

# The Houston VOTER

League of Women Voters-Houston Area • September 2008

## September General Meeting Friday, September 12, 2008

The H.E.S.S. Club  
(Houston Engineering and Scientific Society)  
San Jacinto Room  
5430 Westheimer  
(free parking top and lower level)

11:00 a.m. – Registration

11:30 a.m. – Lunch - \$30

12:00 – Dr. Robert Stein, Dean of Social Sciences,  
Rice University

**“So What’s New in the Political World?”  
Insights and Prognostications**

NOTE: Prepayment is required. Deadline is Sept. 9.  
Send your check to the LWV Office, 2650 Fountain  
View #328, 77057 or call 713-784-2923 with your credit  
card number.

## President’s Message

By Laura Blackburn

It is always wonderful and exciting to begin a new League year. This year is no exception! I think you will find our programs for the year interesting, challenging and exciting!

Our first general meeting is, of course, on politics and the election! We are extremely fortunate to have Dr. Robert Stein, Dean of Social Sciences and Lena Gohlman Fox Professor of Political Science. Many of you have heard Dr. Stein from various TV appearances. He is a man of great insights politically and great humor and dynamism personally. I know you will enjoy him! As you can see from the insert on the left, we will be meeting on September 12 at the Hess Club (Houston Engineering and Scientific Society) at 5430 Westheimer. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you!

Units this month are on health care. We will be reviewing health care as it exists in this country and also looking at the candidate’s approach to health care. No doubt we will have engaging discussions!

I hope you have had a great summer and are looking forward to our new LWV year.

## 88 years

### An Important Anniversary

By Lula Blake

August 26 marked the 88th anniversary of the day the U. S. Constitution was amended to grant women the right to vote. While American women now comprise more than half of our nation’s voting age population, according to the League of Women Voters, the struggle to become full participants in the political life of the country has yet to be fully realized.

This year, we have witnessed a number of remarkable milestones for women. For the first time, a female was elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and a woman was a major contender for President.

These achievements, however, do not mark the end of our journey. In communities across the country, citizens still lack real representation by their elected officials and the policies they pass. It is only with the continued work of citizens and leaders of all backgrounds that this can change.

It is crucial that we continue to engage more citizens in the democratic process, on every level. Citizens volunteering, educating, lobbying, these are absolutely necessary to democracy, and we need to see more of it.

## Attention Texas Legislators

By Millie Whittington

The LWV will be watching the coming session of the Texas Legislature to parry any attempt to invade federal authority on immigration or to assault the newly adopted League position on this issue.

The last position on immigration by LWVTX was adopted in 1996. It did not directly deal with solving the problem of the 10 – 12 million undocumented aliens already here. Although there were provisions for providing essential services to immigrants, who they were was not defined. Now we have a position on immigration by LWVUS adopted this spring that will guide our review of bills before the Legislature in Austin .

The International Affairs Committee of the Houston

*continued on page 3*

## INSIDE

- Observers
- LWVUS Convention report
- Unit Meetings resume

... and more

# The LWV-HA Observers

## Houston City Council

Shirley Gibson Reporting

August 6

The Mayor began the session, after the prayer and pledge, by telling us about a new program that the city government was participating in called City Hall Fellows. These individuals will be selected from among the many interns working in city hall based upon their achievement and deportment. So far about 12 fellows have been selected and they were presented at the meeting. Several councilmembers complimented them on their fine work.

The next item was the incident in which a young boy was killed playing in a storm sewer during a heavy rain. Councilmembers offered their condolences. The Mayor stated that drain covers and bars cause the storm sewers to drain slowly and the issue of drain covers needs to be worked out in committee. It is imperative, however, that parents control their children around storm sewers.

August 13

The first item of business was the appointment of Haroon Shaikh, CPA, who has a firm in three cities, to the board of the Sports Authority. He was congratulated by various members of the council most prominently by M. J. Khan, P. E. who is also an Indian American.

Little discussion followed the reading of the agenda. Everything was passed except three items that were tagged. Councilmember Rodriquez, tagged the item concerning the condemnation of land in his district, saying he needed more information. Councilmember Holm, tagged two items in the property section pending more information.

