



92nd Annual Meeting

2012

**Report to the Membership
And
Workbook**

League of Women Voters of the Houston Area

92nd Annual Meeting
League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Thursday May 10, 2012

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
Clara Barton Gathering Place
1900 Bering Drive
Houston Texas 77057

5:30 pm Silent Auction and Buffet
6:15 pm Keynote Address
 Dr. William V. Flores
 President, The University of Houston/ Downtown

Annual Meeting follows immediately

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The presence of 20 members will constitute a quorum, enabling us to conduct business at this Annual Meeting (Bylaws, Art. VIII, Sec 3).

Please note that this workbook includes information about programs and outreach activities conducted by our affiliated organization, the League of Women Voters of Houston Education Fund.

**League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
92nd Annual Meeting
Thursday May 10, 2012**

Order of Business

Call to Order	Linda Cohn
Organization of Meeting	Linda Cohn
Appointment of Parliamentarian	
Appointment of Timekeeper	
Appointment of Committee to Approve Minutes	
Adoption of Order of Business	
Adoption of Rules	
Treasurer's Report	Barb Swartz
Local Programming	Jan Wilbur
Report of the Budget Committee	Barbara McCormick
Adoption of the Budget, 2012-2013	
Report of the Awards Committee	Barb Swartz
Report of the Nominating Committee	Nancy Parra
Election of Officers for 2012-2013	Linda Cohn
President's Remarks	Linda Cohn
Advice to the Board (I wish the Board would...)	Linda Cohn
Announcements	Linda Cohn
Adjourn	



**The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Minutes of the Annual Meeting
May 19, 2011**

***The Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area was called to order at 7:05 pm by President Nancy Parra. A quorum of 44 members having been recorded as present, the business of the Annual Meeting commenced.**

***Procedural Announcements:**

Marlene Lobberecht shall serve as Parliamentarian.

Betty Oertel shall serve as Timekeeper.

Ryan Leach and Carolyn Mata shall serve as a committee to review and approve the minutes of this meeting.

The annual meeting shall proceed in accordance with the rules published in the Annual Meeting Workbook and Report to Members.

***The Treasurer's Report was presented by Barb Swartz.**

***The President's Report was presented by Nancy Parra.**

***The Executive Director's Report was presented by Christina Gorczynski.**

***Vice-President Lynn Walshak presented a recommended local program for 2011-2012:**

"A Study on Ways to Increase Voter Turnout in Harris County," and moved that this proposal be approved by the general membership. The motion carried by the required majority vote of those present.

***Vice-President Leslie Taylor presented a series of changes to the Bylaws** that had been previously approved by the Board of Directors, and moved that these changes be approved by the general membership. The motion carried by the required two-thirds vote of those present.

***Budget Committee Chair Barbara McCormick presented a motion on behalf of the Budget Committee that annual dues be increased to \$70.00.** The motion carried by the required three-fifths vote of those present.

***Budget Committee Chair Barbara McCormick presented the report of the Budget Committee** and moved that it be approved by the general membership. The motion carried by the required majority vote of those present.

***Linda Cohn presented the report of the Awards Committee:**

For outstanding services as Chair and Co-Chair of the League of Women Voters Committee on Debates and Forums, special achievement awards were presented to Aimee Turney and Nancy Hentschel.

For outstanding services in providing guidance with reports on legislative issues, bylaws and policy handbook revisions, a special achievement award was presented to Marlene Lobberecht.

For outstanding services as Chair of the Human Trafficking Study Committee, a special achievement award was presented to Laura Blackburn.

The annual Helen Hunter Award is presented to the one individual who, over the course of membership, by productive work and by excellent deportment, has furthered the mission of the League of Women Voters. The recipient of the 2011 Helen Hunter Award is Sharon Cunningham.

***Betty Oertel presented the report of the Nominating Committee** and moved that the published recommendations be approved by the general membership. The motion carried by the required majority vote of those present. As provided by the Bylaws, the terms of office for newly elected leaders commenced immediately.

President: Linda Cohn (2011-2013)

Secretary: Mary Lee Burrus (2011-2012)

Program Vice-President: Jan Wilbur (2011-2013)

Community Relations Vice-President: Jacqueline Alfred (2011-2012)

Advocacy Vice-President: Laura Blackburn (2011-2013)

Director: Jackie Davis-Gilmore (2011-2013)

Director: Millie Walker (2011-2013)

Director: Davetta Daniels (2011-2013)

Director: Marcia Miqueloto (2011-2013)

Director: Wayne Derrick (2011-2012)

Director: Ryan Leach (2011-2012)

Nominating Committee: Nancy Parra, Chair (2011-2012)

Nominating Committee: Alice May Berthelsen (2011-2012)

Nominating Committee: Ellen Goins (2011-2012)

***President Linda Cohn invited members to suggest directives for the new League year.** Members urged the Board to:

1. be vigorous in advocating for the League's position on Home Owners Associations
2. maintain a policy of fiscal responsibility
3. encourage diversity with respect to the Board of Directors and
4. be aggressive in the recruitment of new members.

***Ryan Leach moved that the League proclaim a declaration honoring Nancy Parra for her distinguished service as President.** This motion was approved by acclamation and with great applause.

***The Annual Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.**

- recorded by Linda Cohn, approved by Ryan Leach and Carolyn Mata

President's Message
Linda Cohn

Welcome to the 92nd Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area.

We have kept faith with our proud heritage for yet another year. We've worked diligently and effectively in so many ways to keep our treasured democracy thriving and vibrant and to enrich our beloved Houston home.

As you read League Leaders' reports you will be reminded of accomplishments you might have had a hand in developing. Perhaps you will be introduced to programs and events you'd like to learn more about. Perhaps a new idea or a suggestion for refinement will emerge. There's no better call to action than what you'll find in these pages of review.

"Challenge" is a currently popular word for worries or concerns. It suggests a condition we can grow to rise and master, if only we're smart and we persevere. What of our challenges? You will find mention of such things in these pages. Let's find a way forward to tame them all.

Most importantly, you are most cordially invited to be a shining part, an active part, of the coming League Year.

Executive Director's Message

Christina Gorczynski

When I reflect on the League's 2011-2012 year, I think of collaboration, healthy growth and renewal. I am proud to share a few of my favorite highlights from this year.

This year, we welcomed to our League family a new grantor, the Simmons Foundation. The decision to fund the League was based on our longstanding commitment to engaging citizens of Harris County, your history of successful service and the work that we are currently doing to encourage the participation of young people and new citizens.

The Women's Equality Celebration in August was creative, lucrative and fabulous. We leveraged a relationship with a local, world-known artist, John Ross Palmer, secured an artist venue for the event. The John Ross Palmer Gallery and Studio drew record-breaking numbers, attracted new interest in the League from young professionals, creatives, art collections and the society page crowd and provided a unique experience for our longtime supporters.

The 11th Annual Repast was a truly Texan experience—the kind of event that could only happen right here in Houston, Texas. The Go Texan Day theme provided a fun twist to our signature Spring luncheon and the honorees—Anne Clutterbuck and Sue Lovell—told the story of Houston from the public servant's perspective. The two new event co-chairs, Ryan Leach and Sarah Schimmer, carried on Repast traditions and introduced new media strategies that garnered press attention.

To best meet the needs of the League, the office staff underwent a transformation. I reconfigured the office staff program. Rather than having an administrative assistant, I identified the need for a communications coordinator. In March, we hired Travis Sheive as the League Communications Coordinator who will handle online communications like email blasts, the website and follow up with members and the general public.

