



The Houston *VOTER*

League of Women Voters – Houston Area

April/May 2011

LWV HOUSTON AREA ANNUAL MEETING

&

Silent Auction benefiting LWV Houston Education Fund

Thursday, May 19, 2011

Sosa Community Center
1414 Wirt Road, Houston TX 77055

Guest Speaker:

George Greanias

METRO President & CEO

**Silent Auction opens at 5:30 p.m.
Speaker at 6:15 p.m.**

All dinners must be prepaid before noon
May 17, 2011

Best: Mail check payable to LWV-HA
or use PayPal at www.lwvhouston.org

Other options: Call with credit card number
713.784.2923
or email lwv@lwvhouston.org

Dinner Cost: \$30.00
Catered by *Belly Laughter Catering*

Mail checks to LWV-HA, 4001 N. Shepherd
Drive, Suite 213, Houston, TX 77018-5507

The Annual Meeting Workbook is available
at
www.lwvhouston.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nancy Parra

I have enjoyed serving as President of this wonderful organization, and it is with regret that I end the exciting journey that we embarked on together two years ago. I want to extend a special thanks to everyone who helped make my tenure as President so innovative and successful - the League's officers, directors, and committee chairs; our executive director and office assistant, and all of the LWV-HA members who have participated and helped with our many activities.

We have accomplished many things. We have a new, interactive website with increased functionality; we have a new social media presence with over 1,500 fans on Facebook and a Twitter account through which we engage voters of different age groups. Through our participation in the LWVUS Youth Engagement program, we were able to connect with over 6,000 students at 24 Houston area high schools.

We have extended our presence in the community. We partnered with the American Society of Civil Engineers to co-sponsor I-Day Houston. We co-sponsored a gubernatorial debate with the Harris County Department of Education. With the Center for Citizen Education at Rice University, we held a County Clerk candidates debate, and with One Voice Texas, a Juvenile Justice Candidates Forum. We joined The Center for Houston's Future and The Institute for Sustainable Peace in the Candidate Café Dialogues.

We have furthered the League's visibility in Houston's international community by participating in the Connecting Future Legislators with Civil Society project sponsored by LWVUS and the U.S. Department of State. We hosted fellows from Colombia in March and November.

We have continued the League's outreach through our voter registration at the naturalization ceremonies; through our printed and online *Voters Guides*; and through our excellent Focus on Issues meetings. Our importance in the community was reflected in the two successful fundraisers for the Education Fund.

I welcome our new President and board and wish them success. Our League has achieved a great deal over the past two years. We must continue the momentum. The board cannot achieve this alone; we need everyone's participation. Please join me in defining the future of the Houston Area League at the Annual Meeting, May 19.

CALENDAR PLANNING

For 2011-2012 League Year

Wednesday Evening

May 25, 2011

6:00 p.m.

Goode Company Barbeque

8911 Katy Freeway (I-10)

Between Blalock Rd. & Bingle Rd.

Houston, TX 77024

We are getting an early start to planning next year so that we can have a productive summer and hit the ground running in September. This is a great opportunity for all members to come with ideas for Voter Services projects like voter ID education, and topics for our monthly Focus on Issues programs.

At this important meeting, the League sketches out the schedule of meetings for the entire 2011-2012 League Year. Unit leaders, program committee chairs, board members, and all members are encouraged to come.

Arrive early to purchase your meal and bring it upstairs to the private dining room.

LWV-TX Summer Seminars

Engaging Young Voters in Texas

June 4, 2011

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Montgomery County Library

2101 Lake Robbins Drive,

The Woodlands, TX 77380

RSVP to lwv@lwvhouston.org

This is the closest location to Houston of the three summer sessions sponsored by LWV-TX. Each session will focus on the young voter—high school, college/university, young working adult. We will learn how to reach out to new audiences; learn best practices to recruit members, raise funds, improve League visibility; and network with other Leaguers.

Donations Sought for Silent Auction

The Silent Auction is an important fundraiser for the LWV Houston Education Fund. The goal is to raise \$1,500. You may drop off items to be auctioned at the LWV office at 4001 North Shepherd Drive, Suite 213 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on weekdays. Please fill out the auction donation form on page 8 of this *VOTER*.