## Harris County Commissioners Court

By Sharon and Harold Friedman

Many times we hear or read that Harris County Commissioners Court is studying an item that will be taken up later or referred to a committee. Often the item disappears never to be heard of again at the open meetings of the court. A 21 member Advisory Council was created to oversee Harris County's Hospital District's mental services and public health department. The council was also to study the area's public health system, including the merger of some county and city services. The council was created some time ago but we have not heard any results at the court.

Here is a rather new committee working--Commissioner Garcia worked to have a committee established to study the contract deputy program. Under the program civic associations and school districts pay the county to have deputies assigned to spend most of their working hours patrolling specific areas or neighborhoods.

We are sorry to report that retired Commissioner Jim Fonteno died several months ago. He was a kind man who worked especially for the senior citizens in Harris County. The Houston Area League sends sympathy to his family.

## Health Care

By Joann Peschel

No matter what age you are, planning ahead is vital for maintaining health, freedom, independence and happiness.

Get Ready for Life ([www.GetReadyforLife.org](http://www.GetReadyforLife.org)) is a new program that helps older adults live with independence, health and well-being by planning ahead for life's transitions. It offers objective information, educational resources, and links to local and national websites, as well as advice from local experts in four key areas:

- Health – There are always steps you can take to improve your health. Get Ready for Life provides resources on nurturing the body and mind, managing common challenges and thinking through other important health considerations.
- Finances – Financial and legal planning helps us be in control. Get Ready for Life encourages older adults to think ahead about paying for healthcare, managing a budget, completing advance directives and most importantly, being a wise consumer.
- Housing – Independence means choosing the place you call home. Since housing needs change throughout one's life, Get Ready for Life helps you explore the variety of housing options available and learn how even simple home modifications can make a big difference.
- Happiness – What matters most to you? Having a sense of purpose in your life brings happiness so Get Ready for Life offers information and resources about building relationships, having fun and giving back. Get Ready for Life is an initiative of Care for Elders- Houston's largest, most diverse and most experienced partnership focused solely on elder care issues. Uniting over 80 members from the public, private and nonprofit sectors, Care for Elders is working to increase access to services, improve the quality of care, and enhance the quality of life for older adults and their families.

To learn more about this program visit [www. GetReadyforLife.org](http://www.GetReadyforLife.org) or call 713.558.6391.

## JOB OPENINGS

Leadership is a terrible thing to waste. If you have it or recognize it in someone, please give the name to one of the members of the Nominating Committee: Barb Swartz, Joan Golding, or Millie Whittington.

*Your new 2008-2009 Directory included in this mailing contains many personal information changes. Please check it out before contacting a member.*

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization which promotes informed and active participation of citizens in government.

The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

# Summer Tour

By Shirley Gibson

On July 10, the League had their summer outing at Discovery Green Park, a new park operated by the Discovery Green Conservancy, a private nonprofit organization. Guy Hagestette, the Director of Discovery Green Conservancy, gave us an informative lecture about the Conservancy and the origin of the park. He also took us on a tour which included Gateway fountain, a fountain with water spurting out for children; Kinder Lake; Fondren Foundation Performance Space; Donor walls; The Brown Foundation Promenade; a side view of the Wortham Foundations Gardens; the Dog Runs; and the John P. McGovern Playground. A small rain cloud provided us a cool walk which terminated at both the Grove Restaurant and the Lake House Restaurants for lunch.

A good time was had by all as seen in the photos at right.

## Texas Legislators

*continued from page 1*

League will coordinate the monitoring of immigration bills introduced in the 81st Texas Legislature to ensure that there is no attempt to trespass on federal authority and no trampling on humanitarian measures. As guardians against bias, the LWVTX lobbyists will take action for fairness and justice in legislation. As stated in the LWVUS position: "All persons should receive fair treatment under the law."

Today's immigration problems call for constructive measures, not for "Minute Men" in Austin.



*The copy of the Declaration of Independence at the Declare Yourself event.*



# Reports from LWVUS Convention



Laura Blackburn, Michael Fjetland and Lula Blake in Portland.

## **From Maryann Barthelemy:**

I remembered to thank Portland, Oregon for their dedication and hard work to make this a memorable event. I hope to go to Atlanta in 2010. The reward of attending was invaluable, it was democracy at its best and I enjoyed being a part of it.