In December, we celebrated my second anniversary with the League of Women Voters of Houston and I am honored to be the Executive Director of the most prestigious civic organization in Houston. Thank you for your hard work and determination. I look forward to working with you in 2012-2013.

Reports on Special Projects

Photo Voter ID - Leslie Taylor

A Photo Voter ID project was inaugurated to help voters cope with state legislation that proposed more stringent ID requirements at the polling place. LWV Education Fund applied for and received a \$1,000 pass-through grant from LWV-US to fund our efforts to keep local citizens informed about possible implementation of Senate Bill 14. Several articles in the *Voter* kept our members up to date about the status of Voting Rights Act preclearance. Several organizations and elected officials invited task force chair Leslie C. Taylor to speak about the law. We emphasized in handouts and on our website that those citizens who do not have one of the six types of approved ID should start gathering the paperwork to obtain a Texas Identification Certificate now. "Don't Wait," we urged. This message was carried to the following organizations: ROAD Women, *Mi Familia Vota* field worker in training, the Texas Alliance for Retired Americans, KPFT Radio listeners, True Light Baptist Church, The Women's Group, University of Houston Downtown Citizenship Week participants, and to a forum at TSU sponsored by the NAACP and the Houston Urban League Young Professionals. Leslie also spoke to over 100 concerned citizens that Representative Sylvester Turner brought together for a Saturday morning breakfast, and at two town hall meetings sponsored by Congressman Al Green.

The League built a relationship with Operation ID, a mission of First Presbyterian Church and a part of the Coalition for the Homeless. By volunteering as an interviewer with Operation ID, Leslie has learned how to help people obtain birth certificates from Texas and all over the county. Operation ID was happy to have a volunteer deputy voter registrar on hand as well.

All the while, your local League stayed in touch with the Texas Voter Photo ID chair, Linda Krefting. The state League urged caution while we still had no answer from the Justice Department or the courts about when or if the law would go into effect. The conundrum is this: "Solid information" is the best antidote to voter confusion, but no information is "solid" as yet. All is subject to change. Even the published regulations regarding the specifics of implementing the law could change after Voting Rights Act issues and constitutional issues are finally resolved. "LWV wants to remain a trusted source for information that voters can count on and there isn't much we can say at this point that we can be certain will remain true when the dust settles. If we say things now that we need to walk back later, we do more harm than good and create more confusion than we eliminate--and that's the last thing we want to do," wrote Linda Krefting.

Women's Equality Day Commemoration – Sarah Schimmer, Ryan Leach

Our second annual Women's Equality Day Observance was held on Wednesday, August 24, at the John Palmer Galleries in the Heights. It was a cocktail-style reception saluting three notable Houston women (Sylvia Halfhill, Audrey Lawson, Curry Glassell) and for the first time awarding competitively-selected "rising star" recognition to young Houstonians of notable promise.

Repast With Political Pioneers – Sarah Schimmer, Ryan Leach

The 11th annual League of Women Voters Repast Luncheon was held on February 24, 2012 at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Houston. The event which honored former City Council Members Anne Clutterbuck (R) and Sue Lovell (D) was sold-out, attracting a huge number of league members, supporters, and elected officials. County Judge Ed Emmett, Sherriff Adrian Garcia, and a bevy of current and former City Council Members were present. The conversation between the two pioneers was moderated by Channel 8's Ernie Manouse for the second year. Ernie was also celebrating his 150th episode of his Emmy Award Winning series "Innerviews with Ernie Manouse".

The event was chaired by board member Ryan Leach for the second year and by League member Sarah Schimmer. This was the same duo that chaired the Women's Equality Day Celebration. Executive Director Christina Gorczynski and Executive Assistant Travis Sheive rounded out the team.

Organizational Assessment Task Force

In the summer of 2011, an organizational assessment was undertaken in response to concerns about our sustainability as a modern public-service organization. This assessment was facilitated by the United Way.

An Organizational Assessment Task Force was created (chaired by immediate past President Nancy Parra) and charged with identifying those elements which must be addressed, some of which may ultimately lead to a revised theory of governance for the League.

A special League Leadership conference to discuss and evaluate long-range and strategic plans was scheduled for April 28, 2012.

Reports of the Vice Presidents and Their Committees

Organization Vice President – Leslie C. Taylor

I am very proud of your Board, fellow vice presidents and Unit leaders as we amicably adjusted and readjusted the Spring meeting and *Voter* schedules. Our loyal members who attend Units stuck with us and continued to keep coming to learn and discuss new issues. Flexibility was key in this very strange redistricting year of court battles in San Antonio and constant “wait and see” regarding the Texas Voter Photo ID laws.

Although many long-time members prefer to have their Focus on Issues meetings during the noon hour, our early evening meetings brought in solid attendance numbers and many more new members and guests than we typically draw at noon. Sosa Community Center on Wirt Road continues to be a good option for meetings. I reported last year that free locations are increasingly difficult to find and that continues to be the case. At least our cars know the way to Sosa now. Consistency has its advantages.

Penny Milbouer and Judy Hollinger served as assistant *VOTER* editors and proofreaders. The office is running smoothly and our paperwork filed in a way that satisfied the auditor. Under our current policies, a vice president does not directly supervise our Executive Director or staff.

As of January 31, we list 239 members, a significant drop from the 308 members in the last membership year.

I would love to have been able to write on and on about all the great members who assisted me this year. Frankly, I cannot. I did not do a good job of delegating. I did too much myself. I could not recruit a membership chair, which we so desperately needed. Our active members are busy in other essential League functions. We are stretched very thin. If you have been sitting on the sidelines, it is time to step up. Please tell Martha Murphee tonight that you will help her in the next League Year.

Program Vice President – Jan Wilbur

The 2012 League year was the year of studies with a national study, a state study, and a local study on the calendar. The local study on increasing Harris County voter participation was aborted. The main methods of improving participation include allowing all voters to vote-by-mail, allow permanent registration to vote-by-mail, allow county option to conduct all vote-by-mail elections, same-day voter registration, all require legislation which cannot occur until the legislature convenes in 2013. Such legislation is unlikely to occur unless composition of the legislature changes drastically. The League's efforts to shift some voting hours to allow later Saturday and Sunday early voting hours have been rejected at the county level.

The League year started off with a Summer Field Trip to the Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, 1314 Andrews Street, in July. The museum complex is a preservation project in progress in Freedman's Town, part of the historic Fourth Ward. September general meeting featured the Federal Role in Public Education (see below) with units in September and October devoted to that study.

State and national program planning was done at the October general meeting at the Sosa Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road. LWV HA recommended two new state studies: Human Trafficking in Texas and Study of the Primary System in Texas. The League recommended concurrence or a study on Human Trafficking in the U.S. The number one priority for action at the national level was Voting Rights (Voter ID laws) followed by Structural Ways to Reform Congress and Income/Wealth Disparity (99 % vs. 1%). November general meeting and units were devoted to the LWV TX Water Study (see below). The League hosted its annual Reception for Elected Officials at the Black Lab on Montrose in December.

January kicked off with local program planning at the Sosa Community Center (no new studies were suggested but action and updates on several existing positions were suggested – see under 2012 – 2013 Adoption of Local Program in this workbook) with units discussing International Relations (see below). No general meeting was held in February and the State Board of Education (SBOE) election was the topic for unit discussions. Because of redistricting this year, all 15 seats on the SBOE are up for election. An ad hoc committee of Jan Wilbur, Laura Blackburn, Leslie Taylor, Mary Lee Burrus, Wayne Derrick, Penny Milbouer, and Ann Herbage prepared an UPDATE paper highlighting this important but often overlooked election and directing citizens to information about the candidates running for those positions.