Solicit items from your favorite vendor using the same auction form. Leslie Taylor is the auction chair and seeks volunteers to help solicit items and manage the auction during the meeting. Email lctaylor@earthlink.net.

Do not forget to bring your checkbook or credit card or cash to the Annual Meeting May 19. You will not want to miss out on the great items, tickets, books, and treats available.

Nominating Committee Reports 2011-2012 Slate of Officers

The LWV-HA membership will elect new officers and board members at the Annual Meeting on May 19, 2011. A full nominating committee report is included in the Annual Meeting Workbook posted on the website at www.lwvhouston.org. Nominations for officers are:

Linda Cohn — President. Ms. Cohn signed up as a member of the LWV in November 2004. Sam Keeper had her trolling for unregistered voters by January 2005. Ann Wood and Linda became voter registration co-chairs two years later. Linda is last year's recipient of the Helen Hunter Award.

Jacqueline Alfred — Community Relations Vice President. Ms. Alfred is a fundraising and development consultant with her own firm, JA Consulting. She served as President of the LWV-HA (1989-91) and the Greater Youngstown (OH) League (1980-82) and filled many other League positions.

Laura Blackburn – Advocacy Vice President. Ms. Blackburn is a longtime Leaguer. She was president of LWV-HA from 1973 to 1975, and again from 2007-2009. She has been serving as Advocacy VP for the last year. She spent a great deal of the past year chairing the Human Trafficking Committee. She also serves as the Air and Climate Change Chair for LWV-HA as well as LWV-TX. Lobbying on issues is her very favorite thing; studies are next!

Jan Wilbur — Program Vice President. Ms. Wilbur has served the League most recently as Membership Chair and Development Committee Chair. Her service to the local League has included stints as president, vice president and voter services chair. She has also held leadership positions in the state and national leagues.

Mary Lee Burrus — Secretary. Ms. Burrus returned to the League about ten years ago after retiring as an event planner at Rice University. She resurrected the briefing session for unit discussion leaders.

10th Annual Repast with Political Pioneers



Nancy Parra, LWV-HA President (center) greets honorees Beverly Kaufman (left) and Sue Schechter (right).

The 10th Annual Repast drew about 265 League supporters to honor Beverly Kaufman, retired Harris County Clerk, and Republican activist, and Sue Schechter, a former state representative and Democratic Party chair. Hosts were June Deadrick and Catherine Mosbacher. Miya Shay of KTRK, Channel 13, emceed. Ernie Manouse of PBS interviewed the honorees. Thirty-nine current and former elected officials attended.

Sharon Cunningham and Ryan Leach co-chaired the event assisted by Jackie Alfred, Sarah Schimmer, and Jan Wilbur and many volunteers. Executive Director Christina Gorczynski was key to the event's success.



The League was honored to have as guests Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart and Harris County District Clerk Chris Daniel

Photos from On the Beat with Mary Benton Blog
<http://2onthebeat.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/league-of-women-voters-houston-honors-political-pioneers/>

Voter ID Provides Challenge for 2011-2012 League Voter Services Year

By Wayne Derrick and Leslie Taylor

As of April 11, 2011, Voter ID legislation (SB 14) was in a Senate/House conference committee and is likely to be passed and signed by the governor. The legislation requires voters to present a driver's license, military ID, passport, or concealed handgun license as proof of identification. Other forms of government issued IDs or student IDs would not be accepted. The House added 24 amendments to SB 14. Some of the changes added flexibility, but others added more restrictions. The most contentious amendment eliminated a Senate provision exempting those over 70 from the ID requirement. Representatives opposed to the legislation called these Voter ID requirements the most restrictive in the nation.

No one can predict how long the required Justice Department review and legal challenges will delay enforcement of this new law, but your local League is already planning how to best serve the voters in our community who want to keep their franchise. This will be a challenge that will require extraordinary participation by LWV-HA volunteers, coordination with League partners, and new coalitions. If you want to help, call the League office right away. Planning has already started and much work must be done over the summer.

