



A nonpartisan organization that encourages informed citizen participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Dallas

VOTER

March 2004

Visit us at: www.lwvdallas.org
Reach us at: lwvdallas@sbcglobal.net

2720 N. Stemmons Frwy, Suite 812
Dallas, TX 75207-2241

Office: 214-688-4125
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Oak Cliff Unit meets Wednesday at 10:00 a.m.

Polk-Wisdom Library, 7151 Library Lane,
1 block east of Polk/Camp Wisdom intersection,
Co-leaders: Rita Eason & Lucille Gropp, 972-298-4424

March 10th

East Dallas Unit meets Wednesday at Noon

Lakewood Library, 6121 Worth,
bordered by Abrams & LaVista
Leader: Liz Wally, 214-821-2237

Don't Miss the March General Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 2004 at 7:00 PM Scottish Rite Hospital Auditorium

Let the Sun Shine: Record All Votes in the Texas Legislature

Senator Carona (R), Representative Hodge (D) and DMN/VP K. A. Willey

Check out the enclosed flyer! Post it, if you can!

Home Tour March 14th

Linda Wannench, Resource Development Chair

Get ready for a really special LWV-Dallas Home Tour of historic homes in the **SWISS AVENUE HISTORIC PRESERVATION area**. Look for the flyer in this VOTER for specifics.

This event would be a great one to tell your friends about. They can pay you \$15 to attend, or you can invite them to come as your guests. Please turn in all names (and monies) to the League office so we can have a list of expected attendees to check off at each home. This procedure is to ensure the security of the home and its contents.

Besides being a fun and interesting event, the revenue from this Home Tour is **URGENTLY** needed. Our coffers in LWV-Dallas are very low. Please help and have some fun, too.

March Unit Meeting Notes

Katherine Homan, Unit Coordinator

Unit Meetings this month will address the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machinery. **Turn to Pages 4 and 6 for additional information.**

During the March 9th Primary election, we will conduct Exit Polls at four precincts, asking whether or not the voter had (1) his **registration card available** and (2) any **difficulty in voting**. We invite **all League members** to participate by reporting their voting experiences to Unit Leaders or the League Office.

We are continuing our popular **post-card writing** campaign by addressing our Senators and Representatives in Washington on the subject of the Energy Bill. **More information on Page 3.**

Preston-Mockingbird meets Thursday at 9:45 a.m.

St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church
NW Corner Inwood & Mockingbird
Co-leaders: Jane Davis & Pat Vaughan, 214-350-2623

Preston-Hillcrest meets Thursday at 9:45 a.m.

Churchill Way Recreation Center, SE Corner at Hillcrest
Leader: Gayle Hurst, 214-348-7112

March 11th

Dallas Evening meets Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

Ursuline Academy, 4900 Walnut Hill Ln
Leader: Arline Pitt, 972-243-3966

President's Message

**League of Women
Voters of Dallas**

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Dallas League Helping Rock the Vote

March 9th is just the beginning of the election cycle; yet young people under 25 are not participating in the whole spectrum of civic involvement, even though they have the most at stake. What can the League do about it?

The League of Women Voters of Chicago did a study, entitled *A Time For Action: A New Vision of Participatory Democracy* that can be found at www.lwv.org. Recognizing that new, visionary solutions are needed to cure the ills of our society, young people can offer those solutions.

Voting is not the only indicator of civic engagement, which can range from being totally disengaged to expressing high levels of interest, awareness, and activism. Young people do not participate even though they do care about the issues that affect their lives. For example, they are interested in how the government affects their opportunities for jobs. The report states, "People's personal environments (economic, educational, professional, familial) have an effect at many points on the degree of connection (if any) they will feel with political matters."

The report reveals that when young people are interested, they have difficulty finding reliable information relevant to their interests and do not have the skills to interpret or act on the information. The media is only responsible for part of the problem. Public education fails to prepare students for active participation as a citizen. The report says that there are many barriers to civic participation, such as difficult procedures, complicated campaign finance rules, the structure of the political parties, and others. Lastly, young people have a difficult time connecting to meaningful action that inspires them to pursue civic participation for the long run.

To address this locally, the Dallas League is starting a new monthly unit meeting for students and staff at Southern Methodist University's Women's Center. Since campus organizations charge no dues; we will need to provide financial support. Refreshments will be needed as well; call **Katherine Homan** (214-948-6992) to volunteer. Different projects and programs from our regular units will be aimed at student interests. The League had a four-day voter registration at Hughes Trigg building in January to get us started on campus.

To meet another age group's needs, a committee is forming to organize voter registrations in Dallas Independent School District during the spring. Call **Judi Stewart** (214-520-8207) to participate.

Young people deserve our support in learning about civic participation at all levels of government. We can help them develop leadership skills as well as learn the issues to become active citizens. League members can make this project successful with their donations. Government is everybody's business.