The LWV EF Study on Privatization occupied both the general meeting and units in March (see below). The League program year wound up with a very successful meeting at the Sosa Community Center in April. Over 100 attendees heard Mayor Annise Parker, Houston columnist Bill King, and Mike Nichols, who chaired the Mayor's Long Rang Financial Management Task Force, informing about the City budget, pensions, and suggestions from the Task Force on how the City can raise more money and save money.

The City Budget Seminar committee was chaired by Jan Wilbur and included Laura Blackburn, Ann Herbage, and Carolyn Mata as members.

The Privatization Study Committee (Chair Judy Hollinger; Members Alice May Berthelsen, Laura Blackburn, Jo Frederiksen, Peggy Hamric, Emily Means, Martha Murphree, Jan Wilbur) began its work in August 2011. This was an LWVUS study, so we reviewed all background papers provided by LWVUS, interviewed local experts on the subject and prepared a Facts and Issues paper. We presented a general meeting in March 2012 with Gregg Phillips, former Deputy Commissioner of the Texas Commission on Health and Human Services; Anthony Hall, former City Attorney, City of Houston; Daniel Box, Secretary, Houston Organization of Public Employees; and Leslie Forestier, CFO, Houston Zoo as speakers. Consensus questions supplied by LWVUS were discussed and answered at all unit meetings in March 2012. Results of the consensus have been forwarded to LWVUS. In April, a one hour roundtable discussion was telecast on Houston Media Source TV.

In 2012, the International Affairs Committee presented the paper they'd prepared on Responsibility to Protect ("R2P") at unit meetings throughout Houston and served as experts for the unit discussions on the topic.

The Natural Resource Committee was responsible for the general meeting on Water at the IBC Bank building on Kirby. It was entitled "Should Water be a Commodity?" Facts and Issues were provided by the State League as this was a consensus topic. There were two speakers: For position - Buster Brown, former state legislator and author of SB1 and Against position Steve Box, founder and Executive Director of Environmental Stewardship. Members of the Committee include Nancy Parra, Laura Blackburn, Mary Ellen Whitworth, and Sue Schwaller.

Activities of committee members: Carolyn Mata attended WATER Challenges facing the Houston Region sponsored by Rice Design Alliance in August, 2011 and the CEC spring environmental symposium.

The Federal Role in Public Education Study Committee, chaired by Marjorie LaFoe presented LWV EF -prepared material at the September and October units. The Focus on Issue September meeting featured Dr. Annetra Piper, Federal Grants Officer at HISD, and Laura Blackburn and Marjorie LaFoe as speakers and was held at The African American Museum located at the Gregory School, 1300 Victory – a wonderful location secured for us by Dr. Davetta Daniels.

Advocacy Vice President – Laura Blackburn

Thank goodness for off-legislative years! While we were involved in action, particularly at the local and national levels, it was not the constant letter writing and calling of a legislative year.

The Advocacy Committee has performed brilliantly—thanks to Jan Wilbur, who started the committee. Conferring about action encourages us all. The Advocacy Committee is made up of all Advocacy Chairs—those chairs who have positions we can act upon.

Thanks to co-chairs Ana Cummings and Wayne Derrick, a visit was made to the office of Harris County Clerk Stan Stanart to see if we could change the hours of early voting so that voters could vote later in the day and at different times on the weekend. While a cordial conversation was had, little progress was made.

Penny Milbouer and Ann Herbage, Human Trafficking co-chairs, have done yeoman's work in lobbying with leagues around the state and preparing us for suggesting human trafficking as a state study. And they were successful! The LWV-Texas has recommended the study for Texas. That means that it only needs a majority of votes to be adopted at Convention, whereas a non-recommended study requires a two-thirds vote. The committee prepared bright green tags to attach to delegates' lanyards and they prepared a handout and a power point in preparation for caucusing. I know they will be successful! In addition, Penny spent many hours preparing a web page on our LWV-Houston Area website dedicated to information on human trafficking; this page includes videos, information on relevant laws and regulations, links to local, state, and federal resources as well as to the papers written by our local League members, and we have posted the telephone number to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and to Houston's Crime Stoppers. In November 2011, we presented a round table conversation, telecast by Houston Media Source TV, with Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, Tahirih Justice Center Director Anne Chandler, and the YMCA International Services Social Responsibility Director Constance Rossiter. We cultivated contacts with individuals and organizations in Houston that are active in addressing social and law enforcement issues in human trafficking. Laura and Ann also prepared a power point for presentation to an AAUW group.

Jan Wilbur led the action to get the Mayor and City Council members to sign on to our Clean Air Promise campaign. Cards for signatures were given to the Mayor and Council by Linda Cohn as well as members of the public. Another successful event—both the mayor and a number of Council members signed the Promise. As I hope many of you did!

We also sponsored a TV program on air quality, highlighting the mercury rule. Guests included Ann Herbage for the LWV; Matt Tejada with Air Alliance Houston; Larry Soward, former commissioner of TCEQ; Elena Craft of the Environmental Defense

Fund; and Chris Thiele, a partner in the Environmental Strategies Group with Bracewell & Giuliani. It was both in depth and exciting!

Leslie Taylor led our way concerning Voter ID. She wrote many articles and gave many speeches. We are in her debt. In addition she kept up with the new Public Defender Office. Phase I of the Public Defender's Office began in February 1, 2011, with the creation of the Mental Health Division. The PDO is appointed to represent misdemeanor defendants who are the most severely mentally ill or intellectually disabled. The Appellate Division was also created and is expected to represent approximately 350 appeals per year. In Phase II, the Felony Adult Division began taking cases in October 2011. The Juvenile Division began representing clients in December 2011.

Laura is a member of several committees representing the League: HGAC Clean Air Committee as well as the Air Quality, Climate Change and Energy committees of the Houston Partnership.

A number of letters were sent to our U.S. representatives and senators. For example, we wrote Senators Cornyn and Hutchison regarding support of the Election Assistance Commission and sent a letter to all of our U.S. representatives regarding clean air. We also sent a number of emails complimenting various Texas representatives (i.e, Garnet Coleman regarding health care) and Senator Hutchison regarding education and Women's Health Care.

Community Relations Vice President - Jacqueline Alfred

Many thanks to the chairpersons and committees who made the 2011-2012 League year an excellent one for voter service and community outreach.

- Houston City Council/ Harris County Commissioners Court Monitor—Ann Herbage, Chr
- *Voters Guide*—Sherle Frost-Watson and Sharon Cunningham, Chrs.
- *2012 Directory of Elected Officials (Voters Key)*—Marlene Cohn, Chr
- Voter Registration
 - a) Naturalization Ceremonies—Barbara Collins, Chr
 - b) Community events—Committee
- Debates and Forums—Aimee Mobley Turney, Chr
- Speakers Bureau—Committee

Houston City Council and Harris County Commissioners Court Monitor—Ann Herbage

This year marked a change in this area from “observing” to “monitoring.” On-line agenda’s of both local legislative bodies are now monitored regularly and agenda issues of interest to the League are forwarded to Program Vice Presidents for appropriate action or response.

Voters Guide—Sherle Frost-Watson and Sharon Cunningham

We printed and distributed 28,000 English-version *Voters Guides* for the November Election. We were also able to print and distribute 20,000 Spanish-version *Voters Guides*, thanks to a generous contribution from The Hon. Sylvia Garcia and a partnership with Mi Familia Vota, a 501c3 organization, that is dedicated to voter education. Mi Familia Vota provided translation services and printing/distribution assistance for the Spanish language *Voters Guide*. Both versions of the *Voters Guide* featured a redesigned front page and a very user-friendly content format.

