

League of Women Voters  
of Dallas

# VOTER



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

## The Units: Do-Your-Own-Thing

Our **Oak Cliff Unit** Leader has organized a bus tour of the Dallas International Inland Port site for the morning of Wednesday, May 14, starting with breakfast (\$8) and a power point presentation at 9:00 AM at Thorntree Country Club, 825 Wintergreen Rd, Desoto, TX.. There will be room for 30, so interested Leaguers are encouraged to make a reservation by calling **Mildred Pope** at 214-374-8067.

The **Mockingbird Unit** is planning to tour Dallas County's Old Red Court House and Museum on May 8. Other LWVD members are welcome to join us. Be prepared for entrance fees of \$8.00 (\$6.00/seniors). Parking under the courthouse is \$9.00.

Unit members carpooling will leave promptly at 10:30 AM from St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church. Call or email **Eleanor Sutherland** regarding carpool or group lunch reservation (214-368-8215 - ews4167@att.net). If you use other transportation, join us at around 11:00 AM for a self-guided tour of the museum. Plan to lunch in the area or brown-bag-it.

## Nominations for 2009 Susan B. Anthony Award Now Being Accepted! *Katherine Homan and Mildred Pope Luncheon Co-Chairs*

We are hoping to beat the summer exodus by encouraging you to think about the best candidate of your acquaintance. **Nominate her now on the form enclosed form** and beat the **October 1, 2008** deadline.

The Thirteenth Annual Susan B. Anthony Luncheon will be held on Friday, **February 13, 2009**, once again at the resplendent Dallas Arboretum.

## Seeking May 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting Quorum *Katherine Homan, Organization VP*

Please mark **Saturday, May 3** on your calendar for an **8:30 to 11AM** Breakfast Business Meeting to determine our 2008-9 Budget, Program, and Board of Directors. **Sandy Greyson** tops the slate as our first-ever President-Elect.

Come to honor outstanding League members: Myrtle Bales Bulkley Award recipient, **Susybelle Gosslee**, and Virginia Macdonald Award recipient, **Linda Camin**. The President's Meritorious Service Award will be presented to **Alix Mason** in recognition of her ten years of service on our Board of Directors and to **Becky Brakke** and **Jane Pak**, our stellar Co-Chairs of the Susan B. Anthony Silent Auction.

Other honorees will be our most recently designated 50 -Year Members: **Nettie Terry Brown, Dottie Box, Mary Jane Reynolds, Anne Tabb** and **Ginny Whitehill**.

**Be sure to register by April 25 if you plan to attend.** Your participation in the Breakfast Buffet is optional at a cost of \$10. You may mail your registration and \$10 check to the Office or register by phone at 214-688-4125.

## Bulkley and Macdonald Awards at Annual Meeting *Linda Wassenich for the Awards Committee*

**Susybelle Gosslee**, three-term president of LWV-D, 1999-2005, will be presented the Myrtle Bales Bulkley Award for many years of exceptional service to the League and the community. She was elected at the recent State Convention to serve on the LWV-Texas Board of Directors for the next two years.

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2009 State Convention  
Fort Worth, Texas  
April 5, 2008

## Convention Reflections

My time at the League of Women Voters Texas state convention in April was stimulating and disappointing; inspiring and disheartening; challenging as well as frustrating. I found myself interested and involved in the incredible process but absolutely blown away with the painstakingly slow and methodical way business is established, new ideas enlisted and discussed and agreement reached.

### **Board of Directors**

2007-2008  
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Libbie Terrell Lee

#### **Vice Presidents of**

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I am so proud to be a part of this historic organization. I am honored to say that I am the leader of the Dallas LWV. I appreciate the fact that the community looks to the League of Women Voters to educate, advocate, and inform around relevant and current day issues that affect us all.