"If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." --- Aristotle

**Drug Policy Studies
at the State and National Levels**
Suzanne Wills, Drug Policy Issues Chair

The LWVUS social policy position is "...Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans." It is impossible to advocate effectively for this position without studying the drug war.

Crime and official corruption brought about by prohibition threaten us all. All of our children have easy access to polluted, illegal drugs. We all pay the approximately \$500 million annual bill. However, despite equal rates of drug use across racial lines, people of color make up an overwhelming proportion of those penalized by the criminal justice system, suffering from drug-related HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, excluded from public assistance, deported or detained, denied the right to vote and restricted from education and employment opportunities as a result of a drug offense.

The Austin Area LWV will propose drug policy studies to both LWV-TX and LWVUS. The studies were suggested by Noelle Davis. According to the Austin Area Voter, "Members agreed that the focus of such a study should be on laws and policies related to currently illegal recreational drugs, how they relate to social policy, and the legalization of medical use of marijuana. The study could be structured on a health-based model with focus on the effectiveness of drug policy."

At either the state or national level these would clearly be large studies, but they would not be difficult to do. A great deal of information on drug policy and on medical use of cannabis is readily available. I urge the LWV of Dallas to support the Austin Area LWV in proposing both state and national drug policy studies.

**Announcing a Conference
Breaking the Chains:
Communities of Color and the War on Drugs**

The most prominent drug policy reform organization, The Drug Policy Alliance, has long recognized that racial prejudice is integral to drug policy. It has hosted two successful Breaking the Chains conferences, in Los Angeles (2002) and in Racine, WI (2003). Texas was a logical location after the Tulia, Hearne and Dallas Sheetrock scandals. The 2004 conference will be held in Houston on April 1-3. The goals of the conference are to educate the public, community leaders and elected officials about the drug war's disproportionate impact on people of color; to mobilize local and national coalitions to advance drug policy reform; and to promote alternative models to punitive drug laws and enforcement practices. For information, registration and scholarship information see <http://www.breakingthechains.info/> or call Renee Davis at 212-613-8052.

LWV/US Action Alerts

Recently, Senator Pete Domenici (R NM), chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, announced that he will try again to pass the energy bill by reducing some of the tax breaks to industry but still maintaining the major thrust of the bill. Senator Domenici and other proponents of the energy bill are working hard to identify a legislative vehicle on which they can attach the energy bill.

Action is still needed! The League's message on the energy bill remains the same. We urge the Senate to oppose the energy bill because it:

- weakens the Clean Air Act;
- worsens global warming; and
- lacks needed conservation measures.

Because attempts to pass the energy bill could come at any time, we urge League members to participate in town hall meetings, write a letter to the editor or organize in-district meetings with your Senators, and write or call your senator to inform them of your position of being against this bill.

Other issues to watch at the national level include:
1. Support for the Security and Freedom Ensured (SAFE) Act which fixes some of the most problematic provisions of the Patriot Act.
2. Support for full funding for HAVA in the FY05 appropriations:

**Nominating Committee
Report**

Action Vice PresidentConnie Wilson
Community Relations V/ PresidentJanie Metzinger
Program Vice PresidentJudith Stewart
TreasurerJane Davis
Directors (two-year terms):

Dottie Box Katherine Homan
Michelle Manners Sandy Thornton
Nominating Committee ChairFran McElvaney
Nominating Committee Members:
Rebecca Bergstresser Theresa Daniel

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Materka, Chair
Julie Lowenberg **Linda Wassenich**
Nancy Todes **Kristin Castellanos**

Bring with You to March Unit Meeting
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ELECTRONIC VOTING

The 2003 Help America Vote Act (**HAVA**) is **accelerating the change to electronic voting**. But, just as computers enhance the voting process when working properly, they can also multiply the effects of fraud and failure when there are software or hardware errors, or when there is malicious tampering (“hacking”) or deliberate voter fraud. Here is a short primer describing **six points of failure** that every electronic voting system can have. A point of failure is a place in the electronic system where your vote can be changed or lost.

1. **Smart Cards** - Like an ATM card, smart cards are supposed to authorize a voter to vote once and only once. However, last July, computer experts from Johns Hopkins University and Rice University examined the Diebold Accu-vote TS code for security problems. They found that smart cards can be programmed to allow multiple votes and that unauthorized access can be gained not only into the machine’s administrative functions but also into shutting it down. The State of Maryland found that the Diebold smart cards all used the same passwords!