The opening networking opportunity was "The League - How to Stand Out and be Great in 2008." The ideas shared will go beyond 2008. Members were asked to share ideas and brainstorm new ideas to enhance the League's visibility in the community. One of the suggestions made was to recruit volunteers who are not League members to participate in activities. This will serve as a way to get to know the League and to help future members choose to become active.

I also attended a caucus on "Education and the Federal Government." The focus was to bring attention to "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB). The Minnesota delegates hosted a workshop on diversity. They shared tips on recruiting new members from diverse backgrounds. Each delegate shared her experience and decision to join the League.

I talked with members from other states regarding housing. As a result I am optimistic that I can create a plan to promote better housing for seniors in the city.

## **From Lula Blake:**

I arrived at the airport in the

beautiful city of Portland, Oregon along with many other League members from different cities. We all walked a few yards to the train stop, purchased \$2.25 tickets, and were off to our hotels.

I arrived in time to catch the last half of the first session of the convention "How to Stand Out and Be GREAT in 2008". The focus was on the importance of Leagues' service in the communities. There were many shared ideas, and one that stood out, was to invite neighbors, friends, and family to go with you and volunteer in League activities, such as Voter Registration debates and forums, and League meetings.

I also attended the California Caucus, which was on Education "No Child Left Behind." I found that many states are not as advanced as Texas, they have not studied this issue. The meeting was standing room only, and very vocal.

Saturday morning 7:00 a.m., I joined the League's walking tour to the river and around the old China garden - very beautiful. At 10:00 a.m. I took a bus tour to the Saturday Farmers Market.

The Plenary Session started at 1:00 p.m. with the Honorable Barbara Roberts, the first Woman Governor of Oregon, 1991-1995. She gave information on how women of Oregon preserved its history, and how women of today are not only preserving history, they are making history every day.

Lula Blake, Carolie Mullan, Laura Blackburn, Edie Jones get together at the LWVUS national convention,



## **From Michael Fjetland**

A Male Delegate's View of a League of Women Voters Convention – I went to my first League of Women Voters convention in Portland, Oregon, and discovered that it was like no other convention I had ever attended. I was one of the few male delegates (the League has allowed men to join their nonpartisan group since 1973.) Over 1,000 women filled the room. I have never worked so hard at a convention in my life. The women worked like dogs on a number of serious issues from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., then continued until 10 p.m. They fired it up again the next day at 9 a.m. Needless to say I was exhausted by the time it wrapped up four days later, but also impressed by their system that would be a tremendous role model for Congress. Spread through the giant room were microphones marked "pro" and "con." Both sides got to make their arguments, motions and amendments. Despite disagreements, the atmosphere remained civil. The speaker alternated between "pro" and "con" speakers at each of six microphone positions. One of the best keynote speakers at the convention spoke on global climate change. Dr. V. Ramanathan is a Professor of Climate and Atmospheric Sciences for UC-San Diego. His graphics painted a startling picture of the rapid changes happening as a result of global warming that will negatively impact our future – and our children's – unless action is taken immediately. Later, the League adopted climate change as an action program item, along with health care.

I encourage you to get involved in this dynamic organization, even if the conventions are more serious work than fun. They are helping make the world a better place.

## **From Laura Blackburn:**

The "work" of the convention was accomplished: a budget was adopted with a \$1.20 increase in dues for each of the coming years. A change was made in the Principles which added the sentence:

*continued on page 5*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept. 1	Labor Day (office closed)
Sept. 5	First day to apply for ballot by mail
Sept. 9	Briefing, League office, 2 p.m.
Sept. 10	VOTER Deadline
Sept. 12	General Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
Sept. 15-20	Units on Health
Sept. 24	VOTER Mailing Naturalization Service
Sept. 26	Board Meeting, League office, 10 a.m.

### Thanks to the following for their contributions:

Mary Titus	Annie R. Johnson Benifield
Leslie Taylor	Joan Helfgott
Gwen Essinger	Lynn B. Johnson
Sharon Friedman	Priscilla Saunders
Carmen Forbes	Alma Novotny
Joseph F. Reilly, Jr.	William A. Camfield
Jan Wilbur	Kathleen Gammill
Sylvia Garcia	Judy Hollinger
Barbara McCormick	Terry Hershey
Mary S. Dix	Cheryl Berg
Sue Dehaven	Ann Jones
Molly Shanks	Amber York
Renee Cross	Karen Getty
Barbara Henley	
Donna Mohlman	Cynthia Biasca,
Linn Swartz	<i>in memory of</i>
Frances Burford	<i>Jeanette Vanderwater</i>

### LWWUS convention report

*continued from page 4*

"The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial." In addition, a study on "The advisability of using the National Popular Vote compact among the states as a method for electing the President" was adopted.