In addition to printed *Voters Guides*, we offered both the English and Spanish versions on-line using our wonderful *411.org Online* system. Links to our online Guide were promoted by numerous other organizations through their websites. The *411.org Online Voters Guide*, which enables users to access candidate responses and print a sample ballot, is proving to be a very useful aide to voters.

For the November 2011 Election, the 74 candidates for City of Houston offices were contacted and 68 candidates responded to our *Voters Guide* questionnaire. We owe a debt of gratitude to our office assistant, Travis Sheive, and to Sharon Cunningham for their hard work in contacting candidates and following-up to ensure that responses were submitted.

The *411* interactive software, provided through LWV-US, was again used to compile the content for the Guide. The software program enables us to contact the candidates and receive their responses to our questions, electronically. The *411* software greatly expedites the editing process for VG editor, Sherle Frost-Watson, and makes layout and design much easier for our new Graphic Designer, Andrea Roberts.

The *Voters Guide* also included information about the Statewide Ballot Issues (provided by LWV-TX) and comprehensive information about voting (painstakingly compiled, checked and double-checked by Sharon Cunningham).

As this report is being written, we are preparing the *Voters Guide* for the Spring Primary, Tuesday, May 29. Two-hundred thirty-nine candidates have been contacted. The *Voters Guide* will include information about candidates for statewide and regional offices that is being compiled and provided by LWV-TX. Our partnership with Mi Familia Vota will continue and we will be providing both printed and online versions of the *Voters Guide* in English and Spanish versions.

2012 Directory of Elected Officials (Voters Key)—Marlene Cohn

Last year, we focused on cleaning up the formatting of the *Voters Key* and added a new section including a list of the school board trustees in Harris County. The new Key underwent an even greater overhaul this year. Perhaps the biggest change of all is the new title. To avoid confusion with other League publications, the title has been changed to *The Directory of Elected Officials*. “*Voters Key*” was included in small font simply as a transition; I believe by next year the former title will be completely phased out.

Information traditionally included in the print version has been omitted this year. The lists of judges and school board trustees have been posted as an online only addendum, and the voting information section has been removed entirely as it was more appropriate to our voting FAQ brochure. These changes left valuable room for formatting revisions and allowed us to highlight the primary function of the *Directory*: getting in touch with your representatives.

Most importantly, the committee had formally appointed proof readers and fact checkers this year. Judy Veibig, Marcia Miqueloto, and University of Houston intern Julia Serrano performed an invaluable service. Hats off to them. Finally, with a new printer (Dolphin Graphics) we were able to get our usual 3000 copies for only \$2,225.

Voter Registration

Naturalization Ceremonies—Barbara Collins

Our biggest success in registering citizens to vote continues to occur at the monthly Naturalization Ceremonies held at the M. O. Campbell Educational Center. From April 2011 through March 2012, with small flags waving and much applause (and some tears of joy), League volunteers saw 26,665 applicants take the Oath of Citizenship, and accepted voter registration applications from 20,840 of these newest citizens -- a robust 78 percent.

In addition, the League continues its efforts to register new voters at smaller venues in Houston and surrounding areas. None of these programs would be possible without the enthusiastic support of our many volunteers -- the unsung heroes of the League of Women Voters.

Voter Registration Community Events—Committee

Many thanks to all who helped ensure that we were able to respond to requests for Voter Registration at community events. We registered voters at conventions and community events as well as local universities, HCC campuses, trade/technical schools and local ISDs and high schools. We also assisted with voter registration events sponsored by Mi Familia Vota, providing Spanish speaking volunteers, to assist with voter registration and voting information.

Approximately 300 voters were registered at these events during that past year. Our ability to respond to requests for Voter Registration is limited only by the number of volunteers who are available to staff events.

Debates and Forums Committee—Aimee Mobley Turney

LWV-HA partnered with Houston MediaSource TV and Houston PBS in sponsoring a comprehensive series of one-hour Candidate Debates covering all but one contested municipal election race on the November 2011 General Election ballot and half of the races on the December 2011 Runoff Election ballot.

The Municipal Candidates Debates Series were telecast live from the studios of Houston MediaSource TV on Thursday evenings, were rebroadcast on Houston PBS channels 8.1 and 8.2 and were available for on demand viewing via the internet at <http://vimeo.com/channels/lwvhouston>.

Speakers Bureau—Committee

Limited availability of speakers has prompted a re-evaluation of how we responded to requests this year; however, Leslie Taylor responded to many requests for information about pending Voter ID changes (see separate report by Leslie for details) and other League members were able to provide speakers to groups and organizations covering a variety of topics.

Most speaking requests included a request for Voter Registration services (see report above) or were specific to one of LWV's programs or positions. Presentations covering areas of public policy where the League has recognized expertise/positions were handled by the Program VPs or committee chairs.

Our partnership with Houston MediaSource has enabled us to produce several round table presentations on topics of importance to the community. This is proving to be an effective means of sharing information with a reach that is far beyond what we can achieve by sending speakers to small groups and organizations.

Proposed Rules for the Annual Meeting

Composition

Admission to the Annual Meeting is open to voting members, associate members and guests. Only voting members may vote.

Quorum (ART VIII, SEC 3, LWV-HA BYLAWS)

Twenty members must be present in order to conduct business at this meeting.

Debate

Only voting members have the privilege of the floor. No person may speak twice until all who wish to speak have had an opportunity to do so. Each speaker shall identify herself or himself. Each debate speaker shall be limited to one minute, plus the time required to complete a sentence.

Closing Debate

A motion to halt debate is stated as "I move the previous question." This motion, which must be seconded, is not debatable and must be put to an immediate vote. A two-thirds vote is necessary to adopt this motion. If adopted, debate is immediately ended, and the motion under debate is voted upon.

Voting Procedures

A majority of those qualified to vote and voting shall constitute an election of officers. Nominations for officers may be made from the floor by any voting member at the appropriate time, provided the consent of the nominee has been secured.

Bylaws

Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present and voting, provided the amendments have been submitted to the membership in writing at least one month in advance.

Annual dues

Annual dues are determined by a three-fifths vote of those present and voting.

Budget

Adoption of the budget requires a majority vote.

Governing Rules

The Rules contained in "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised" shall govern in all cases to which they are applicable and not inconsistent with the Bylaws.

Local Programming Jan Wilbur

Because the League has an extensive list of existing positions, no new study items are recommended.

A top priority for update and action is proposed: City finances/budget including the Drainage Fee and how that impacts Capital Improvement budgeting.

Update is also urged on Sustainability (Air Quality, Quality of Life, Water Conservation).

The suggestion was made that the bilingual education position and the TIRZ position be updated and possible action considered.

Current Positions

Government

City Government (1993)

1. Support a strong Mayor/Council form of government with the following components:
 - *elected Mayor who is chief administrative officer of the city; who appoints all department heads subject to approval of Council; who has the power to remove department heads and staff members; who presides over Council and votes on all Council business but does not have the power of the veto.
 - *a City Council which functions as a strong legislative branch; has direct input into the formulation of the agenda for Council meetings; participates fully in goal setting for and in the development of the annual budget; can independently establish standing committees; has access to a centralized council research staff which can research issues for Council as a whole; and has adequate access to legal counsel and services of the legal department.
 - *an elected City Controller who is independent of the Mayor and City Council.
2. Support a City Council electoral structure that provides for:
 - *members elected both at-large and by single-member districts.
 - *a majority of the members elected from single-member districts
3. Support a City Council of optimal size that is determined by criteria which insure:
 - *representation of all citizens
 - *accountability
 - *accessibility
 - *effectiveness
 - *affordability
4. Support of single-member district lines based substantially on population and which also:
 - *ensure that minority rights are not diluted.
 - *reflect geographic common sense.
 - *maintain the integrity of neighborhoods.
 - *create districts which are compact, contiguous, and continuous in shape.
5. Support 4-year terms for the offices of Mayor, Controller, and City Council with staggered terms for Council.
6. Support for a special election to be called to fill a Council vacancy when ten months remain in a two-year term or twenty months remain in a four-year term.
7. Oppose term limitations for elected officials. Support of appropriate measures, or “escape clauses,” which will enable citizens to vote for candidates of their choice if term limitations are in effect. (1991/1992)

History: The League last updated this position in the 1990's.

