



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

Dallas

VOTER

Summer 2004

Visit us at: www.lwvdallas.org
Reach us at: lwvdallas@yahoo.com

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

Office: 214-688-4125
FAX: 214-688-4126

Community Relations Committee Focuses on Voter Registration and Voter Education

Janie Metzinger, Community Relations Vice President

We're working smarter, not harder! The voter registration deadline is October 4, 2004. To increase voter registration and voter participation, we will maximize our strength, recruit new voter registrars, join with other non-partisan community partners, and give priority to high turnout community events and venues and lower voter turnout areas. These activities are at the heart of LWV's historical mission to make democracy work. Please contact **Janie Metzinger** at **214-275-8101** or call the League Office at 214-688-4125 to **sign up today**.

Deputy Voter Registrars

On **Friday, August 6**, stop by the LWV office anytime between **10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.** to become a **Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar**. With this power you can register voters at special events or at the lemonade stand in your own front yard.

Information Fairs

Will you volunteer to staff our booths in Market Hall at the following high traffic events which are heavily attended by women?

August 14 and 15 ---- VIVA DALLAS
August 28 and 29 ---- WOMEN'S EXPO

September Debates

Candidate Forums offer candidates in contested elections an opportunity to inform the voting public about their positions on political issues. **Site chairs, greeters, and time-keepers** are urgently needed to host these forums. **Turn to Page 3 for details.**

Half Price Books Partnership

Half Price Books is partnering with the League of Women Voters on a **Voter Registration Project** in each of its Texas stores.

Active Voter Registration—During **August and September** every store is **dedicating space**, tables, chairs, promotion, signs, etc. for local League of Women Voters **volunteers** to register voters.

Passive Voter Registration—Voter registration application materials with eye-catching signs will be at every checkout register in every store and a link to the League of Women Voters website.

Thanks, Half Price Books, for this fantastic opportunity! Now, it's up to us to make it happen! Pick a store near you and volunteer to register voters!

Among the nation's top 200 women-owned businesses, Half Price Books was founded in Dallas by civic activists Pat Anderson and Ken Gjemere. A strong League supporter, the late Gjemere was first in line to join LWVD when the League opened its membership to all citizens.

President's Message

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League Is a Light of Hope for Voters

or

It Is Better to Light a Candle Than to Curse the Darkness

by Susybelle Gosslee

People around the world will be watching the U.S. November elections. Will all Dallas County voters be counted? The League office had many calls from voters with problems during early voting and on election day of the 2000 Presidential election – so many, in fact, that the two phone lines rang constantly. Voters look to the League as a light of hope for fair elections this November. The League of Women Voters supports fair elections, informed voters, and voting machines that are secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible. Every member can help Dallas meet League standards so as to secure an accurate vote.

Kay Maxwell, LWVUS President, said “The League has a long tradition of reaching agreement through deliberative, democratic processes. There was disagreement with the LWVUS stance opposing a Voter-Verified Paper Trail (VVPT).” At the June LWVUS convention, members arrived at a revised interpretation of our *Citizen's Right to Vote* position by following League process. The convention resolution substituted “secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible” for the language that had previously stated LWV position on a type of technology. Therefore, the League has moved from taking a stand on types of technology to taking a stand on the goals or principles any particular technology must fulfill. Ms. Maxwell further states that the criteria of being secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible are not code words for VVPT or any other type of technology. The LWVUS will continue to promote these goals in Dallas County.

The League will also promote good elections by helping voters *become* informed about the candidates and the issues. Candidate forums will be held in nine contested local elections. Representatives *Martin Frost* and *Pete Sessions* will have two League sponsored forums; one on October 6 will be open to the public and the *other will be the* last forum before election day on Channel 11. Other candidate forums will be held and shown repeatedly on Dallas Community Television, Channel 27. Please tell your friends to watch for them. The dates will be promoted on our website: www.lwvdallas.org. Also, issue information will be provided on our website.

The *Voters Guide* will be on the web at www.congress.org, replacing the League's dnet.org site. All candidates in contested elections may present their positions in their own words. If a candidate does not respond to the League *Voters Guide*, please call the candidate's campaign headquarters to ask them to do so. Candidates can update their positions, inform voters about upcoming “Meet the Candidate Meetings,” and provide other campaign information.

League members are encouraged to participate in the election process by volunteering to be an election judge or other official. Training is necessary. Call the Dallas County Elections Department, 214-819-6300, to get details.

(Continued on the next page)

President's Message (continued)

Volunteers are also needed in the League office, especially during October through the election. You will have training, so call a League friend and the office (214-688-4125) to volunteer together. Volunteering in the office is most interesting and rewarding.

The League is a reliable and unbiased source of candidate and election information. For many years, your League has been advocating for fair elections, informed voters, and voting machines that are secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible. While every election is important, the November 2004 Presidential election is pivotal to defining the role of government in the future. More people will vote than ever before. There is a job for every League member, so please call the LWVD office and help Make Democracy Work — now and in the future.

Celebrate Women's Equality Day

On August 25th at Dallas City Hall, mark the 84th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to our Constitution that gave American women the right to vote. Women's Issues Network (WIN) and the League are coordinating the celebration.

You are invited to join us to honor the suffragists, wearing white as they did, on **Wednesday, August 25, 2004, at 12:00 noon in the Dallas City Hall Flag Room.** The topic of the thirty-minute program is "**The Power of Women's Vote.**" **Susybelle Gosslee** will speak representing the League and local party chairs will discuss how their platform planks speak to women's issues and making democracy work. We are working on confirmations of the speakers.