2. **Touch Screens** - After the voter verifies their displayed vote, the votes are supposed to be recorded and stored inside the touch screen’s computer. However, Fairfax County, VA. reported that in their 2003 elections, voters had trouble getting their votes to register properly on the display screen. Early voters in Dallas County in the 2002 election reported that votes for Ron Kirk were displayed as votes for John Cornyn. Moreover, even if the screen properly shows the votes you cast, that does not necessarily mean those votes are cast. A Maryland election simulation demonstrated how hardware (like cards containing ballot definitions) could be altered or replaced. In a Broward County, FL special election for a state house seat, no votes were recorded for 134 people. The winner won by 12 votes, automatically prompting a recount, but there were no votes to count.

3. **Transmission** - If a memory card is faulty, “reprogrammed” (or forged) while in transit and there aren’t multiple copies, then all votes can be lost. Evidently, “zapping” a memory card is much easier than changing or otherwise forging a box of paper ballots. Diebold attributed a faulty memory card to a “minus 16,000 vote” posting for Gore in Volusia County, FL during the 2000 Presidential Election. In San Luis Obispo County’s March 2002 primary, voting machines spontaneously reported voting totals five hours before the polls even closed.

4. **Storage** - Electronic connections to central storage equipment are at risk of hacking. At Maryland’s election simulation, tampering with the central storage of the Diebold system could be done at will.

5. **Counting** - Problems with “undercounting” have occurred with touch screen systems in a 2000 Riverside County, CA. election and in the 2004 presidential primary in Washington, D.C.

6. **Reporting** - The counting and reporting software may not be the same. In Boone County, IN the system reported 144,000 votes cast when only 19,000 voters were registered.

As the best solution to all the above problems, **many computer scientists support a paper receipt or printout version of the completed ballot**. This paper receipt is like a paper ballot that is both separate from the electronic voting environment, as well as voter-verified after the vote has been recorded. This paper trail provides a redundancy that would be difficult to tamper with and backup verification to the electronic vote count.

However, the **National League does not support proposals for a paper-based voter verification** system. As **Linda Wassenich** wrote in her February Letter to the *VOTER* Editor, “DRE’s in well-administered systems provide a substantial audit capacity for purposes of recounts and authentication. The LWV/US does not believe in an individual paper confirmation for each ballot is required and in fact is unnecessary and can be counterproductive.”

The **ACLU concurs with LWV/US’s position** by stating, “There is no reason to assume paper recounts are more accurate than machine tabulations. Paper is notoriously difficult to handle and easy to manipulate. Counting paper ballots would be subject to all of the historical problems, including human error, fraud, and mishandling.”

While electronic voting can make vast improvements in the amount of time taken to vote and report the vote count, we still need to ensure the promise of electronic voting by instituting tamper- and failure-resistant election procedures and systems. Citizens need to be knowledgeable about electronic voting and how it could affect our elections-- and consequently our lives.

Excerpt of a presentation by Margaret MacPhail (LWV-Corpus Christi) who is a retired IBM Master Inventor currently holding 26 U.S. software patents.

2004-2005

Program Planning Recommendations

The Program Exploratory Committee met January 23, 2004, to review the local study topics suggested by the units and other members. After the units initially considered and discussed the ideas at their December meetings, a compilation of their reports was recapped and sent back for any further discussion and comments at their January meetings.

The final result was an overwhelming consensus to continue the bond study started in 2003. It was decided that the original guidelines for the study warranted a second year to complete. There were no changes made to the original study recommendation.

There was also consensus that, in lieu of a new study, committees and/or units prepare the programs for unit meetings using their non-recommended items as suggested topics.

Non-Recommended Items:

- Voter education to dispel voter apathy
- Air Quality
- Drug Policies of Law Enforcement
- Election System including Training,
Personnel, Partisanship
- Voting Machines—Paperless Ballots/Paper Trail
- Water Conservation
- Recycling

Committee: **Arline Pitt**, Chair
Dottie Schweinfurth
Elizabeth Esterchild
Joanne Early
Mary Helen Bradford

Election Year Sparks Voter Services Activities

Judi Stewart, Community Relations VP

A great big thank you goes out to LWVD members who have so generously given of their time at recent Voter Services projects. With the March 9th Primary and the upcoming Presidential elections, a new interest in registering voters and in the voting process has been sparked among public, civic, charitable and corporate organizations.

Rita Eason, Katy Huebner and **Maureen Jones** presented a program to approximately 300 history and government students at South Grand Prairie High School. They spoke about the history of voting in the United States, the process of voting and how to study issues and candidates. In addition, they registered 13 new voters!

With the help of the SMU Women's Center and our SMU intern Candace Spaulding, LWVD volunteers spent four hours each day from January 27-30 at the Hughes-Trigg Student Center at SMU registering voters. A great big thank you to **Daphne Head, Mardi Jones, Jane Davis, Pat Vaughan, Dottie Box** and **Beverly LeMaster** for their help.

