

League of Women Voters
of Dallas

VOTER



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

Unit Meetings on January 12 and 13 Will Seek Consensus

Wednesday Unit meets at 10AM in Piney Woods Room at the Center for Community Cooperation, 2900 Live Oak.

Evening Unit meets at 6:00PM at Angela's Cafe in the shopping center at the NW corner of Inwood and Lovers Lane.

Thursday Unit meets at 9:30AM St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church, Inwood & Mockingbird, Dallas 75209.

Unit leaders call or send notices to regularly attending members. Contact our office at league@lwvdallas.org or 214 688-4125 for more information.

Since approving a local study on Economic Development Tools at its 2009 Annual Meeting, League members have had several opportunities to learn about tools such TIFs and MMDs at various combined and regular unit meetings.

At January's Unit Meetings, Committee Members **Barbara Downey, Brenda Marks** and **Jane Davis** will again serve as resource persons as members discuss the Consensus Questions to see if any consensus can be reached.

Each member has received by mail a copy of the Facts and Issues paper and the questions. Your presence and participation are of great value in this traditional League process.

What is Consensus?

Julie Lowenberg, a former LWVTX Program VP

Webster defines consensus as "agreement on matters of opinion." For the League of Women Voters, however, consensus has a far broader meaning. In League parlance, it means **agreement among a substantial number of a representative group of members (not just a simple majority) reached after sustained study and group discussion.** Consensus is a prerequisite to the League's taking action on national, state, or local government issues. Consensus also determines what action, if any, is to be taken. No action is taken where there is a lack of agreement, and although this may be disappointing to some members, it is essential that a League position means that members are not only informed but are in basic agreement.

League members are expected to examine all sides of an issue. The sources of information must be weighed; various factors considered and facts established before opinions are formed. **Minority opinions should be listened to with open minds and be included in reports to the board.** The discussion leader should seek to draw out opinions and encourage every member to participate. When reactions to specific aspects of the item presented are indicated, specific questions may be asked of the membership and the answers reported to the board. The board should also be informed about the tenor of the meeting: for example, was there enthusiastic approval; much opposition, doubt, and uncertainty; or hesitation to come to a conclusion?

Once the board at the appropriate level evaluates the thinking of its members and finds sufficient areas of agreement, the League "has a position" on the item under consideration. A substantial and representative number of its members now approve or disapprove certain policies and may want to take action. The general membership is informed at meetings and by newsletters.

(The original article appeared in the Texas VOTER in 1996 when Julie was State Program Chair. She has also served as President of both local and state Leagues. Currently she chairs our local Observer Corps and has been an observer at TIF Study Committee meetings. As many of you know from last year's SBA Award ceremony, Julie also has an exemplary legal career on her resume.)

From the President's Desk

2010-2011

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Happy New Year! I hope 2011 will be a very good year for you.

January starts with unit meetings where we will be taking consensus on our local study, Dallas Economic Development Tools. Our hard-working study committee has produced an excellent Facts and Issues and set of consensus questions on this topic. Make plans to come

to one of the unit meetings on Wednesday the 12th or Thursday the 13th and participate in what is sure to be a lively and informative discussion.

Many, many kudos and thanks to study committee members **Theresa Daniel, Jane Davis, Genie Fritz, Susybelle Gosslee, Linda Sharp, Beverly Tobian, and Mary Vogelson**. Special thanks to co-chairs **Barbara Downey** and **Brenda Marks**. The F&I and consensus questions are the culmination of 15 months of committee discussions, research, and writing. The committee also organized and presented two highly informative general meetings and one set of unit meetings on this topic.

Thanks also to **Linda Camin**, who worked on the study before resigning to serve on the city's Ethics Advisory Committee; to **Judy Jacks**, one of the original co-chairs, who moved to Denver last March; and to **Julie Lowenberg**, in an advisory role as Observer Corps chair.

