



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

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DALLAS

November
2005

VOTER

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ELECTION ISSUES ISSUE

Be prepared for a long and jam-packed ballot on November 8! Ballots will begin with 14 Propositions effecting changes to the **Dallas City Charter**, followed by 9 proposed Amendments to the **Texas State Constitution**.

Included in last month's *VOTER* was (1) a grid showing the shifts in responsibilities that would result among the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager with the passage of Proposition One and (2) an information sheet detailing the 9 proposed state constitutional amendments.

This *VOTER* contains your *LWVTX Voters Guide* with pros and cons on the proposed constitutional amendments, as well as the following Local Voters Guide regarding the proposed City Charter changes.

Proposition One is the City Council's promised alternative if citizens voted down the Blackwood Strong Mayor/no City Manager proposal last May. Essentially, it retains the City Manager's position but proposes shifting the responsibility of hiring the City Manager from the City Council to the Mayor. Either the Mayor or a majority of the City Council, however, can fire the City Manager. The Mayor's leadership role would be strengthened via joint responsibility with the City Manager for preparing the budget and appointing police and fire chiefs. The increase from \$60,000 to \$120,000 in mayoral compensation reflects not only the increased responsibilities of this position but also a full-time salary sufficient for persons with no secondary income.

Propositions 2-13 deal with needed "housekeeping changes" recommended by the Charter Review Commission to update the Charter to present-day requirements.

Proposition 14 authorizes the issuance of \$23.8 million general obligation bonds for a homeless assistance facility.

Where does the League stand?

LWV-Dallas supports the **Council-Manager** system of government with a **strong city council** (see Handbook, page 41). Unlike the Blackwood Proposal last May, **Proposition One** retains the **City Manager position**, albeit moving some of its powers to the Mayor. **Proposition One** also bolsters the **City Council** in accordance with Items 3 and 5 of our position statement. **Proposition Seven** concurs with Item 10 of our position for an **on-going charter review process**. Finally, we support **Proposition Fourteen** according to our **Bill of Rights position** (see Handbook, pages 45-46).

2005-2006

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President's Post

There's no doubt about it! Our party to celebrate the 85th Birthday of Leaguer Extraordinaire, **Eleanor Sutherland**, as well as the 85th Anniversary of Women's Right to Vote, surely put the **fun in fundraising!**

Led by **Becky Brakke**, the Board greeted over 80 member and nonmember guests and served them cake and champagne, while being entertained by a lighthearted suffragist program. Brandi Andrade, of Echo Women's Theater at White Rock Lake Park, stole the show with a mega-melo-dramatic reading of an anti-suffragist speech! **Ginny Whitehill** told the aMAZing story of how the Equal Rights Amendment was ratified here in Texas, and the Birthday Girl quoted wit and wisdom from THE suffragist Susan B. Anthony.

However, one might consider almost in vain here in Texas the heroic efforts of those women who won for us the right to vote. I refer, of course, to the sorry fact that Texas women rank only 49th in the Nation for voter turn out. **Reversing our 49th rank is the League's main priority this year.** In Dallas, our voter outreach has been to the under-served student and minority communities via our highly successful "**Why Don't Texas Women Vote?**" survey. Not only have over **a thousand people completed this survey**, but, even **more importantly**, the public's **voting consciousness has been raised** in the process!

Thank you all for your efforts to help the Dallas League arrive at consensus on not just one, but three consecutive program positions. While Units were unable to reach consensus regarding updating our local position on the Dallas City Charter, we did seem to operate with more momentum and expertness while **conducting consensus** on Texas Drug Laws and Policies. There is just one more left – this one on Public Transportation – which we hope you will faithfully participate in, either by mailing/faxing in your opinions or attending November Unit meetings.

If you were unable to make it to any one of our three Issue **Forums**, please know that they (1) will be broadcast on **DC/TV** and (2) are available on **tape for loan** via the League Office.

Remember, **Election Day is November 8** and **Early Voting is October 24 through November 4**. Anyone not working at the polls, please come to the Office on Election Day and help us field phone calls and questions! Let the Office know what time is good for you and if you can bring a laptop.