Having a dedication to the development of the next generation of progressive leaders then will likely require that an examination occur around how business has been done in the past...because I submit it is not necessarily the way to get new business done. I know that I am venturing into deep water...but I am compelled to raise this question: Could now (if not now, real soon) be the time to change the LWV Texas Issues/Action process? Specifically, what I understand is that nothing occurs without it being a part of program planning, related to a pre-determined position, and brought forward within the two year window of time between state conventions. Know that I agree, the League cannot "chase every rabbit" and study every issue, or take action in every situation. But I can say with certainty, meaningful issues that impact how government does business were left hanging until the next convention.

"Change" is a theme resonating nationally. It is deliberately directed at a group of voters who are identified and targeted for a specific purpose. This has to be a real target for the LWV as well. The increased involvement of women and other minorities in the political process is thrilling. The need to successfully diversify and recruit a more ethnically different youthful group of future Leaguers for long-term sustainability must be an absolute and continuous campaign. In the same vein though, if our process is insufficient to progressively allow for hands-on practice and advocacy and is too extensive a process around action, it is likely their interest will re-direct into another campaign. This is not just about speeding up the way business is done. But rather a small discussion around what can happen if the current process continues without review. I believe that if our current process continues unchecked, real opportunities will eclipse us and our strategic leadership will wane

Until next time...

Libbie Terrell Lee

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Approximately 20 years ago Susybelle founded Our Friends Place to provide a therapeutic foster group home for girls aged 10-18 who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned. This program now includes a transitional living program for girls as they age out of the foster care program. She was also the founder of the Connections Conference in 1994, which focuses on children's issues. In recognition of her extensive endeavors, she received the Maura Award in 1992, the Prism Award from the Mental Health Association of Dallas in 1994, and the SAVVY Award in 1999.

More recently Susybelle has been involved with worldwide peace issues. In 1995, she attended the United Nations Non Governmental Organization Forum in Beijing, China. In February of this year, she attended a follow-up conference at the United Nations in New York. She was very involved as Program Chair for the Peacemakers International Women's Peace Conference in Dallas in July 2007. She also works with Rick Halperin and SMU's Center for Human Rights to advocate for the end of the death penalty.



**Linda Camin** will receive the Virginia Macdonald Award for exhibiting courage in working for change and inspiring leadership in others. Linda joined with **Barbara Weinstein** and **Nancy Wilson** in 2003 to urge Leagues around the state to support the drive to get recorded votes in the Texas Legislature. She served as Program Chair of the LWV-TX Committee on Recorded Votes and saw the proposition develop into a successful constitutional amendment.

For LWV-Dallas, she has been an issue chair for the hospital district and for mental health. She was co-chair of the committee that re-studied the council/manager form of government and currently serves as chair of the city government observer corp. She has also been involved with the Richardson League, serving as secretary and as liaison to the board of LWV-Dallas. With these connections she has greatly facilitated programs that were jointly planned and conducted by both Leagues.

Linda has been active with the Texas Nurses Association and received District 4's Nurse of the Year award in 1987, the Great One Hundred Nurses recognition in 1992, the Dolores Alfred Lifetime Achievement Award in 2001, and the statewide Ruth Stewart Award for Public Service in 2004. She also received the Liberty Bell Award in 2004 from the Texas Young Lawyers Association. She serves on the board of Mental Health America of Greater Dallas, chairing the Public Policy Committee, and is secretary of the Women's Council of Dallas County Health and Human Services Coalition.

## Units Getting a Jump Start on Historic Presidential Election Season

*Katherine Homan, Organization VP*

To broaden access to voter registration information and materials, our Units have identified a number of ways to serve a vast population of potential voters. Some are raising awareness of the presence and availability of voter registration cards, while others are providing voting material and information. We invite all Leaguers to check out these voter service projects and contact a Unit Leader to volunteer your assistance!