The need for action is indicated by both the LWV-TX testimony opposing SB 14 and a national survey. LWV-TX estimates that there may be one million or

more voting-eligible Texans without DPS photo ID. This estimate is based upon the number of Texas citizens who register to vote without providing DPS identification. Of those without a driver's license, it is estimated that more than 70 percent are women and over one third are seniors.

The Brennan Center for Justice conducted a national survey in 2006 to study the likely effect of Voter ID laws. From this survey, it is estimated that about 11 percent of American citizens do not have current, unexpired government-issued identification with a photograph. It is also estimated that about seven percent of United States citizens do not have ready access to citizenship documents required to get a photo ID.

As the LWV-TX testified, the Voter ID law will disproportionately affect the poor, minorities, and women. The Brennan survey estimates that 12 percent of voting-age American citizens earning less than \$25,000 per year do not have readily available the type of proof required to get an ID acceptable under the proposed Texas law. Twenty-five percent of voting-age African-American citizens lack photo ID compared to eight percent of white voting-age citizens. Sixteen percent of Hispanic voting-age citizens lack photo IDs, the Brennan Center survey estimates.

As many as 32 million voting-age women may have available proof of citizenship documents that do not reflect their current name. Those who have an ID, but have moved without updating the address with DPS may run

Continued on page 4



Voter Registration Program Celebrates Volunteers

By Ann Wood and Linda Cohn

The League's Voter Registration program held a reception to "Celebrate Volunteers" on Sunday, April 10, 2011. Over 100 women and men have volunteered to register voters at naturalization ceremonies and other events over the past four years and we thought that as program leadership changes, it was time to acknowledge the scores of people who have shared the effort and the joy of the program.

In addition to the volunteers, we invited the other people responsible for the successful voter registration efforts conducted at naturalization programs. Joining the volunteers were US Citizen and Immigration Service personnel, representatives of the Federal Court system, dedicated staff from M.O. Campbell Education Center, Post Office staffers who help with passport applications, and members of the Harris County Voter Registrar's staff. The League program would not be successful without the cooperation of each of these groups.

The afternoon program included recognition awards, refreshments and the screening of a video entitled, "The Naturalized." It is documentary on the process of naturalization as seen through the eyes of USCIS, the courts and applicants — some famous and some not — but all remarkable by their decision to seek U. S. citizenship. The video does a terrific job exploring the various myths and mysteries of securing citizenship as these applicants tell their stories. It manages to achieve all this and still be a thoroughly enjoyable and inspiring program.

The program's success rests with all the dedicated volunteers who have marched up and down auditorium stairs, sweated in the sun at sporting events, dodged downpours during debates, occupied hospital and court house lobbies, and met high school and university students on their home ground to register over 50,000 new voters during the past four years. Congratulations on a job well done. We do celebrate your contributions.

Voter ID Provides Challenge for 2011-2012 League Voter Services Year

(Continued from page 3)

afoul of the proposed requirements. The US Census reports that Hispanics and blacks have an annual mobility rate of 18 percent. College students also need to be informed about the new law and of their options.

LWV-HA predicts that many Houston residents will need help obtaining the proof necessary to get a photo ID, particularly help obtaining a certified birth

certificate. The Catch-22 here is that to order a birth certificate from Harris County, you or a close family member must produce a photo ID. Other options are available, but require gathering a substantial amount of paperwork. The most challenging cases will be helping those who were delivered by midwives, have no local family members, or who were born in other states.

Additional Annual Meeting Information

If you are new to LWV-HA, you might be wondering what the Annual Meeting is all about. A League annual meeting is a very important event. Like most corporation bylaws, ours require that it take place, but Leaguers do more than just elect a nominated slate of leaders for the next year. Members decide whether to approve consensus statements, approve a budget, and approve the Board's recommendation for a study to be done in the next League year(s). We also enjoy a great meal together, hear an interesting speaker, celebrate the successes of 2010-2011, and get terrific deals at the auction.