2005 Unit Meeting Program Topics

November - **Consensus** on Texas Transportation Study

December - State and Local **Program Planning**

January - **Unit Planning** for Women's History Month in March

Unit Meetings and Leaders

Brenda Marks, Unit Coordinator

214-443-4310 - W 469-235-6598© bmrks@smi.law.com

Oak Cliff Unit meets second Wednesday at 10AM

Potter's House at Primrose Community Room

Perryton Drive, off Hampton Road across from Kiest Park

Mildred Pope 214-374-8067 469-235-7077© mderrpope@yahoo.com

East Dallas Unit meets second Wednesday at Noon

Lakewood Branch Library

6121 Worth, bordered by Abrams & La Vista

Suzy Wills 214-324-1594 suzwills@swbell.net

Dallas Evening Unit meets second Wednesday at 6:30 PM

Royal China Restaurant, Preston & Royal Lane (NE corner)

Arline Pitt 972-419-8950 - W 972-243-3966 - H arline.pitt@cunamutual.com

Preston-Hillcrest Unit meets second Thursday at 9:30 AM

Churchill Way Recreation Center off Hillcrest

Gayle Hurst 214-348-7112 -H 214-236-0367©

Preston-Mockingbird Unit meets second Thursday at 9:45 AM

Home of Judi Stewart at 3736 Potomac Avenue

Pat Vaughan 214-350-2623 dallasvaughan@aol.com

Ann Ross 214.351.6646 adholm@aol.com

Coming Soon To A TV Near You!

Sandy Thornton, Forum Coordinator

Check www.lvwddallas.org, then grab your TV remote and set your VCR. Coming soon to DCTV will be our production of an "Issue Forum of Texas Drug Policy and Law Study".

Posted on our website are the dates, times and channels for airings of this important program on DCTV. **Two copies in VHS format are available for check-out from the office.** If you have any questions, please call me at 214-827-1988.

Bucks

4

Books

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana Education Fund (LWVLAEF), a (501)(c)3 organization, has developed the "Bucks 4 Books" program to purchase educational materials for the K-12 displaced students from the 4 Gulf Coast States ravaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

It's an Internet effort so that 100% of all the donations will go to pay for educational materials. Please pass this on to others in your address book.

If you work for a company or a union, please ask them to make a tax deductible donation to the "Bucks 4 Books" program, to pass this on to all of their employees, and, if they have a charitable matching program, to add "Bucks 4 Books" to their list.

All checks should be may payable to: LWV of Louisiana Education Fund, P. O. Box 4451, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4451

Thank you and always share the Spirit of League,
Jean Armstrong, President.
Phone: 225-927-2255
League of Women Voters of Louisiana Education Fund

September Unit Meetings Featured City Charter Consensus Questions *Brenda Marks, Unit Coordinator*

Our 2005-2006 unit meetings started off in September with consensus sessions to update our League position on the Dallas City Charter. Many thanks are due to **Linda Camin, Theresa Daniel** and **Genie Fritz** who led the meetings and provided excellent handouts, and information.

Unfortunately consensus could not be reached on whether (1) the mayor should have the ability to hire/fire the City Manager and (2) the city council should be able to fire the City Manager by a majority vote.

The **East Dallas** unit favored both questions, whereas the **Evening** unit rejected both questions. The **Oak Cliff** unit was unable to reach consensus on either question. **Preston-Hillcrest** and **Preston-Mockingbird** both favored Question #1, but were split on Question #2 with **Preston-Mockingbird** rejecting and **Preston-Hillcrest** in favor. **In totality, clear, concise, and collective consensus on hiring and firing the City Manager could not be achieved.**

All the units spent time discussing "Year of the Voter" planning and new ideas for encouraging and increasing voter participation. **Lou Ann Ligon**, LWVD member representative to the Dallas Peace Center (DPC), attended the Evening and Preston-Hillcrest meetings and presented copies of DPC's most recent issue of the *Dallas Peace Times* featuring **Roger Kallenberg's** article (with photo) on the June 4th *Local Voices* Project.

Two voter registration projects were also conducted in September. **Preston-Mockingbird** unit held a two-day registration drive and survey circulation at SMU on September 13-14, and the **Oak Cliff** unit held a similar event at the Veteran's Administration Hospital on September 20. Kudos to **Pat Vaughan, Ann Ross** and **Eleanor Sutherland** for working the SMU event and to **Mildred Pope, Kathleen Soch** and **Lillian George** (Lillian is also a new member!) for handling the VA Hospital event. As always, thanks to our ubiquitous President, **Katherine Homan**, for helping with both events.

In October the units met again in **consensus sessions on LWV-Texas' Drug Policy Study**. In this case, the LWV-Dallas Board will report our results to the state board. Whether there is consensus or not will be **determined by the state board and announced in January 2006.**

!! NEW LWVUS WEBSITE !!

Visit their new, improved, user-friendly site at www.lwv.org. Register your name and email address the first time. After that the site will recognize you.

Drug Policy Issue Forum

Suzanne Wills, Drug Policy Issues Chair

The only disappointing thing about the drug policy issue forum was that there were not more League members in attendance. The Hitt Auditorium was an excellent venue, **the panelists were varied, interesting** and, for the most part, tried to answer the questions that were posed.