The **East Dallas Unit** is working to get signs in the Health and Human Services Building about opportunities available at the Elections Office on the 8th floor. The many of the hundreds of people who pass through there each day could register to vote, change the address on their voter registration or replace a lost card. For more information, contact Unit Leader **Suzanne Wills at 214-324-1594 or [suzwills@swbell.net](mailto:suzwills@swbell.net)**.

The **Evening Unit** has ambitiously undertaken two projects: (1) a College and University Project to blast- email students, faculty, and staff about the availability of our Online Voters Guide and election information. They are compiling college and university contact lists and (2) a Project to provide nursing homes and assisted living centers with voter information packets. They are planning what will be included in the packets. Other units are welcome to partner in this project. The **Mockingbird Unit** has expressed interest. For more information, contact Unit Leader **Miriam Foshay at 214-503-7932 or [mfoshay@speakeasy.net](mailto:mfoshay@speakeasy.net)**.

The **North Dallas Unit** will cooperate with the Evening Unit by preparing and distributing voter information packets to the Latino Cultural Center as well as to libraries and recreation centers in their area. They are also investigating the possibility of registering voters at Half-Price Bookstores as we have done in the past. For more information, contact Unit Leader **Gayle Hurst at 214-348-7112 or [gayle.hurst@scbglobal.net](mailto:gayle.hurst@scbglobal.net)**.

When **Oak Cliff Unit** member, **Essie Reed**, learned about the lack of voter registration signage at Health and Human Services, she thought "How soon they forget," considering the intensive civil rights efforts 15 years ago to **bring voter registration services to the public**. As the State League's Voter Service Chair and member of the National Voter Registration Act Task Force in 1994, Essie worked with then-Secretary of State Ron Kirk to implement the NVRA Rules by outlining them in our Texas Election Code. The **Texas Voter Registration Act** stipulates the following:

**§ 20.001. DESIGNATION OF VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCIES.**

- (a) *The following state agencies are designated as voter registration agencies:*
- (1) *Health and Human Services Commission;*
  - (2) *Department of Aging and Disability Services;*
  - (3) *Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services;*
  - (4) *Department of State Health Services; and*
  - (5) *any other agency or program as determined by the secretary of state that primarily provides:*
    - (A) *public assistance; or*
    - (B) *services to persons with disabilities.*
- (b) *The Department of Public Safety is designated as a voter registration agency.*
- (c) *Each public library, including any branch or other service outlet, is designated as a voter registration agency.*
- (d) *Each marriage license office of the county clerk is designated as a voter registration agency.*

Today, however, the public is hard pressed to see **where voter registration cards are available**, and we wonder whether the people who work in the public assistance agencies even know that they are supposed to be offering voter registration services to those they serve. For more information refer back to an article on National Voter Registration Act in the February issue of our national VOTER.

Wondering about the **local compliance level with the Texas Voter Registration Act**, the Oak Cliff Unit decided to conduct a **two-part survey**. The first part will involve making a visual observation as to the ready presence and availability of voter registration cards, and the second part will be to inquire "Who makes sure that people get voter registration cards, when," for example, they sign up for a library card?

**We will visit as many of the above offices as our volunteer assistance will allow.** Any one can participate – even Scout troops! For more information, contact Unit Leader **Mildred Pope at 214-374-8067 or [mderppope@yahoo.com](mailto:mderppope@yahoo.com)**.

## Voting Matters

*Doug Taylor, League member and Contributing Columnist*

Have you ever wondered why fewer people are involved in community organizations such as the League, participating in political activity, or even just voting? What could be the causes and how we address the problem? An interesting book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, by Robert Putnam, has a lot of data, some of the answers, and brings up many more questions.

*Bowling Alone* shows that **civic disengagement is an ongoing phenomenon** that can be reflected in data about club membership, voting patterns, even participation in church services. The trends Putnam presents show a steady decline since the 1940's in almost every possible metric of participation rates in civic society.