We hope you will be there. Bring mothers, friends, daughters, husbands, sons, and sisters to show the city the strength of women voters. Please inform others of this event. We look forward to seeing you there. Please call the League office at 214-688-4125 if you need further information.

Candidate Forum Planning

Sandy Thornton, Candidate Forum Coordinator

LWVD plans to hold 9 Candidate Forums for the following contested races between September 8 to October 8. We will be cooperating with other area Leagues. Irving and Arlington may be assisting with Districts 105 and 106. Richardson will be in charge of District 4 and 112 Candidate Forums.

US House/ Dallas District 5 - Bill Bernstein, John Gonzalez, Jeb Hensarling.

US House/Dallas District 24 - James Lawrence, Kenny Marchant, Gary R. Page.

US House/Dallas District 32 - Martin Frost, Michael David Needleman, Pete Sessions.

TX House/Irving District 105 - Linda Harper-Brown, Mike Moore.

TX House/Grand Prairie District 106 - Ray Allen, Katy Hubener.

TX House/University Park District 108 - Dan Branch, Malcolm Dade.

TX House/Garland District 113 - Eric Brandler, Joe Driver.

Dallas County Sheriff - Danny Chandler v. Lupe Valdez & Dallas County Tax Assessor - David Childs v. Diana Lackey.

Opportunities abound for **site chairs, time keepers** and **greeters** for these events. **Libbie Terrell Lee** has signed up as Site Chair for U.S. House District 24, but we urgently need volunteers for the remaining sites. Responsibilities include the following:

- (1) Talk with the candidates in a specific race to find a mutually agreeable date.
- (2) Arrange a site for the event.
- (3) Coordinate with the Forum Coordinator, DCTV Chair, and the League office for candidates' follow-up letters.
- (4) Call volunteers to be greeters.
- (5) Plan to attend the event and be there at least 2 hours prior to start.

If you have questions or want to volunteer, please call **Kristen Castellanos** at 214-327-3038; email kcastel771@aol.com. After August 3, please contact **Sandy Thornton**, Forum Coordinator, at 214-827-1988 or email tubbsl@swbell.net

Drug Policy Update

Suzanne Wills, Drug Policy Issues Chair

Since the last *VOTER* deadline there have been many interesting developments in drug policy. Here are the major ones listed from local to international.

The Texas Medical Association unanimously adopted a new policy supporting the right of doctors and patients to discuss medical marijuana as a viable treatment option without fear of recrimination by authorities and reaffirmed the association's call for further research on medicinal marijuana.

The Texas Democratic Convention passed a "Resolution Protecting the Rights of Physicians to Recommend Medical Marijuana." The newly passed Democratic platform supports the right of patients and their doctors to choose any medical treatment without interference from government bureaucrats and opposes denying student loans or grants to those convicted of a drug felony.

The newly passed Texas Republican platform opposes the movement toward the legalization of illicit drugs, entitlements based on addictive behaviors and any "needle exchange" or "bleach kit" programs.

Researchers at Texas State University at San Marcos published a study showing that the federal government's anti-drug ads do little to dissuade young people from taking drugs, may actually prompt some teens to experiment with drugs and spark thoughts that run counter to the ads' message.

Vermont became the 10th state to pass legislation allowing patients to possess marijuana for medicinal purposes. Maryland recognizes medical use as a mitigating factor in state prosecution. The District of Columbia has also passed a medical marijuana initiative.

U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled that federal funds could not be withheld from transit authorities if they accept ads for their bus, train or subway systems promoting reform of drug laws. See "Free Speech on Drugs," April 2004, *VOTER*.

By a vote of 148-268 the U.S. House of Representatives defeated an amendment that would have prevented the DEA and the U.S. Justice Department from spending more money to raid and prosecute medical marijuana patients and providers.

China sentenced dozens of drug dealers to death in June in preparation for the U.N. International Day Against Drug Abuse. Chongqing No.1 Intermediate People's Court convicted 16 people in a one-day mass public trial on June 26; then immediately killed them. See "The UN and Drug Policy," in May 2004, *VOTER*.

The Swiss Parliament voted 92 to 102 against legalizing cannabis consumption.

As usual, for every step forward there was a step backward or a lost opportunity.

New Partnerships

For the 2004 elections, the League is partnering with Capitol Advantage to make **DNet more widely available than ever before**. Major websites, including AOL, MSN, Yahoo!, USA Today, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Fox News and C-SPAN, will carry it.

Through this partnership, **DNet** has been incorporated into the Capwiz Election tool. The LWV and Dnet are still prominently displayed. Log on to www.congress.org and see for yourself.

LWVUS has also teamed up with **Smart WomenVote.com** to encourage more women to vote.

SmartWomenVote is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, election year initiative providing inspirational, good citizenship tools, and reminders to "VOTE".

Stylish products include "Smart Women Vote in 2004" buttons, bumper stickers, tattoos, paper and pencils, magnets, mugs, tee shirts and more. Visit their website www.SmartWomenVote.com and order some for yourself.

New DFPS Council Meets

Submitted by Susybelle Gosslee

A nine-member council for the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) has been named by Gov. Rick Perry and had its initial meeting in July. The two-day meeting included a training session and a business meeting.

The DFPS council is the first of the five new councils to be formed. Others will be named by the governor for the **Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services**, which began operations on March 1; for the **Departments of Aging and Disability Services** and **State Health Services**, both of which will begin operations on September 1; and for the **Health and Human Services Commission**. The governor will also appoint the chair positions for each council.

Source: *Health and Human Services News*.