Last month, through the auspices of the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth, the Dallas League was one of the local organizations that met with a small delegation of visitors from Iraq. The delegates were leaders of organizations working to promote the rights of women and minorities in Iraq. They told us an interesting fact about their government--its constitution mandates that at least 25% of the elected representatives be women. They're doing better than we are! Before the November elections, 17% of the U.S. Senate and 17% of the U.S. House were women.

The League's Nominating Committee has begun putting together a slate of candidates for election to the board at the annual meeting in March. Please consider offering your time and talents to help guide our organization in its important work. You can contact committee chair **Carol Donovan** at carolcdonovanpc@aol.com.



Consensus Questions

Economic Development Tools Study

Unit members will draw on the information they have available in the *Facts and Issues* paper and its appendices, as well as on knowledge gained at any of the three meetings held over the past year: *TIF 101* in April, 2009; Unit meetings in September, 2010; and our general meeting, *Creating Wealth and Community*, in November, 2010. Answers to these questions will be the basis for any position the Board adopts.

1. The City of Dallas Economic Development Department has an elaborate rating scale for TIF proposals that requires a score of 70 out of 100 basis points on a broad range of items categorized as either financial benefits or policy benefits prior to the approval of a TIF. Do you consider that to be:

Adequate

Inadequate

If inadequate, what additional items should the City include in its criteria for establishing TIFs?

2. According to the yearly summary of activity in Dallas TIF Districts and the City's Financial Guidelines, TIFs and related projects are scored and evaluated as "in compliance" (or not) in the addendum to each annual budget document. Do you believe this method of reporting to be sufficient to provide for strong financial oversight and transparency and to keep the public advised?

Yes

No

If not, what additional steps should the City take to create an atmosphere of strong oversight and transparency and to keep the public advised on what is happening with the TIFs?

3. Oversight of ongoing TIF projects is the responsibility of City's Economic Development Department staff. The department monitors the day-to-day operations and financial performance of each TIF and issues an annual report to the City Council (which is also filed with the Comptroller of the State of Texas) for each TIF. Do you think that is sufficient oversight?

Yes

No

Why?

4. State law caps the amount of TIF financing at 15% of the city's tax base. Dallas previously limited its cap to 5%, but increased it to 10% in recent years, where it stands today. What would be your recommendation to the City Council?

Retain current level

Permanently cap it at 10% to prevent future increases

Increase it only if it can be shown that the increase would not adversely affect the city's budget and property tax base

Decrease it

Consensus Questions (Continued)

5. State law allows the creation of TIFs based on both property and sales tax revenues. Current City of Dallas economic policy allows only the use of the property tax base for TIF financing in Dallas. Various outside groups are promoting the use of TIFS based on sales tax revenue. Would your recommendation be:

To consider it

Discourage it

To prohibit it

6. The City Council considers TIF boards in Dallas to be advisory only. Their power is limited to recommending approval of proposed TIF projects stated in the project plan or recommended by staff to the Council, or not recommending. Do you think this power is sufficient to allow citizen participation and oversight into the process of creating and developing TIFs?

Yes

No

Thoughts?

7. State law requires that TIF board members be qualified voters in the reinvestment zone, or be at least 18 and owners of real property in the zone, whether or not they live there. This definition easily includes renters, community leaders and representatives of neighborhood associations in the TIF district, yet the composition of Dallas TIF boards is often far less representative. What steps should the city staff and Council take to include a more varied membership on TIF boards that would be more representative of the community in which the TIF is being created?

8. TIFs are primarily proposed by developers with input by the city staff. Do you think community-based groups should be encouraged to propose TIFs in their areas, such as the Fort Worth Avenue Development Group has done?

Yes

No

Why?

Consensus Questions (Continued)

9. It is fairly easy to evaluate TIFs in terms of how much they have increased the property tax base. Academic studies have shown that increasing the tax base can result in increased taxes because of the costs of added services and bond debt. Do you think the city's financial situation would be better off over time if tax increment financing were not used for development?