Action: In 2010, the League monitored the task force named to look at term limits and make recommendations.

Since the elimination of term limits was specifically prohibited from being considered, the League supported two four year terms with an escape clause that would allow a candidate to run after having been off council for one term. Council received the report of the task force but took no action.

City Charter

Support a complete revision of the city charter of Houston. (1974)

Financing City Government

1. Support financial policies that:

- *are guided by sound principles of fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency;
- *provide current revenues sufficient to support expenditures;
- *are based on concepts of appropriate long range planning methods;
- *are based on diversified sources of revenue.

2. Specifically support:

- *the use by the city of additional sources of revenues in order to decrease the reliance on property taxes for funding the General Fund Budget;
- *the maintenance of debt service costs for all types of financing at a level not to exceed 20% of the General Fund revenues;
- *the maintenance of a General Fund undesignated ending fund balance whose level will be a minimum of 5% of the total expenditures less debt service costs;
- *the setting of user fees and charges by the city at levels sufficient to recover the costs of providing those services, except for those services associated with provision for the general welfare and common good;
- *the development of financial and management processes and systems which result in operational efficiency and cost containment. (1989)

History: The study was undertaken to formulate a position on the policies and principles basic to financing City Government, beyond the budget process, and give the LWV-HA the means to address such concerns as the city's over-dependence on property taxes for funding the operating budget, its need to maintain a healthy emergency fund balance, the level of city indebtedness beyond investment in capital improvements, and others.

Action: No action has been taken on this position in recent years.

Budget Process

1. Support a budget process that meets these criteria:

- *is based on long range planning;
- *provides for thorough budget review and evaluation;
- *has well defined channels for citizen input and review.

2. Specifically support:

- *a budget format that provides for budget controls and accountability and provides for analysis that reflects policy goals and directions;

*a budget process that is regulated by well-defined timelines for each step of the budget process, and that these timelines are written into the city's code of ordinances, and that these timelines should provide for adequate timing for public study and input with each step;

*a budget process that encourages public participation by such specific means as:

*public meetings on budget policy and issues held by the mayor and council members in different sections of the city;

*publishing a brief budget summary in newspapers that would include important budget revenues and expenditures and highlights of major policy changes;

*availability of the proposed budget when given to council with provision for a number of copies available to the public at cost;

*giving adequate notice of all proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making all public records accessible.

*notice of all hearing dates.

*a budget process that provides for testimony by the individual citizen at the public hearing or as provided for by state law prior to the adoption of the proposed budget.(1988)

History: This position was first reached in 1975. It was updated in 1988 to emphasize public input, long range planning, and availability of budget documents a budget calendar; and support for integrating the Capital Improvement Budget with the Operating Budget.

Action: Much of what the League advocated has been achieved, and no action has been taken in recent years.

Capital Improvement Budget

Support the consideration of the capital improvement budget along with the operating budget. (1988)

Libraries

Support measures to insure adequate library facilities for Houston area residents, including merger of city and county systems and the regional library concept. (1969)

History: When this study began in the late 1960's, libraries were few and of low quality. Library budgets were politically easy to cut.

Action: Since 1969 this position has been used to lobby City Council for needed funding. We have also worked with other groups seeking increased library hours and personnel. There have been significant improvements. Although merger of the city and county library systems has been politically impossible, the two systems do cooperate.

Annexation/Disannexation

1. Support annexation by Houston of the Ship Channel Industrial Districts, with negotiation of short-term contracts in the interim. (1977) The LWV-HA recognizes the importance to the city of Houston of the power

to annex additional geographic territory in order to protect its economic base and to provide a government which addresses regional needs. However the League feels that Houston should exercise this power within the following guidelines: (1979)

- *Checkerboard patterns should be avoided;

- *No unincorporated areas should be left surrounded by the city (except those within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of another city);

- *Houston should not pass over economically depressed areas as it proceeds with annexation;

- *Houston should plan annexation in advance in order to make sure that city departments are prepared for expanded services;

- *Houston should notify residents of areas to be annexed in advance and give them the opportunity to help plan how needed services will be provided and/or coordinated with facilities already in place;

- *Houston should provide services related to public health and safety services immediately upon annexation, and set a schedule to provide other services within a reasonable time;

- *Houston should provide adequate levels of services to all annexed areas, and this should be done without extra assessments to residents of areas where such assessments would be a severe burden. These should include: improving streets and drainage to a level at which services can be provided to people living on those streets; and provision of city water and wastewater service within a reasonable time if the area has no adequate facilities;

- *Establish an impartial board to weigh the importance of annexation to the health of the city and the ability of the city to accommodate the needs of the area. (1979)

2. Support a comprehensive planning process for growth, open spaces, and capital investment in the ETJ, recognizing the possibility of eventual annexation of these areas. (1979)

3. Support the adoption of a subdivision ordinance for the city and the ETJ. (1979)

4. Support policies encouraging development within the city limits. (1979)

5. Support a policy encouraging water districts to consist of a single parcel of land. (1979)

6. Support a long-range policy of annexation and the adoption of a policy for annexation and disannexation to include:

- *legal clarification of circumstances under which disannexation would be permitted;

- *a review board, preferably at the state level, to hear cases of disputed annexations and disannexations;

- *a requirement for an annexing city to establish a baseline for the provision of municipal services to be maintained in all parts of the city and provided to newly annexed areas at the same level. (1983)

History: The last use of this position was for the annexation of Kingwood in the 1980's.

Action: No action has been taken in recent years as no annexation has taken place.

Comprehensive Planning

1. Support planning in Houston's extraterritorial jurisdiction through:
 - *the development of goals and priorities for Harris County by assessing the needs of the total community with maximum public participation;
 - *central planning coordination and implementation tools for the unincorporated areas of Harris County;
 - *development of a uniform performance building code for the unincorporated areas of Harris County;
 - *feasibility studies for the consolidation of planning services between municipalities and Harris County;
 - *increased use of Harris County of the planning services of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, and the development by H-GAC of practical services reflecting the planning needs of Harris County. (1976)
2. Support the development and adoption of a long-range flexible, constantly updated, comprehensive plan, developed with adequate citizen input. This plan should include:
 - *the coordination and centralization of the planning process in Houston, with the strengthening of a central planning authority;
 - *the development of goals, objectives, and priorities for Houston through a process which assures maximum public participation;
 - *a broad-based planning commission with members with diverse backgrounds and expertise;
 - *a comprehensive plan which includes economic, social, and environmental concerns as well as physical development;
 - *public involvement in the planning process at the neighborhood level, and public hearings on proposed plans;
 - *an explanation to the public by the City Council of why any given plan is or is not adopted; (1976)
 - *a strong role for the City Planning Commission, committed to the full range of powers granted it by the city charter, and to the coordination of its work with an equally strong Planning Department; cooperation between the private and public planning entities, with public participation throughout the process;
 - *vigorous enforcement of current regulations, and the enactment of additional ordinances which focus on civic concerns such as traffic congestion and storm water runoff; preserve and improve the quality of life in Houston neighborhoods;
 - *the use of growth management techniques such as performance standards, impact fees, and both shortterm and long-term capital improvements budget planning;
 - *a city ordinance requiring the setting aside of land for open space and parks. (1984)

History: Studies in 1976 and 1984 addressed the lack of long-range planning in both the City of Houston and Harris County and coordination or planning between the City and the County.

