

League of Women Voters  
of Dallas

# VOTER



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

## October 10-11 Unit Meetings

### Oak Cliff Unit - 10:00AM Wednesday

Primrose Oaks Community Rm,  
2999 S. Hampton Road at Perryton  
Drive across from Kiest Park.  
**Mildred Pope** 214-374-8067 or  
mderrpope@yahoo.com

### East Dallas Unit - Noon Wednesday

Lakewood Branch Library, 6121  
Worth, bordered by Abrams &  
La Vista.  
**Suzanne Wills** 214-324-1594 or  
suzwills@swbell.net

### Dallas Evening Unit – 6:30PM Wednesday

9614 Hillview Dr, near the  
intersection of Abrams & Royal.  
**Miriam Foshay** 214-503-7932 or  
mfoshay@speakeasy.net

### North Dallas Unit – 9:30AM Thursday

Churchill Way Rec Center,  
6906 Churchill Way off Hillcrest.  
**Gayle Hurst** 214-348-7112 or  
gayle.hurst@sbcglobal.net

### Mockingbird Unit – 9:30AM Thursday

St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal  
Church, 6525 Inwood at  
Mockingbird.  
**Pat Vaughan** 214-350-2623 or  
dallasvaughan@aol.com &  
**Eleanor Sutherland** 214-368-8215  
or ews4167@att.net

## Seeking Consensus on Mandating Testing *Mildred Pope, Program VP*

By now, you have received from the State League a **Facts and Issues** on **Mandated Testing in Texas Public Schools** and had an opportunity to attend our **September Issue Forum** with Alliance/AFT President Bolender, State Representative Branch, and DISD Director of Evaluation and Accountability, Oakeley. With information from these sources, Dallas Leaguers should be prepared and ready to discuss and answer the Consensus Questions on pages 2-3 of this issue.

October Unit Meetings will be devoted to determining **consensus**, which is not a simple majority of agreement, but **2/3 or 3/4's agreement** by member participants on responses to the Consensus Questions. Anyone unable to attend a Unit meeting, may complete the enclosed form by October 15 and return to the Office by fax 214-688-4126 or mail to 2720 N. Stemmons Fwy, Suite 812, Dallas 75207.

Education is the cornerstone of our democracy. Without a public school system that is teaching our youth to be literate and possessing critical thinking skills, how can we expect them to be informed and active participants in the democratic process?

## Immigration and Education Forum *Lou Ann Ligon, Forum Chair*

As the population of Hispanics living in North Texas soars, we are faced with many new challenges that demand our urgent attention. One of the most pressing is education, in its broadest terms. Unless action is taken to change negative educational trends, we will have a vastly under-educated population that will inevitably bring poverty, illiteracy, crime, and an economy lacking the workforce necessary to remain competitive in the marketplace.

To become informed about this educational challenge and crisis, you are invited to attend our Issue Forum on the **Impact of Immigration on Education in Dallas County**. Bring a friend to the Forum on **Thursday, October 25, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM**, at the **Bill J. Priest Institute for Economic Development** at 1402 Corinth, Dallas, TX 75205. Immigration Study Committee Chair **Maureen Jones** will moderate our four highly qualified panelists: **Vanna Slaughter**, Director of Immigration and Legal Services Division of Catholic Charities; **Miriam Rodriguez**, Assistant Director of Dallas Public Libraries, **Lisa Oglesby Rocha**, Executive Director of Avance-Dallas; **Gilda Evans**, Executive Director of DISD Multi-Language Enrichment Program.

You may reserve a box lunch for \$8.50, by calling the League Office, 214-688-4125, by October 22.

## From the President's Desk

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2007-2008

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When one looks back in history and begins to examine the passion and determination of heroes past, what prevails most is their determination to stand firm in the face of great opposition and misunderstanding. These were the ones who had the courage to stay focused and not be discouraged or deterred with the temporary distractions. They did not waffle at difficulty or lose heart in the face of adversity. These heroes had a vision in mind. They imagined and could see past a dream, longing for something bigger and greater than had ever occurred to date. Some did not live to see what their efforts wrought, but their sacrifices were worth it because embedded in their hearts was belief in their mission. Abandoning the cause was beyond imagination.

Today, when political issues emerge, debates rage over who has the best perspective at long term remedy. Civil and logical debate, while intended to produce consensus, has been known to deteriorate into meaningless finger pointing and mind manipulation.

In our society, valued opinions become Election Day results. Getting it right is of the utmost importance. Giving the voters of Dallas access to the best possible information so they can cast an informed vote is the League of Women Voters of Dallas' primary mission. League members are speaking to organizations – such as the African American Museum, the Association of Black Engineers, co-hosting debates and forums, and my most honored invitation, being featured and recognized at the Women's Equality Day celebrations at Dallas City Hall and the Women's Museum. The LWV-Dallas' commitment is to do what it takes to make this community an informed society. We seek to insure that the people are knowledgeable of the issues, excited and committed to the election process. League member are so much so committed that we volunteer many hours to make it happen.

