texas Tomorrow

Make sure that legislators Hinojosa, Hunter, Herrero & Ortiz hear from you. Log onto www.legis.state.tx.us to visit the Texas Legislature online.

Senate Bill 315

Relating to the reapportionment of congressional districts and the creation, function, and duties of the Texas Congressional Redistricting Commission.

AUTHOR:

Senator Jeff Wentworth (R)
San Antonio

ANALYSIS:

S.B.315 calls for the creation of an independent bipartisan Redistricting Commission by 2011; the selection of four Democrats and four Republicans to serve on the Commission – none of whom are running for or holding public office; the election of a non-voting chair from outside the Commission to run the meetings; proposition of a plan that favors neither party unduly.

STATUS:

Out of State Affairs Committee; Public Hearing held Monday, March 2nd; No action taken.

FISCAL NOTE:

The Legislative Budget Board finds no significant fiscal implication to the State.

HISTORY:

For 15 years, Sen. Wentworth has introduced similar bills which have twice passed the Senate yet failed to reach the House floor and become law.

The League neither supports nor opposes the following:

HB104 – Strama (D)

Bill proposing a bipartisan commission of non-elected members to draw boundaries that include the state Senate and House districts and the Congressional House of Representatives.

Referred to Redistricting Cmte.

HJR19 – Strama (D)

Proposed constitutional amendment approved by the voters before HB 104 would take effect.

Referred to Redistricting Cmte.

Act Today! Join the League's Redistricting Committee. Contact Lisa Hernandez at 361.882.476 or via e-mail at <lalisahernandez@gmail.com>.



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