Action: LWV-HA has consistently lobbied for a zoning ordinance for the City of Houston. In 2003, the League joined with the Blueprint Houston project to promote public participation in comprehensive city planning.

Tax Abatement & TIRZ

The LWV-HA supports the use of tax abatements and tax increment reinvestment zones in the Houston region with appropriate oversight and public input. The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area supports tax abatements as an economic development tool in competitive site situations to attract new “magnet industries” and to retain existing businesses and encourage them to upgrade and provide new jobs. The League also supports tax abatement as an environmental incentive, for historic preservation, and to revitalize blighted areas. Tax abatement contracts should be analyzed for public benefit and rigidly monitored for compliance and should be terminated if contract terms are not met. The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area supports Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZs) with appropriate oversight and analysis by the governmental jurisdiction(s) involved and community input, to develop or redevelop blighted areas, for land use management, and for economic growth in tax base. For both tax abatements and TIRZs, the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area supports:

1. Annual collection and dissemination of objective data.
2. Regional cooperation.
3. A mandatory public hearing for meaningful and timely input on whether a proposed contract should be granted.
4. Regular re-evaluation of criteria in light of broader community planning goals. (2006)

History: The League originally studied tax abatements in 1996. Our position was restudied and TIRZs were added to the study in 2006.

Action: The 2006 study revealed that both the City and the County had tightened up the requirements and the monitoring of tax abatements, and no action has been taken under this position since then.

Ethics

Support of effective ethics regulation with strong enforcement.

History: This position was adopted in 2007.

Action: In 2008, Laura Blackburn served on the Citizens Task Force on Ethics established by County Judge Ed Emmett. The League lobbied for a bill in the 81st Legislature that would have closed the “revolving door” and prohibited county officials from lobbying for a certain period of time following the termination of their county employment. The Governor vetoed the bill.

Natural Resources

Parks and Recreation

Support measures to insure acquisition, maintenance, and development of public lands in the Houston area by:

- *comprehensive planning for public lands in Harris County to meet National Parks and Recreation Association standards;
- *adequate funding;
- *adoption of an objective priority planning policy;
- *investigation of legal ordinances to facilitate parkland acquisition and contribution of land and money by developers;
- *maximum cooperation and coordination of park services and planning between city and county;
- *maximum use of schools and churches for program development;
- *opposition to long-term private and public leasing of public lands. (1970)

Action: Since 2002, the League has been a member of the Houston Quality of Life Coalition and has supported the coalition's goals. In recent years the League has lobbied for more aggressive land acquisition and water conservation policies by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and for additional funding for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

Transportation

Support comprehensive transportation plans which include:

- *best land use of land and access to employment, cultural, civic, medical, educational, and other facilities;
- *public participation in the early planning stages; (1971)
- *a well-balanced, environmentally sensitive, multi-modal transportation system which includes buses, rail, and well-regulated paratransit (jitneys, etc.);
- *cooperation and funding of joint ventures among the different transportation agencies – Highway Department, Metro, and city and county;
- *use of highway funds in the following order of priority:
 1. maintenance
 2. new construction
 3. public mass transit
- *limited use of user fees such as toll roads to help fund development and/or construction of a transportation system. (1985)

History: The League has historically been concerned about mobility and studied the issue several times in the 1970's and 1980's.

Action: LWV-HA and Houston-Galveston Area Council lobbied with other groups to pass enabling state legislation for a city referendum to establish a transit authority.

Flood Control

Support comprehensive long-range planning for flood damage avoidance in Harris County by considering:

- *all alternative methods for flood damage avoidance;
- *the effect of future development on flooding patterns;
- *the full effects of stream modifications;
- *the flood plain as a multiple use resource, especially its role as a natural retention system which reduces and delays peak flows;
- *economic, social, and environmental factors, especially water quality. (1978)

History: At 11 feet above sea level, there is no place in the Houston area that might not be under water in a 5 inch rain. New flood maps were finalized in 2005. Some areas (e.g., Bellaire) have been expanded; others reduced.

Action: The League has a member on the citizen Harris County Flood Control Task Force (the chairperson is the League representative). Several League members representing other organizations are also members of the Task Force, which meets quarterly. The Harris County Flood Control District does a good job planning as defined by our position except, perhaps, in considering “the effect of future development on flooding patterns,” which is governed by Houston and Harris County, not the Flood Control District.

Solid Waste

Support a long-range solid waste management plan which emphasizes:

- *recycling and development of new technology;
- *separation of solid waste at the source;
- *judicious use of incineration and landfills;
- *effective land use principles;
- *control of air and water pollution;
- *regional planning;
- *promotion of public education efforts;
- *citizen participation. (1972)

History: The League began studying solid waste issues in response to federal, state, and local statutes, and because of controversy arising from the operation of the Holmes Road incinerator.

Action: In the past, LWV-HA has lobbied for reduction in packaging so less waste is generated, for greater use of recycled materials, and for economic incentives which enable recycled materials to compete effectively with “virgin” materials. No action has been taken on this position since the late 1990's.

Toxic Substances

Support:

*the protection of public health with special concern for sensitive populations as the primary factor in determining regulatory action and decision-making involving toxic substances, with economic costs a secondary consideration;

*a policy requiring industry and unions to fully inform employees and the public of potential risks of toxic substances, both in the work place and the community;

*informing the public of any possibility of adverse effect of toxic substances via clear labeling, public forums, public access to information, and articles and programs in all media to help make informed choices;

*regulating the transportation of toxic substances by:

1. enforcement of safety, speed, and inspection regulations;

2. establishment of realistic schedules, routes, and work practices to protect the public health;

3. requirement of complete and informative labeling on the transporting vehicle, whether hazardous product or waste;

*stronger regulatory efforts to control hazardous pollutants in air and water by frequent re-examination of laws and regulations as new information is developed through research, and by enlarging existing regulatory agencies, as necessary, even at increased costs to the taxpayers. (1983)

History: Passage of the Toxic Substances Control Act in 1976 spurred LWV-HA's examination of the hazards of toxic substances in Texas' Gulf Coast region. After several general meetings, the 1983 consensus was reached.

Action: League members have served on the Toxic Substances Task Force and the Houston Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Members now serve on the Environment Committee of the Greater Houston Partnership. In 2005, we testified before Houston City Council and the Texas Senate Natural Resources Committee, urging stronger laws and enforcement of laws on air quality.

Building Codes in Coastal Areas

Support the most up-to-date building codes possible for coastal areas, taking into account future storms of increasing intensity and frequency as well as cost. Building codes should take into account elevation, roofs and windows and should be strictly enforced at every governmental level. It is viewed that Category 3 protection is appropriate for this area.

Social Policy

Administration of Justice

Support the removal of certain areas of human behavior from criminal prosecution: sexual activity between legally competent consenting adults, gambling, adult access to pornography, use of alcohol. (1975)

Support measures for rehabilitation of offenders, which would include:

- *punishment or penalties which fit the crime;
- *more equitable punishment;
- *alternative arrangements to placement of juveniles in state schools which would include small, family type units close to home with effective supervision and qualified personnel;
- *provisions for pre-trial release such as are incorporated in the present (1974) Harris County Pretrial Release Program.