I encourage each of you to locate ways to increase your influence in the community through voter outreach and education. If you have some ideas but are not certain how to put them into action, seek to speak on behalf of an issue, or have a passion for researching social justice issues and need a platform, please feel free to get in sync with us. Use your gifts and talents, so that we can begin to speak implicitly to the issues that affect us all.

Until next time...

Libbie Terrell Lee

## State Study Consensus Questions

### Mandated Achievement Testing in the Public Schools of Texas

1. Which of the following should be applied to state-mandated standardized TESTS? Check all that should apply.

- a. Developed and reviewed with input from Texas educators--classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, administrators, and education service center staff.
- b. Written with sensitivity to the diversity of the state's population.
- c. Used as a major component of any required accountability system--state or federal.
- d. Used as a diagnostic tool to evaluate student and school progress--not for state or federal accountability systems.
- e. Used in addition to a nationally available test.
- f. Replaced by a nationally available test.
- g. Used as a measure of individual mastery and proficiency in a subject.
- h. Used as a measure of a student's growth and progress in a subject from one year to the next.
- i. Used to determine grade-level advancement. If so, what grades? \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Used as the sole determination for graduation from high school.
- k. Replaced by end-of-course tests for exit-level, standardized exams in high school.
- l. Offered in Spanish to all Spanish-speaking students not considered to be proficient in English.
- m. Used with a focus on the goal of measuring higher-level thinking skills.
- n. Used with a focus on the goal of limiting the frequency of test administration, which would also apply to benchmark tests, practice tests, and field tests.
- o. Eliminated completely.
- p. Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Since the state-mandated tests are based on the Texas standardized CURRICULUM, which of the following should be applied to the curriculum? Check all that should apply.

- a. Developed with broad input from Texas educators, the public, business groups, and elected and appointed officials.
- b. Reflects the diversity of the state's population.
- c. Covers subjects that are included on the standardized tests, as well as those that are not included, to ensure richness and variety.
- d. Provides the academic rigor necessary for success in postsecondary education and careers.
- e. Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Since state-mandated tests are used in determining accountability, which of the following should be applied to the state-mandated ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM? Check all that should apply.

- a. Used as a method to ensure that districts are teaching the standardized state curriculum.
- b. Realigned to avoid conflicting results between state and federal accountability systems.
- c. Used to measure academic achievement and to identify gaps in performance, based on standardized tests and other indicators (for example, dropouts, attendance, and high school completion).

(Continued on the next page)

State Study Consensus Questions (continued)

- d. Used as a diagnostic method of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of schools and school districts.
- e. Used to measure a school's growth in academic achievement from one year to the next.
- f. Modified to place less emphasis on the standardized test and to include additional measurement, such as other types of tests, performance in coursework, and portfolios.
- g. Used to establish school and school district ratings.
- h. Used to sanction, reconstitute, and close schools.
- i. Used as a primary factor to appraise and terminate educators.
- j. Used to direct resources to improve performance.
- k. Used to reward schools.
- l. Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

4. Given that there is a gap in the performance of subgroups of students who are tested, what measures do you support to ensure EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY for academic achievement? Check all that should apply.

- a. Universal prekindergarten programs.
- b. Universal, full-day kindergarten programs.
- c. Early intervention for academically at-risk students.
- d. Research-based instruction for English learners and other targeted subgroups of students.
- e. Tutoring and/or remedial classes for students who fail a section or sections of the standardized test.
- f. Extended school day, Saturday classes, and summer school.
- g. Extended school year.
- h. Night courses in high school.
- i. Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5. How should the state SUPPORT TEACHERS in reference to mandated testing? Check all that should apply.

- a. Provide adequate planning time or class-release time.
- b. Provide professional development that is relevant and, preferably, that is supported by research demonstrating improvement in student achievement.
- c. Reduce the class size, especially for low-performing students at all grade levels.
- d. Provide teacher aides for low-performing campuses.
- e. Provide incentives to teachers, based on significant improvement in the performance of their students on the standardized test.
- f. Provide incentives to campuses, based on significant improvement in the performance of their students on the standardized test.
- g. Provide incentives to attract experienced and qualified teachers to low-performing campuses.
- h. Provide incentives to attract experienced and qualified teachers to subject areas where shortages exist.
- i. Support mentoring for new teachers, with compensation for mentors.
- j. Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Voting Matters: What's happening with ES&S Electronic Voting Systems**

*Doug Taylor: League Member and Contributing Columnist*

The **impending decertification** of a large number of **ES&S Direct Recording Electronic voting systems** (DREs) by the **California** Secretary of State Debra Bowen **should** be of **interest** to all **voters in Dallas County**. ES&S refused to provide the Secretary's office with the source code for the DREs that many counties were planning on using for the fall general election. They also sold a version of one of their machines that was not certified by the state or federal government. In another case, **when they eventually turned over their source code**, it was not the same code that the state held in escrow.