Yes ___ If yes, would you recommend the use of Municipal Management Districts (where property owners create a self-governed special district to tax themselves for improvements and infrastructure) or other economic incentives?
MMDs ___ Other incentives such as :

No ___ If no, what considerations (if any) in addition to financial should be evaluated when using TIFS for economic development? Please list.

10. TIFs were originally conceived to redevelop blighted inner-cities around the state. Dallas's use of TIFs has been focused overwhelmingly on the downtown area and small areas adjacent to DART stations. This has added to the perception that TIFs are developer driven rather than used as an overall redevelopment tool in coordination with strategic planning. Would you support limiting their future use to Dallas's southern and western sectors, which have the City's only large tracts of undeveloped land and continue to lag far behind in economic development?

Yes ___ No ___ Thoughts?

11. Dallas TIFs currently don't issue bonds to raise funds for approved projects, although it is within their statutory powers. Developers list TIF infrastructure and other projects in the project plan, approve them through the Board and Council as the market allows, and finance those projects themselves; they are reimbursed only when the project is successfully completed and TIF funds have accumulated (as a result of increased property values) from which the reimbursement can be made. Would you recommend that this policy:

Be retained and strictly enforced ___

Be changed to allow TIF boards to issue bonds and enter into other financing agreements when proven necessary ___

The Nominating Committee's Challenge

At our Annual Meeting on March 26, we will elect a group of officers presented for our consideration by the Nominating Committee. We will elect an **Organization Vice President**, a **Program Vice President**, and a **Secretary** for two-year terms, as well a **Voter Outreach Vice President** for a one-year term, filling an unexpired term. Four **Board Directors** are needed for two-year terms, and next year's Nominating Committee and its Chair will be established.

The Committee includes **Carol Donovan, Chair**, **Susan Grundy** and **Diane McQuarie**, who were elected last year. **Kristen Castellanos** and **Rose Harder** were appointed to join them from the Board.

Committee members will be seeking candidates. Give some serious consideration to whom you would want to join our leadership and give them your suggestions. Best of all, say "Yes" when challenged to serve.

Have Your Renewed Your Membership?

Katherine Homan, Organization VP

Renewing now is easier than ever. To pay either by check or credit card, go to our website at <http://www.lwvdallas.org> conveniently to continue your League membership. There you can either pay online or print out the Membership Form to return with your check in the mail.

Trusting you will continue your League membership and let us remain your most trusted source for civic information!

Patient Starts 29th Year in Federal Medical Cannabis Program

Suzanne Wills, Drug Policy Issues Chair

Irvin Rosenfeld is one of only 4 medical cannabis patients in the country that receive cannabis legally from the federal government. Irv celebrated his 28th anniversary in this unique program on Saturday, November 20, 2010.

Irv is a 57 year-old successful stockbroker from South Florida. Irv uses medical cannabis to relieve chronic pain and muscle spasms caused by a rare bone disease. When he was 10, doctors discovered that his skeleton was riddled with more than 200 tumors, due to a condition known as Multiple Congenital Cartilaginous Exostosis. Despite six operations, he still lives with scores of tumors in his bones.

After a long struggle with the federal government, Irv Rosenfeld won the right to access medical cannabis in 1982. Thirteen people with debilitating conditions were allowed into the Compassionate Investigative New Drug (IND) Program to receive federally-grown medical cannabis. In 1992, President George Bush discontinued the program, but Irv still receives 9 ounces of cannabis rolled into cigarettes every 25 days from the federal government. The cannabis is grown by NIDA at the University of Mississippi. Over the 29 years in the program, Irv has received more than 120,000 medical cannabis cigarettes and is in good health because of it.

Irv's book is called "My Medicine: How I Convinced the Federal Government to Provide My Marijuana and Helped Launch a National Movement". Copies of the book may be purchased by visiting www.mymedicinethebook.com. Proceeds from the book help to cover expenses while traveling to educate people about medical cannabis.

From a press release issued by Hiedi Handford: hiedi@hicannabissolutions.com.