Action: The League has lobbied for repeal of Penal Code 21.06 to decriminalize consensual sexual activity between adults and participated in programs to educate the public about voting rights of ex-felons.

Bilingual Education

*Support educational legislation, policies, and programs that take into consideration the following:

*The purpose of bilingual education should be to teach every limited-English proficient (LEP) student to read, write, and speak English as soon as possible while maintaining academic achievement.

*The basis on which the effectiveness of bilingual education should be determined are:

1. how quickly transition into English is made;
2. standardized testing results of academic achievement, using valid data that can be confirmed.

*Factors that negatively influence the academic achievement of LEP students are:

1. limited supply of qualified, committed teachers;
2. high mobility of students' families;
3. economic hardships;
4. low educational expectations of the teachers, family, and the children.

*The factors can be mitigated by:

1. consistency of curriculum among school districts;
2. adequate resources available from the Texas Education Agency;
3. working with families and teachers to raise educational expectations;
4. creating new avenues for recruiting additional teachers who are qualified and committed.

*Because of the preservation of ethnic cultures is the responsibility of the home and other institutions, funding for bilingual education should be focused on the acquisition of English proficiency.

History: LWV-HA conducted a two-year study of bilingual education in the Greater Houston Area to review and evaluate federal and state laws, funding mechanisms, and policies as well as how programs are being implemented and the criteria used for evaluating the success or effectiveness of the programs. A position was adopted on April 24, 2000.

Action: No action has been taken in recent years.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Support the requirement for schools to honor parental written requests not to use corporal punishment on their children. (1989) Support the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools. This is a local position only.

History: The Child Abuse and Neglect study was begun in Houston in 1988. The Committee soon discovered that child abuse and neglect should be a state issue. At the LWVT convention held in Houston in 1990, the study was adopted as a non-recommended item and was studied locally by LWV-HA members under the guidelines of the LWVT. The child care issue was studied that same year as a recommended LWVT item.

Action: In recent years, the League has lobbied for child abuse prevention programs to be restored with health care provided for all our children in protective care; caseworker caseloads to reflect the national standard of 12 to 18 cases per worker; and for Children's Protective Services (CPS) to be adequately funded with the latest technology.

Domestic Violence

Support efforts to:

- *increase community awareness of the incidence of domestic violence;
- *establish a process for keeping records on domestic violence calls, responses, charges, and dispositions;
- *provide special training of police and special squads to deal with domestic violence;
- *establish crisis intervention teams and provide aid to the victims;
- *encourage the District Attorney's office to prosecute charges of domestic violence;
- *encourage sensitivity to the problem of domestic violence throughout the justice system;
- *encourage increased cooperation between agencies that deal with the problem;
- *make counseling available for all members of a household involved in domestic violence. (1983)

History: LWV-HA has had a position on domestic violence since 1983.

Action: LWV-HA was part of a coalition that successfully lobbied for setting up the Domestic Violence Unit in the District Attorney's office and League members volunteered in the office in the 1980's and early 1990's. The League supported the anti-stalking law that was revised in the 1997 Texas Legislative session. No action has been taken since then.

Education

1. Support measures to improve educational accountability program in the school districts of the greater Houston area, with:

- *shared responsibility of educational accountability at all levels of the educational process, including the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency, local school boards, administrators, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community.

- *state legislative accountability for fair and equitable funding;

- *teacher accountability for knowledge of competency in the subjects they teach;

- *student accountability for conduct and attitude;

- *community accountability for knowledge of election issues;

- *community involvement in accountability programs;

- *comprehensive student evaluations including methods other than standardized testing;

- *parental input in the evaluation process of the school district personnel. (1978)

2. Support equal access to quality education, including:

- *providing opportunities for students to learn to function in our pluralistic community;

- *offering and encouraging the achievement of academic skills which enable each child to function at his/her highest potential;

- *providing superior programs and teaching which take into account the needs of the individual pupil;

- *offering superior programs in college preparatory and occupational/vocational training;

- *providing free transportation as an integrative tool for those requesting it;

- *student transfer policies which preserve existing integration;

- *magnet-alternative schools;

- *closing under-utilized schools;

- *combinations of the above. (1976)

History: LWV-HA adopted its education positions in the mid-1970's in response to perceived inequities in school funding and educational opportunities. In 2002-03, committee members restudied the LWV-HA position on education.

Action: Action since has included monitoring state legislation on school finance (especially vouchers), and the impact of the religious right on education through affiliation with the Texas Freedom Network. The school tax base impact of tax abatements was considered in the 2006 LWV-HA Tax Abatement study that found only limited use of tax abatements by school districts. The League has consistently opposed vouchers and supported adequate education funding.

Health

1. Support the establishment of comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and inclusive public health services for Houston Area residents. These services should be accessible to the public in terms of cost and location. Clients should understand available services. Emphasis should be given to preventive and primary care.

2. Support joint planning and coordination to eliminate duplication and gaps in health services and to improve the availability and quality of care including:
 - *Centralized regional governance to pool resources and increase effectiveness;
 - *Collaborative efforts by city, county, and non-profit public health care providers including programs to disseminate information enabling users to better manage their care; and
 - *Channels for consumer input into health planning.
3. Support measures to control the escalation of health care costs including:
 - *Increasing the insured population;
 - *Accessing all available matching funds;
 - *Utilization of local public and private funds to pay Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) premiums/Medicare Part B premiums for indigent elderly;
 - *Increasing the number of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), school clinics, and other clinics that deliver comprehensive medical services so that care is delivered in the most appropriate setting, thus lowering the use of expensive emergency room services;
 - *Area-wide coordination of electronic health records including immunizations to be accessible by all health care facilities;
 - *Area-wide coordination of highly specialized care involving expensive equipment; and
 - *Utilization of para-professionals such as nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, and dental hygienists.

History: The LWV-HA study evaluated the existing health care providers, distribution, and services in light of increases in the number of uninsured residents, over-crowding in public hospitals, and ever increasing reliance on emergency rooms to provide primary care services at prohibitive cost.

Action: LWV-HA has lobbied to prevent cuts in the Hospital District budget. In 2002, LWV-HA opposed shortened hours for city clinics. League members served on a committee to study public health care in Houston and issued a report in 2005. Also in 2005, LWV-HA lobbied for a Hospital District budget that realistically addressed the demand for services.

Housing

1. Support equal opportunities for all Houstonians with emphasis on additional well-managed, low-cost housing and continued support of existing positions:
 - *a minimum housing code used in conjunction with existing building, fire, health, and sanitation codes;
 - *adequate provisions for enforcing these codes, and any relocation of families necessary through such enforcement, to be the obligation of the city;
 - *completion of a workable program for land use and housing for more orderly growth of the city, thus leading to qualification for federal assistance;
 - *encouragement of private investment in low-cost housing and the use of private initiative to seek new ways of housing the needy. (1971)

2. Support a substantial increase in low and moderate-income housing stock expenditures for Houston and Harris County above the 26% and 30% of Community Development Block Grant funds allocated in 1990. The League believes that Housing Assistance should be the top priority of Community Development Block Grant funding. We support equal priority for Capital Improvements and Economic Development.

History: Our housing position was prompted by serious rental housing quality deficiencies in the 1970's. The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) position arose from concerns that insufficient funds were being devoted to low and moderate housing as opposed to economic development.

Action: LWV-HA used its position to work with Houston City Council to create a housing code, which led to improvements in rental housing stock. No action has been taken on this position in recent years.