The decline in voting and interest in political activity are symptoms of this crisis in civic engagement. As we have found through League research, this is reflected in lower voter participation by women and the younger generations. Putnam identifies some probable culprits: longer commute times and TV watching, but there are other factors such as suburban sprawl and the passing of the WWII generation. The trick is to find ways to **overcome these trends toward isolation and build social capital**.

The League as an organization is trying to engage both our members and the community. Engagement is difficult if people don't feel an interest in civic and political activity. It's much easier to cocoon yourself in your home and watch TV than to go out and meet people, participate in conversation, and perhaps work with others. While voter outreach projects such as *DART Out to Vote* may interest some voters, most will ignore the effort unless they already have an interest in a particular candidate or issue.

Engaging voters is so difficult that **in the recent primary runoff elections under 2% of the registered voters in Dallas County participated in either party's runoff**. Just a few weeks earlier, voters turned out in record numbers to select Presidential candidates in their respective party primaries. The inconsistencies with voter turnout indicate that unless interest is high in a particular race, voters will tune out rather than turn out.

The LWVD as an organization also has difficulty recruiting new members. Whether it is the hurdle of meetings during the working day, high dues, or simply a lack of interest, the number of active participants is fairly low for a city the size of Dallas. Yet, at the same time, we find evangelical churches able to build congregations numbering in the tens of thousands who can meet every week. **What is drawing people to a church that doesn't draw them to an organization that protects their voting rights?** How do we bring them in and get them involved?

While registering voters and creating voters guides have been some of our traditional outreach programs, I feel we need to look into programs that not only register and inform voters, but ones that will **engage them in LWVD projects**. Hopefully some will become League members and leaders. Perhaps we need to **connect to young, college age women through partnerships with sororities and some kind of young voter membership**. We might look at **coalition building with other community organizations**. What are they interested in? I am looking for good ideas, perhaps a survey. Working together we can come up with a plan.

## The Dallas League at State Convention

At the State Convention in Fort Worth April 4-6, LWV-Dallas was the proud recipient of two LWV-Texas awards, the **Community Partnership Award** and the **Pioneer Award**.

Our **Community Partnership Award** was based upon our September 06 and 07 voter outreach events, both spearheaded by **Voter Outreach VP, Brenda Marks**. In September '06 we partnered with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (*DART*) and a community coalition to register and educate nearly 7,000 voters. In September '07 LWV-Dallas co-hosted the **Trinity Referendum Debate** with State Representative **Raphael Anchia** to educate and inform a standing-room-only crowd of over 450 voters.

Our **Pioneer Award** was based on the efforts of **Cherlyn** and **Karlton Remington**, who have taken our League into 21st Century visibility and communications with **web-streaming** and **YouTube!**

**Only one** of the two Action Motions we posted **was approved**. We requested that LWV-TX endorse Clean Elections by insisting that the Texas legislature, during its January 2009 session, pass legislation providing for such a constitutional amendment election necessary for the establishment of a publicly financed elections system in Texas.

A second Action Motion to prohibit the Legislature from using funds in the various system benefit funds for purposes other than originally set forth was not brought forward because our state program positions were not specific enough to do so.

The Budget was approved with **no increase in state per member payments**. No new studies were approved, but a review and **update of the state position on Voting Rights and Election Laws passed** with minor modifications.

**Under the capable direction of State Board member Linda Wassenich** the silent and live auctions raised more than \$17,000, a record amount. And, of course, the entire event was chaired by Dallas Leaguer **Barbara Weinstein**.

## Looking Ahead to the May 10 Election

Early voting will be available between **April 28 and May 6** for the **May 10 Joint Election**.

Remember to find your specific ballot on the Election Department's website at **[dalcoelections.org](http://dalcoelections.org)** and remind friends and family to do the same.

Scroll all the way down and click on  
**"Search for your voter registration."**

Enter your name and click on  
**"Show voter information"**

This will bring up your voter profile and allow you to  
**"view the ballot for your precinct."**

# STUDY YOUR SAMPLE BALLOT BEFORE VOTING