The educational part of the Convention related to climate change, and the speakers were outstanding, particularly the climate change panel which included "The State of Climate Change—What We Know and What We Don't" By Dr. Ram Ramanathan. You could tell he was not only a very informed individual but he was a teacher also, and presented his information in an understandable and humorous way, as the best of teachers do! "Climate Change Disparities—the Effect on the Developing World" by Heather Kaplan, Senior Policy Advisor on Climate Change for Oxfam America, effectively presented another aspect of this complex problem.

Both of these presentations will be on the LWV-US website soon [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

It was a pleasure for me to represent the Houston Area League of Women Voters of Houston.

## We welcome these new and returning members:

Berg \_\_\_\_\_ Jill W. MacDonald \_\_\_\_\_

Jane K. Bomba \_\_\_\_\_ Carolyn Mounce \_\_\_\_\_

Ruth Brodsky \_\_\_\_\_ Sue Rosenthal \_\_\_\_\_

Julie Coan \_\_\_\_\_

Sarah Schimmer \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Louis Dally \_\_\_\_\_

Linda Shead \_\_\_\_\_

Lynn Defrees \_\_\_\_\_

Karin Shipton \_\_\_\_\_

Linda & Frank Driskill \_\_\_\_\_

Marilyn Wilking \_\_\_\_\_

Sandra Kessler \_\_\_\_\_

**[www.travelwiththeleague.com](http://www.travelwiththeleague.com)  
or call 1-800-762-4216**

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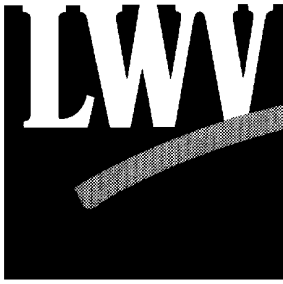
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## September Unit Meetings

**Monday, Sept. 15**  
**Southwest Day, 1 p.m.**

Alief Library  
7979 South Kirkwood  
Rhoda Haddox  
713/667-5952

**Citywide Evening, 6 p.m.**

Black Lab Pub  
4100 Montrose  
Jackie Friedman  
713/521-0702

**Tuesday, Sept. 16**  
**Spring Branch, 9:30 a.m.**

Community Room  
Lakeview Place Apts.  
(Agnes Davis residence)  
8950 Hammerly Blvd  
Barb Swartz  
713/467-3561

**Thursday, Sept. 18**  
**Midwest, 10 a.m.**

Gerald Womack Building  
4412 Almeda  
Yvette Calloway  
713/747-6555  
Millie Whittington  
281/752-0446

**Saturday, Sept. 20**  
**New Member Unit, 10 a.m.**

League office  
2650 Fountain View, #328  
Judy Hollinger  
713/665-4458

**NEW UNIT?** Do you live in far west Harris County or Katy? Are unit meetings too far away for you? We are starting a new unit on Highway 6 between Memorial and IH-10. If you are interested, please call Joan Golding, 281/596-0935, and she will give you time, place, and full information. Join us!

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At the Unit meetings this month, we will discuss the LWVUS position on quality, affordable health care for all. We would like your input on the subject. Reread the Facts and Issues on Health care in the February issue of the VOTER and the information included in this mailing. Additional information will be provided at the September General Meeting and at the Unit meetings. Come prepared to join in the discussion at your Unit meeting. (The Facts & Issues can be found at [www.lwvhouston.org](http://www.lwvhouston.org), click on Positions on Issues, than on Health Care, then on Facts & Issues.)

### **Unit Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you support the LWVUS position that quality, affordable health care should be available to all US residents? Why or why not?
2. What are the Presidential candidates' stands on health care?
3. What are the health care positions of the people running in your congressional district? What are the positions of the candidates for the Senate?
4. How can we best contact our congressional candidates to let them know the importance of improving our health care delivery system? How and when should we be contacting them?
5. What do you see in the future if the health care delivery system stays as it is now?