Thank you also to **Katherine Homan** for her efforts in recruiting volunteers and to **Sally Garcia** for fielding requests, assembling materials and processing voter registration cards.

The LWVD currently needs volunteers for Voter Services for a Mesquite Assisted Living Center, a Garland factory with over 300 workers, Viva Dallas 2004! by the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (August 14-15) and Visions: The Women's Expo (August 28-29). If you would like to help, please call the LWVD office or volunteer at your next unit meeting.

IN MEMORIAM

Frances Edwards Faris

We pause to remember Fran Faris, a loyal and active member of the League and its Oak Cliff Unit for over 50 years. Fran knew her mind and spoke it; always ready to act on her convictions. Born and educated in New York, she married and raised her family of five in Dallas. For the League she served as Secretary; Chair of Membership, Unit Organization, and a Local Study of the Dallas Library; Organization VP; and President in 1965-67 and was the Myrtle Bales Bulkley Award recipient in 2002.

Fran earned a Master's degree in gerontology from UNT, founded the Southwest Society on Aging and worked for many local social service agencies. She was instrumental in the formation of Senior Citizens of Great Dallas, Area Agency on Aging, Retired Senior Volunteers, and the VNA's Adult Day Care program. As a volunteer she worked with the Women's Center of Dallas and more recently helped found Oak Cliff Churches for Emergency Aid Food Pantry. She was active in the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Oak Cliff and its area organizations and Women's federations, serving as president of many groups. We will miss her presence greatly and continue to be inspired by her life of service.

Does My Vote Count?

Jan Sanders, League Member

The integrity of the ballot box is basic to our democratic processes. It brings to life our representative form of government. The ballot box gives power to ordinary and extraordinary people alike. Voting is the engine of democracy. Our history is marked by the struggle to enfranchise the American people—all the people.

Starting with the limited access to the ballot box established in the formative years of our government which permitted only white men who were land owners to vote, we have progressed through the tragedy of the Civil War, the brave battle of women in seeking the vote, to the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement to make real the 14th and 15th Amendments. We have continued to extend the dream of the Declaration of Independence to build this land of the free and the home of the brave. Because of our rule by law through an orderly electoral process, we have become a model for democracy over tyranny; we are the last best hope of the world.

Why then is voter participation declining? Many have analyzed it, but it boils down to the cynical feeling that “even if I vote, my vote won’t count”. What has contributed to this concern?

There are many reasons—the power of big money to distort campaigns, the power of deregulated media, the power used to draw partisan electoral districts, the influence of political consultants (Return to point one.), harassment at the polls, discouragement and barriers to voter registration, and finally the 2000 Election with hanging chads, butterfly ballots, and the legal maneuverings that culminated in the 5-4 Supreme Court ruling that put Bush in office even though he did not win the popular vote.

Now add to all of the above, the possibility of ballot box manipulation on a grand scale. Oh, we have had dead people showing up on the voter rolls, we have had corrupt ballot box stuffing in boss-controlled precincts, but through all that folks have relied on their right to vote and accept the results that are announced at the end of a hard fought campaign.

But we could be on the brink of another scenario. All agree that we are a politically polarized nation as evidenced in recent elections and even more recent political polling. Now, add to all of the above, the skepticism over the touch screen voting machines and you have trouble with a capital T.

Computer scientists point out that these machines could be programmed to swing an election. When challenged to demonstrate the reliability of the codes, the machine vendors say no, calling such disclosure “proprietary information”. And worse still there is the possibility that the machines could be hacked from outside for the same purpose. There is no paper trail to be reviewed in a possible recount or verification.

Then try to apply “the smell test”. As reported in the New York Times, the largest company selling these touch screen voting machines is Diebold and its owner, Walden O’Dell has been quoted as saying he “would do anything for the reelection of the President.” A Diebold folder named “rob-georgia.zip” puts the political upset in the Georgia 2002 elections where these machines were used into serious question.

Thomas Jefferson said that each generation has to secure its own freedom and that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Republicans, Democrats and Independents, rich and poor, all ethnic and racial groups—we as a society should work together to provide a Presidential election that deserves our trust. We should provide a transparent electoral process that can be documented, recounted and verified.

How could we secure the integrity of the ballot box right here in Dallas? Our Commissioners Court, which responsible for elections, could require that the early voting touch screens be wired to printers that would provide a voter-checked “receipt” that would be secured in a box and available if verification is called for. Or, a less expensive method would be to use the paper ballot and scanners used on Election Day during the early voting, grouping precincts by subdivisions of the county and opening the Records building to all precincts. We handled our early voting procedures similarly before the fraud-prone touch screens. We must protect the integrity of the vote. Our ability to govern ourselves depends upon it.

---Jan Sanders is a retired teacher, community volunteer, life long resident of Dallas County. jansan@airmail.net