The details about the budget and other committee and leadership reports are contained in an Annual Meeting Workbook, which is posted online. A limited amount of printed copies will be available at the meeting for a charge of \$5.00. At page 2 is a shortened version of the Nominating Committee's report as to officers. Short biographies of nominees for the Board of Directors is located on this page, along with the proposed consensus statement. The report of the bylaws committee was published in the last *VOTER* and will be reprinted in the Annual Meeting Workbook.

Those who enjoyed our lunch at the January program planning requested the same caterer and we have obliged. Dinner will be healthy and delicious.

New Nominees to the Board

Ryan Leach (one year term) has been involved in Houston politics since graduating law school in 2006. He served as chief of staff for Houston City Council Member Sue Lovell. In 2010 he became general counsel of Pasadena ISD. Ryan also serves on the Board of the Bering Omega Young Professionals and is heavily involved in the Victory Fund. He helped with the 10th Annual Reapst.

Marcia Miqueloto was born in Quito, Ecuador. She studied in the U.S. to earn a degree from Gulf Coast College as a bilingual secretary. She returned to Ecuador to work at the American Embassy in the Peace Corps division. She moved to Houston in 1978, married, and worked at Petroleos of Venezuela Co., and for LWV-HA as an office assistant. She holds a Texas Broker real estate license.

Jacqueline Davis-Gilmore is a native Houstonian with B.A. and M.A. in Speech Communications. She earned a graduate certificate in women's studies from the University of Houston and a graduate degree in professional leadership from Rice University.

Dr. Davetta Daniels is a career educator. After a successful 32-year tenure with HISD, this retired principal remains very active in her community. Education opened a bright future for this Austin native. Education afforded her an opportunity to travel widely in the U.S. and abroad. Dr. Daniels works tirelessly in an effort to mentor young people. She serves on the William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity, as a vice president of the Tierwester Civic Club, and is very active at the Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church.

Human Trafficking Consensus

At the request of the Human Trafficking study committee, the LWV-HA Board of Directors submits the following consensus statement to the membership for consideration:

The Houston Area League of Women Voters is opposed to all forms of human trafficking; international and domestic, sex and labor, and adults and children. To reduce this form of modern-day slavery we support stronger enforcement of laws; stronger penalties for traffickers; and stronger intervening care for victims, including housing, clothing, physical and mental health care, and legal services. We support increased public and private funding for safe houses for minors, and increased funding for training and education of judges and law enforcement personnel on how to recognize and respond to human trafficking.

Explanation of consensus:

In studying the proposed state laws offered this legislative session, our members supported:

- Changing the current second degree felony for compelling prostitution of a minor to a first degree felony;
- Include human trafficking and compelling prostitution in 3g offenses;
- Allowing involuntary termination of parent-child relationship in certain cases;
- Adding prostitution, compelling prostitution, and aggravated promotion of prostitution to the list of what constitutes a "common nuisance," and

Building community awareness of how to recognize human trafficking, how to report suspected human trafficking, including but not limited to, promoting and publicizing the human trafficking hot line number – 1-888-3737-888.

Nominated to Return to the Board

Wayne Derrick is an engineering graduate of Rice University and worked in the petrochemical industry until retirement. He has a keen interest in improving elections in Texas and has been an election judge many times. He especially wants to increase voter turnout, and has agreed to co-chair the new study on Harris County elections. He is also a volunteer in the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Houston.

Millie Walker joined the League in 2009 and has served as a board member for a year. She has been active with the Advocacy and Development Committees. She co-chaired the Fall Fundraiser and helped research and write the Focus on Issues: Redistricting Update.

Program Study Proposed for Next League year

At the Program Planning meeting in January 2011, one new local program study, Increasing Voter Participation in Harris County, was suggested. The LWV-HA Board of Directors recommends the following study:

Focus: A study on ways to increase voter turnout in Harris County.