Dr. Leland Lou, Chief, Pain Management Division, UT-Southwestern University Hospitals, brought a perspective that is seldom heard in forums of this sort. He said that **pain specialists are constantly afraid that they will be targeted by law enforcement**, will have to defend themselves in court, and will lose their livelihood. **Because of this fear they under treat their patients.** In any large hospital you "could count the chronic pain patients who are getting adequate relief on your fingers." **He supported syringe exchange programs saying they prevent extremely serious and expensive diseases.** With regard to medical marijuana, he has read studies that show it has therapeutic uses and studies that show it has risks. There are no perfect drugs. Dr. Lou's colleagues discouraged him from participating in our forum because they thought he might become a target of prosecution.

Eric Mountin, Assistant District Attorney, was invited to defend the status quo while others were discussing problems and possible change, not an easy or comfortable task. **He never strayed from the government's drug policy stance.** When asked to explain the extremely skewed results of the drug law enforcement from a racial perspective he said the **DA's office takes only the**



Board members Michelle Manners, Judi Stewart, Brenda Marks, and Joanne Early gather for the Forum.

cases the police bring. [92.2% of Texas inmates convicted of a drug crime are non-white.] The DA's office does not discriminate based on race or wealth. They prosecute traffickers and repeat offenders, rarely users. Certain drugs are illegal because citizens want them to be illegal. **Law enforcement does what citizens want.** He said that more people are in treatment for marijuana than for all other drugs combined. [According to SAMSHA 54.1% were sent by courts. Only 10.3% were sent by health care providers.] **Mr. Mountin said he does not consider what happens to the children of offenders when determining sentences.** On the contrary, he is harder on people who bring their children to sentencing hearings. He noted that **the Texas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children** addresses the needs of children from homes where drugs are used.

Judge John Creuzot is well known as a reformer and for starting an innovative drug court. [See *DIVERT*, February 2003 *VOTER*] In response to the question about racially skewed results of drug law enforcement he said that **people who are stopped for a broken taillight or other minor infraction in minority neighborhoods are not given a ticket, but arrested and searched.** So, the police uncover more crime in those neighborhoods. He suggested that more crime would be uncovered at Mockingbird and Hillcrest if the same tactics were employed there. **On syringe exchanges—If you oppose syringe exchange programs on moral grounds that's the end of the discussion.** If your tax dollars are important to you or if preventing disease is important to you, **syringe exchanges are a reasonable option.** Are there enough beds for drug treatment in Dallas? **No.** Does Texas' drug policy reduce crime? **No.** Does it improve public health? **No.** Does it protect children? **No.** Does it efficiently use public resources? **No.**

Veletta Lill did an excellent job as moderator, as we knew she would. We owe a debt of gratitude to her and to each of the panelists for an extremely informative evening.



Guests study one of our posters.

Clockwise: Linda Wassenich, Franci Moses, Julie Lowenberg, Barbara Materka, Susybelle Gosslee, Pat Sabin, Rebecca Bergstresser, Lucy Polter, Katherine Homan, Louise Raggio, Eleanor Sutherland, and Jo Fay Godbey.



LWVD President Katherine Homan with Dallas League members who have been Past Presidents of local Leagues.

On Turning 85 Eleanor Sutherland

Thank you is a small but heartfelt phrase to say how honored and pleased I was to be the “big attraction,” along with the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. It was great to be associated with so many dedicated members of this splendid organization. It has meant very much for me to be a member, and to be so honored was something I feel is one of the best things to happen to me. Thank you all.

To celebrate in such style in such a fine setting made it even better. I have to thank Katherine Homan for insisting that we celebrate on my birthday. Jane Pak and her husband Charles were super hosts of the affair – their house is beautiful, as is the setting. The planning committee and the host committee are to be congratulated on making everything go smoothly.

Louise B. Raggio Endowed Lecture Series in
Women’s Studies

”Women in the 21st Century: The Balancing Act”

featuring

Anna Quindlen

novelist, social critic, and Newsweek columnist
November 14, 2005 at 8:00 p.m.
Hughes-Trigg Student Center, SMU

Tickets: \$25 each

Mention the League of Women Voters to receive a \$5 discount.

For tickets or more information,
call 214-768-8283 or email esutton@smu.edu

Mental Health Association PRISM Awards Luncheon

The Mental Health Association of Greater Dallas has announced that Oscar and Emmy-winning actress and best-selling author **Patty Duke will be the featured speaker** at the Prism Awards Luncheon 2005 on November 14, 2005 at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel in Dallas.

League member **Veletta Lill** will receive *The Ruth Sharp Altshuler Award*, which recognizes outstanding community service in meeting the needs of persons with mental illness.

Tickets for the luncheon are \$100 each. For tickets, underwriting packages, and table sponsorships for the Prism Awards Luncheon call MHA at 214-871-2420.