League Bulletin Board

Calendar

January

6 Board Meeting
12-13 **Unit Meetings**
13 Feb.VOTER deadline

February

3 Board Meeting
10 March VOTER deadline for
Annual Meetings Reports
11 **Susan B. Anthony Luncheon**

Welcome New Members

Jean Laughlin
Pilar Sanchez

*To contact fellow members,
check out our
Membership Directory.
<http://members.lwvdallas.org>*

Contributions as of 11/19/10

Patron Member: **Barbara Weinstein**

Birthday Fun Raisers: **Ann Adams, Frances McElvaney, Dorothy Box, Becky Brakke, Carol Brin, Deborah Decker, Barbara Downey, Marthelle Eatmon, Janet Eickmeyer, Agnes Ellsworth, Joyce Forney, Lea Frailey, Monica Fried, Sandy Greyson, Rose Harder, Adlene Harrison, Kathleen Irvin, Mardi Jones, Morine Kovich, Lucy Lockwood, Lina Maddox, Michelle Manners, Alix Mason, Barbara Materka, Derek O'Brien, Frances Rasco, Toni Rose, Pat Sabin, Ellen Solender, Eleanor Sutherland, Beverly Tobian, Elizabeth Walley, Bessie Weed, and Amber Zimmermann.**

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Reward Application Form at
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IN MEMORIAM

Lou Ann Ligon, 1930 - 2010

We mourn the loss of long time League member and leader, Lou Ann Ligon who died on November 15 after a long illness. She was actively involved in life and her causes until the end. At her memorial service in December, which she planned before she died, family and friends remembered her love of family, travel, and dancing, as well as her dedication to environmental causes, ending hunger, and promoting peace.

As Program VP, she led us in understanding the League's position on World Trade and also kept us informed about critical issues regarding children. She brought the work of Avance-Dallas to our attention. She challenged "the village" to accept its responsibilities to children—because, as she put it, "the first few years last forever."

Join the League of Women Voters of Dallas

where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

It's not for women only!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DALLAS
DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Dallas (LWVD), in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in, and commitment to, diversity and pluralism.

LWVD welcomes any person to participate in any activity of LWVD, regardless of gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability or political persuasion.

LWVD recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making.

LWVD subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that inclusiveness enhances its capability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

LWVD affirms its commitment to reflecting diversity in its membership, board, staff and programs.

Membership Levels

___\$60/year Individual ___\$30 additional member at same address

___\$150/year Patron ___\$500/year Benefactor

___Scholarship information available upon request. Call 214-688-4125

___\$25/year Student \$___Contribution to LWVD Scholarship Fund

Name(s) _____

Address _____

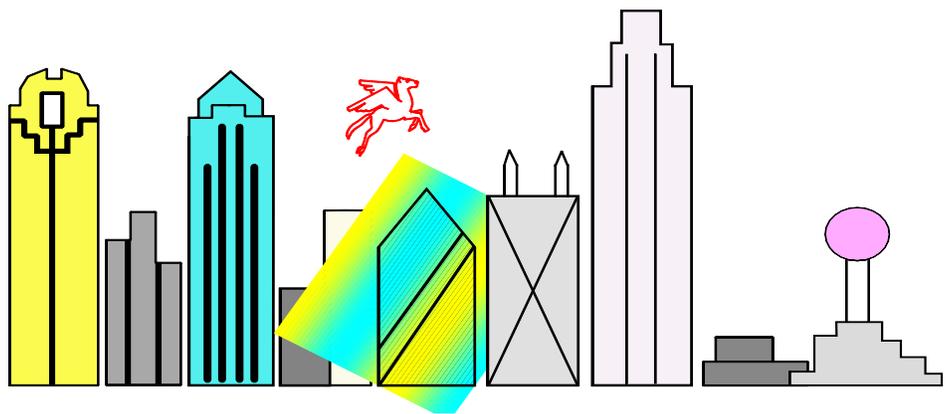
Phones: Home _____ Work _____

Cell _____ E-mail _____

Mail a check payable to **LWVDallas** with this information to the **League of Women Voters of Dallas** at the address noted below

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