Scope: Study the current voting patterns in Harris County and formulate ways in which voter participation can be increased, including, but not limited to:

- Identify current voting statistics for Harris County, based on race, nationality, gender, income and education.
- Identify current statistics on early voting in relation to the overall voting statistics.
- Determine whether early voting hours and locations favor certain segments of the population over others.
- Research whether early voting actually means that more people vote or only that more people vote early.
- Consider whether an Election Administrator for Harris County separate from the County Clerk's office would promote more solutions to increase voter participation.
- Identify successful solutions and processes that can lead to greater numbers of voters especially among populations with low voter turnout.
- Promote awareness of the importance of voting especially among populations with low voter turnout.

Rationale for League of Women Voters Houston Area Study: Harris County and the Houston Area in particular have very low voter turnout, among the lowest in big city areas. This is especially true for certain segments of the population, such as the Hispanic and Asian populations, and among certain age groups, such as college-age voters and young, black males. Since some of these populations are among the fastest growing in Harris County, it is imperative that these population groups become involved in the political process through voting. It has been proposed that increasing early voting opportunities may increase voting among these segments of the population, based on the theory that current early voting hours and locations favor senior citizens, business people with flexible schedules, and professionals who get time off to vote. However, an Op-Ed column in the *New York Times* of October 25, 2010, "Voting Early, but Not So Often," concludes that early voting only means that more people vote early not that more people vote. It has also been suggested that an Election Administrator for Harris County separate from the County Clerk's office would promote more solutions to address low voter turnout.

Given the current low-voter turnout in the Houston Area, reasons for this phenomenon should be analyzed more thoroughly and successful solutions identified and promoted.

Co-Chairs: Ana Cummings and Wayne Derrick

Police Advisory Committee Report

By Barb Swartz

The February meeting closely followed the often televised videos of the police beating of the teenager. Chief McClelland noted that there are 5,382 officers at HPD and the actions of a few "don't go to the heart and soul and commitment" of those who do the job right.

Overall violent crime is down 12 percent this year with property crime down six percent. McClelland continues to see a downward trend.

At the March meeting Chief McClelland spoke mainly about the upcoming budget sessions, noting this will be a most challenging year. He pointed out that 95 percent of HPD budget of \$685 million goes to personnel. The job is to keep 2.5 million people safe over a 600-square-mile area. The Chief spoke briefly about the Mayor's Executive Order — drafted, not signed — changing the Police Advisory Committee to a Public Safety Advisory Committee with a more limited makeup and change in mission to concentrate on public safety and homeland security issues.

County Commissioners Report

By Shirley Gibson

March 22, 2011: Commissioners El Franco Lee and Steve Radack were concerned about once ordinary expenses, such as cell phones for county employees, membership fees in organizations, and travel expenses, are no longer automatically approved. Speakers expressed interest in drainage ditch back-ups.

February 22, 2011: Budget issues dominated the meeting. There is a shortfall of \$16 million for this fiscal year and cuts are necessary. Constable expenses will be cut. The county has been paying part of the expenses of 600 constables who work under contract in subdivisions and small towns. The commissioners now want these jurisdictions to pay 100 percent of the expenses even though the constables would be working only part-time in the contracted area. A one cent tax increase could help fund these policing efforts.

Houston City Council Report

By Shirley Gibson

Houston City Council meetings this spring have been very different from the brief meetings of September 2010. Members disagree more often and place “tags” on proposed ordinances to delay consideration. Occasionally the Mayor will get members to remove tags so that amendments can be proposed. This process means that the same issue can be debated over several weeks.

February 16, 2011: Council approved a \$1.2 million community development block grant agreement with IBN SINA Foundation to acquire land and build a community health clinic on South Post Oak to serve southwest Houston. Council approved hiring 50 new police cadets under a grant from the Department of Justice. Administrative details of a Kinder Foundation grant were discussed for use by two tax increment reinvestment zones. Members considered hiring a law firm to help with redistricting and a proposed plan to collect about \$7 million owed to the city. City Attorney David Feldman wants to replace the outside vendors with city workers.

February 23, 2011: The Mayor reported on the designated historical districts in which property owners had petitioned to be excluded. The petitions did not meet the requirements for the city to act. A decision to purchase software for billing the Renew Houston drainage fee was postponed. Council approved funding to demolish property damaged in Hurricane Ike.

