

~ In Memorium ~

DALE VAN ORT

July 3, 1939—June 26, 2013

Survivors include wife and LWVD member Molly Van Ort and son Brett Van Ort.
Worked for Freeman Companies 1977-2003.
Was president of Freeman Decorating Company.
Recipient of the Buck Freeman Award for dedication and performance.

83d Legislative Session Outcomes Forum: State Issues Affecting Older Adults

submitted by Miriam Foshay with input from Jan Sanders and Lynda Ender

Oh, what a meeting this was! First of all, the meeting room was packed, with standing room only - well over 100 people attended. All but one of the anticipated speakers were present - *Senator Royce West, and Representatives Roberto Alonzo, Angie Chen Button, Eric Johnson and Bennett Ratliff.*

Lynda Ender began the meeting by asking us all to contact our Congressmen about reauthorizing the Older Americans Act, which funds critical services that keep older adults healthy and independent. Some of these services include meals, job training, transportation, and caregiver support. The Advocacy Group for Elders (AGE) lobbied for five initiatives, and three were passed by the 83rd Legislature, including modest funding for assisted living ombudsmen, a new program. Two of AGE's initiatives failed to gain traction, including mandatory geriatric training for health care practitioners and funding for affordable senior housing.

An excellent handout was provided by the Senior Source listing bills passed in the State House and Senate that affect older adults. Senator Royce West, who sits on the Health and Human Services committee, talked at length about the significance of several of the Senate bills that he supported, including SB 7 (provides services to persons with disabilities that would shorten the waiting list for medical care and save money) and SB 8 (Medicaid fraud prevention). He also talked about HB2840, which would enable cities to grant properties to developers and grocery chains to bring grocery stores to "food deserts." Funds were finally released for the Lite Up Texas (LUP) program (subsidizes utility costs for low income households), but the surcharge on electric bills that funds this program will cease on September 1, 2013, and the program itself will end in 2017. Senator West told us that LUP spawned a tug of war between the House and Senate, with the result that part of the money will go towards certification of the budget rather than LUP. "If you don't like that, then show up at the hearings!" he urged.

In a similar vein, Rep. Alonzo urged attendees to go to Austin if they wanted to see Medicaid expansion. "The Supreme Court's ruling allowing states to opt out of Medicaid expansion was a great disservice to the people of Texas" he said. He also feels that the voter ID law puts a disproportionate burden on seniors who are required to renew their drivers licenses more frequently and may have trouble getting the necessary state ID.

Bennett Ratliff was a freshman legislator in the 83rd Session, and explained that his instructions were to "shut up and listen," instructions that he apparently followed. He referred to the passage of a bill that would increase the number of doctors who would stay in Texas.

Senator West and Representative Ratliff stayed to answer questions, and both were very open and informative in their responses. The one question that neither could answer was whether any progress had been made in bringing more jobs for seniors to Texas or in improving job search assistance.

Thanks to the Senior Source and Lynda Ender for putting together this forum!

LWVD member Jan Sanders: I had a "take away" that relates to the League's ongoing work. Elected officials from both parties reported when they pay attention to advocates: Face to face communication, one on one phone conversation, hand written letter. I'm always listening for any changes to this information, especially in light of our changing communication technology. It was important to hear their take as of 2013.

LWVD/DEF gratefully acknowledges donations during April 1-July 30, 2013, from the following: Susybelle Gosslee in memory of John Gosslee; **Jennifer Cutrer-Benefactor member**; Eleanor Sutherland for scholarship; Ann Folz in honor of Sue Lichten; **Sally Dunning-Patron member**; Molly Van Ort; Lynda Ender in memory of John Gosslee and Ernest Bernhardt; **Carol Barger-Patron member** and scholarship; Kathryn Carpenter for scholarship; **Pat Sabin-Patron member**; Linda Wassenich in memory of Ernest Bernhardt; Patti Crumley for scholarship; **Kay Irvin-Benefactor member**; Barbara Materka in memory of Jeanne Dodds; Fran Morris in honor of Linda Wassenich; Annette Stewart for scholarship; Linda Wassenich in memory of Jeanne Dodds and for scholarship; Julie Lowenberg in memory of Jeanne Dodds; **Eileen Rosenblum-Patron member**; Nancy Wilson in honor of Barbara Weinstein; Lenora Graham for scholarship; Audrey Curtis for scholarship; Linda Wassenich in memory of Dale Van Ort; and Bessie Weed.

LWV at Three Levels

by Mildred Pope

There has been more news on the voting rights front this week, especially as we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the March on Washington. The Governor of North Carolina signed an omnibus voter suppression bill into law on Monday. This new law restricts voting not just by requiring the most restrictive voter photo ID, but also significantly cuts back early voting and restricts voter registration.

March for the Dream on August 24th (Reminder) The League is a partner of the 50th anniversary March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

While the League takes pause to celebrate Women’s Equality day August 26th it is with great pride we pause to share our history from all three levels of government. The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, has fought since 1920 to improve our systems of government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy. The League’s enduring vitality and resonance comes from its unique decentralization structure. The League is a grassroots organization, working at the national, state, and local levels.

There are Leagues in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong. The 900 state and local Leagues comprise a vast grassroots lobby corps that can be mobilized when necessary.

About - The League of Women Voters of Texas, a nonpartisan political organization, was formed October 19, 1919, at San Antonio, when the Texas Equal Suffrage Association was dissolved to reorganize for a new purpose. Earlier the same year Carrie Chapman Catt, head of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, had urged the formation of the League of Women Voters as the successor to NAWSA and as the official support organization for newly enfranchised American Women. Under the forceful leadership of its first president, Jessie Daniel Ames of Georgetown, who served from 1919 to 1923, the LWVTX focused its efforts on educating the newly enfranchised women voters of the state.

Reminder – Board members please complete your local survey and bring it to the September board meeting.



RIPPLES IN THE POND

by Linda Wassenich

Recently, I was talking with our broker, Emily Harwood, at Charles Schwab. She mentioned how frustrating the recent city council elections were because she wanted to know the candidates’ positions on fracking. Then she went to the LWVD website and found the *Voters Guide*.

One of the questions was about fracking; so she got the information she needed and she sent a link to her homeowners association via Facebook so others could read the information too.

Think about ways you, too, can spread the word, not only about the accurate, informative and non partisan *Voters Guide* but also about Vote411.org.