The **compromise in California** with the other 3 vendors was to allow limited use of DREs, but only for early voting and one HAVA terminal in each polling place on Election Day. In addition, the SOS required that a printed paper trail be audited for 100% of the DREs used in the election both for Early Voting and on Election Day. This **will be an interesting test of the accuracy of DREs**. If the paper trail doesn't match the electronic report, then the DREs cannot be trusted for public use.

**ES&S DREs have a history of unreliable vote recording**. A quick survey of VotersUnite!'s web site <http://www.votersunite.org/electionproblems.asp> reveals dozens of incidents involving ES&S DREs since 2006. Leading the pack are machine malfunctions on either the central tabulator or the DRE, missing (under) votes, jammed printers, subtracted votes, tallies totaling more than the entire population of a jurisdiction, etc. One of the most spectacular and suspicious was the undervote in Sarasota County Florida in 2006 where an estimated 18,000 votes for a congressional race were not counted.

**Here in Dallas County we use the iVotronic DRE for both Early Voting and as a HAVA terminal in each polling place on Election Day**. A voter verified paper trail is not provided. As a result, it is impossible to independently perform any kind of audit such as the California SOS has required for California's DREs. Without any sort of paper trail, and independent audit is impossible and the voter can only rely on the honesty and competence of elections administrators and vendor programming of the DRE and the central tabulator.

**U.S. Congressional Representative Russ Holt's election reform bill, H.R. 811**, has been undergoing some amendments recently but has not been sent to the House floor for a vote yet. One of the amendments being considered is in reaction to the California experience. Representative Susan Davis has proposed to allow only a single DRE with a paper trail for every polling site. She would also allow DREs to be used for early voting, but would not increase the audit requirements as the California SOS did. It will be interesting to see if it makes its way out of committee to the House floor for debate. There is a lot of resistance to the bill, some from those who feel it doesn't go far enough (an outright ban on DREs) and others who feel it goes too far. It is unlikely however, that another bill could be crafted in time to be in effect for the 2008 elections.

Interestingly enough, during the debate on the Holt legislation, the **New York Times** has editorialized in favor of removing DREs from use. A judge in **New Jersey** has declared DREs to be unreliable and illegal for use in his state. States such as **New Mexico** and **Florida** are returning to paper ballots. Even the vendors are feeling that change will come. **Diebold**, for example, is trying to sell its election systems division.



**Aimee Bolender, President of Alliance/AFT, Cecilia Oakely, Ph.D., Executive Director of DISD Evaluation and Accountability, Dan Branch, State Representative District 108, and our Moderator and member, Roger Kallenberg.**

Photo by Sarah Hauser.

## Our Recent Panel

League members and guests enjoyed and were informed by a presentation on Mandated Testing from the point of view of teachers, the district administration, and a local legislator. Representative Branch chairs the Select Committee on Higher and Public Education Finance in the Texas House of Representatives.

Those who missed the program will have an opportunity to see a streaming video soon, compliments of Lifetime Videos.

## Looking Ahead to November and the National Study

According to the national League's website, the Immigration Study has now reached the member agreement phase. League members have a tremendous responsibility to take advantage of every possible opportunity – attend meetings, read publications, and follow the issue in newspapers and news magazines, for instance – to educate themselves during a League study. The Irving League study sessions on Immigration (See the notice below) provide one more opportunity to become informed.

Ultimately, League members must come to some sort of broad agreement on the values they hold related to immigration. Consensus is mutual agreement of League members arrived at through discussion. Consensus questions provide structure for the meeting, as members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes apparent whether or not consensus has been reached on each question. You can find the questions on the national website. We will also provide them in our VOTER and on our website.

## Irving League Presents Background Studies

An important dialog is taking place in the League of Women Voters of Irving fall study on immigration. The first session on Aug. 20<sup>th</sup> was on Motivation for Immigration to America. The second session on Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> had an economic focus.

Attendees were asked to come prepared by reading brief background papers available on the website, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). Click on the left column on Immigration Policy >> Follow Our Study. The next page displays 'Projects' and 'Resources' in blue headers. Under 'National Voter' you can read and print out Study Briefs #2, "**Impact on U.S. Economy**". Then in the right column under 'Background Papers' find "Immigration and the Economy" and "Economic Aspects of Authorized and Unauthorized Immigration".

The next meeting will be on Monday, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. on the subjects of Policy and Legal Issues surrounding Immigration. The place will be determined; bring your own lunch. Study Brief #3 is "**Border Enforcement**" and Brief #4 is "**Family Reunification and Diversity Policies**". Background papers, 3 to 4 pages in length, are: "Federal Immigration Policy: Enforcement Issues", "Overview: Federal Policy and Proposed Reforms", "US Policy: Family Reunification". For information, please contact Jan Killen at 972-790-0696.