March 2, 2011: This session lasted past noon as members debated redistricting, amended the proposed ordinance, and left a final decision for later.

March 23, 2011: Council devoted an hour to hearing public testimony on the new drainage fee. A heated debate ensued about changing the health insurance plan for city employees and retirees.

March 30, 2011: The Renew Houston drainage fee ordinance was again extensively debated over whether to exclude churches, schools, and county buildings from the fee. Council-member Costello used procedural rules to limit amendments to the ordinance and postpone a final vote. Council approved the new contract with the Houston Police Officers Union. Members discussed and adopted a new health plan with CIGNA to cover city employees and retirees.

Marty Gay Remembered

The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area extends its deepest sympathy to Nelda Gay and her family on the death of Nelda's husband and long-time League member and volunteer, Marty Gay. Marty set up LWV-HA's first website and was webmaster for several years.

LWV-HA Leaguers at Lobby Days

Twelve members of LWV-HA took the drive to Austin to participate in the LWV-TX lobby days. On Monday the group heard briefings by a state senator on redistricting and a panel of League experts on the topics that were to be discussed with our legislators on Tuesday morning. Teams of two or more visited representatives and senators from the greater Houston area to chat primarily about redistricting and open government. When the elected officials were not available, they talked with staff.

Participating this year were Laura Blackburn, Advocacy Vice President, Executive Director Christina Gorczynski, John Gorczynski, Emily Means, Leslie Taylor, Sharon Cunningham, Judy Hollinger, Davetta Daniels, Ann Herbage, Millie Walker, Barb Swartz, and Lynn Walshak.

Plan Adds Two Council Districts

By Millie Walker and Jan Wilbur

The City's proposed redistricting plan was presented to Council on April 6 and a public hearing was held April 13. The plan would add two new council districts, District J and District K, to the existing nine districts. District J, in the city center, combines most of the Heights with Montrose and District K encompasses the far southwest part of the City.

Redistricting requires that districts have substantially equal population of 190,909 plus or minus 9,545. Under the Voting Rights Act, the plan must not diminish the opportunity for protected minorities to elect representatives of their choice. Under the proposed plan, districts range from District H with 180,847 to District E (Kingwood and Clear Lake) at 197,870.

Hispanic political leaders assert that the plan provides only the two existing “safe” Hispanic-majority districts and that adding two new council districts diminishes Hispanic influence. The city contends there are two “opportunity” districts, Districts A and F, each with at least 50 percent Hispanic voting-age population. However, citizen voting-age population is estimated to be 25-30 percent Hispanic in Districts A and F.

A computer kiosk will be set up on the 6th floor of 611 Walker Street for citizens who want to draw their own plan. LWV-HA's city council observer, Shirley Gibson, has obtained color maps of the plan for display at the League office.

After public hearings in April, the council will vote on the plan on May 18, 2011, and must send it to the Department of Justice for pre-clearance by the first of June. If pre-clearance is not given or if a lawsuit is filed, it will be hard to have the new plan in place in time for the City elections November 8, 2011.



The Houston VOTER
League of Women Voters – Houston
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 Houston, Texas 77018-5507

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Donation Form May 19, 2011

Silent Auction

Benefiting the League of Women Voters of
 Houston Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization

Donor Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone # _____ Address: _____

Item description: _____

Estimated value: \$ _____

Comments: _____

Contribution in lieu of auction item: \$ _____

Please note: To maintain our strict nonpartisan policies, we are unable to auction items autographed by office holders or candidates. Donors are identified on the bid sheets. Contributions to the League of Women Voters Education Fund are tax deductible to the full extent provided by law.

CALENDAR

April 29, 2011	Board Meetings
May 19, 2011	Annual Meeting
May 25, 2011	Calendar Planning
May 27, 2011	Board Meetings & Board Training

The Houston VOTER is published five times per year by the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area. This newsletter is provided as part of yearly membership dues.

Nancy Parra – President
 Christina Gorczynski – Executive Director
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