Mandatory Homeowner Associations

The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area supports changes in Texas law governing mandatory homeowner associations which would provide:

- *Protection against foreclosure on homesteads.
- *Priority of payments so that assessment payments apply first to assessments and then to non-assessment items.
- *Secret ballots in homeowner elections.
- *Adequate safeguards against fraud to assure uniform, honest and accurate election results.
- *That the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Texas Open Records Act cover homeowner associations. (2008)

Sexuality Education and Reproductive Services

1. Support comprehensive sex education in all public schools in Harris County, including:
 - *greater parental involvement;
 - *broadening curricula;
 - *student access to specifically educated nurses, counselors, and teachers;
 - *greater use of city and county educational programs;
 - *programs to help parents open discussions with their children. (1982)
2. Support adequate, easily accessible, publicly funded family planning services to meet the community's needs, including:
 - *confidentiality of all clients;
 - *efficient scheduling of family planning services;
 - *advertising;
 - *adequate funding;
 - *adequate, accessible facilities. (1982)
3. Support equal access to legal and medically sound pregnancy termination services for all residents of Houston and Harris County, with government funding and/or a

combination of government/private funding available for low and moderate income residents. (1982)

History: This position was adopted in 1982.

Action: The LWV cooperates with Planned Parenthood at all levels to keep Roe v. Wade, or freedom of choice, the law of the land. The League supports providing foreign aid for family planning. In 2002 wrote letter to US senators urging ratification of CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) treaty.

Administration of Justice: Public Defender

The board approved the following position statement: The League of Women Voters of the Houston Area supports measures to create and then adequately fund and adequately staff a public defender office for Harris County. The league supports and encourages court administrators and judges to continually assess and improve the system of appointing private counsel to represent those indigent defendants who are not represented by a public defender. The league supports efforts to monitor and adjust workloads of both public defenders and appointed counsel with the goal that each indigent defendant receives competent legal advice and representation.

History: This position was adopted in 2009. A notebook of research materials and electronic copies of research materials are available at the LWV-HA office.

Action: Soon after taking the position, the League testified before Commissioners Court to applaud its application for a grant from the Texas Task Force for Indigent Defense and followed the revision of the grant application.

League of Women Voters of the Houston Area Budget for Fiscal Year 2012-2013

Submitted by the Budget Committee for Membership Approval

Barbara McCormick, Chair

Linda Cohn, Laura Blackburn, Barb Swartz, Marlene Lobberecht, Sharon Cunningham

Please note that the League of Women Voters of Houston Education Fund budget will be approved by the LWV-Education Fund Board of Trustees at their June meeting. Items pertaining to the LWV-Education Fund are included for information only.

INCOME	LWVHA		LWVHEF		PROPOSED -- 2012-2013		
	YTD 2/29	Budget	YTD 2/29	Budget	LWVHA	LWVHEF	TOTAL
Dues	11,426	20,500			15,000		15,000
Focus on Issues Meetings			690	1,080		1,350	1,350
Holiday Reception	735	1,750			1,000		1,000
Program Planning		400				100	100
Annual Meeting	90	1,500			1,200		1,200
Silent Auction		1,000			1,000		1,000
Repast			38,800	52,000		50,500	50,500
Fall Fundraiser			17,753	15,000		20,000	20,000
Democracy Circle		1,500			3,000	7,000	10,000
Member Donations, unrestricted	1,849	3,500	17,203	3,500	3,500	3,500	7,000
Nonmember Donation, unrestricted			72	500		100	100
Corporate Donations, unrestricted			249	300		300	300
Legacy Donations				500	1,500	8,500	10,000
LWVUS Grants			2,000	1,000			0
Foundation Grants			11,000	80,000		45,000	45,000
New Funding Avenues						15,000	15,000
In-Kind Contribution of Goods					5,000	10,000	
Voters Key			4	5,000		1,000	1,000
Voters Guide			16,400	20,000		15,000	15,000
Member List Rental/Sale	1,000	1,000			2,000		2,000
Misc.	88		47				0
TOTAL	15,188	31,150	104,218	178,880	33,200	177,350	195,550

EXPENSE	LWVHA		LWVHEF		PROPOSED -- 2012-2013		
	YTD 2/29	Budget	YTD 2/29	Budget	LWVHA	LWVHEF	TOTAL
Rent	1,080	1,450	6,920	8,150	1,450	8,150	9,600
Maintenance		15		85	45	255	300
Telephone	254	375	1,654	2,125	410	2,315	2,725
Office Supplies	41	150	435	850	150	850	1,000
Software Updates	262	75	261	425	75	425	500
Postage	219	150	205	100	50	595	645
Insurance, liability & worker's comp	448	180	700	1,020	180	1,020	1,200
Insurance, D&O					750	750	1,500
Equipment		180		1,020	300	1,700	2,000
Equipment Maintenance		30	225	170	30	170	200
In-Kind Contribution of Goods					5,000	10,000	15,000
Focus on Issues Meetings			359	1,240		1,200	1,200
Holiday Reception	536	1,500			750		750
Program Planning		400				100	100
Annual Meeting		1,000			1,000		1,000
Lobbying Activities		200			100		100
Membership	88	500			100		100
Member Finance Drive	88	350	88	350	100	100	200
Directory	711	400			0		0
VOTER	465	700	506	700	0	0	0
Annual Meeting Workbook		300			150		150
Strategic Planning					375	2,125	2,500
Convention/Cou ncil				1,200	0	500	500
Voter Registration			48	250		2,000	2,000
Youth Engagement Project				10,000		1,000	1,000
Voters Guide, printed			7,343	17,100		9,500	9,500
Voters Key			2,225	3,000		750	750
Facts & Issues		120	129	1,320		50	50
Voter ID Project				15,000		900	900
Mobile Voter Education Project						6,000	6,000

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EXPENSE	LWVHA		LWVHEF		PROPOSED -- 2012-2013		
	YTD 2/29	Budget	YTD 2/29	Budget	LWVHA	LWVHEF	TOTAL
Program Study				200		0	0
Debates & Forums				8,000		3,000	3,000
Fall Fundraiser			3,884	4,000		5,000	5,000
Repast			4,275	22,000		24,000	24,000
Annual Report	50	15		85	15	85	100
Public Relations			398	200		400	400
Dues to Coalitions			550	725		775	775
Member List Rental/Sale				1,000		2,000	2,000
LWVUS Grant Expenses				200			0
Exec. Dir. Salary	3,681	4,750	32,909	42,750	7,200	40,800	48,000
Health Insurance Supplement					150	850	1,000
Communications Coordinator	5,604	8,400	9,376	12,600	3,600	20,400	24,000
Payroll Taxes	437	2,180	2,997	6,555	1,310	7,425	8,735
Auto Expense	20	35	200	205	40	210	250
Staff Development		50	225	150	40	210	250
Professional Services	2,700	4,200	2,800	4,200	3,000	4,500	7,500
LWVUS PMP	2,198	4,200	4,395	4,200	4,500	4,500	9,000
LWV-TX PMP	3,284	3,200	1,642	3,200	3,400	3,400	6,800
Web Site		400	1,050	1,100	1,100	7,900	9,000
Bank & Pay Pal Charges	199	500	597	665	500	665	1,165
Credit Card Lease			288	600		600	600
TOTAL	22,365	36,005	86,684	176,740	35,870	177,175	213,045
Difference		-4,855		2,140	-2,670	175	-17,495

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee presents the following slate for the Annual Meeting Election:

Officers (2012-2014)

Treasurer Barb Swartz
Organization Vice President Martha Murphree

Officers One-Year Term (2012-2013)

Community Relations VP Jacqueline Alfred
Secretary Mary Lee Burrus

Directors (2012-2014)

Tom Berg
Carolyn Mata
Penny Milbouer
Sarah Schimmer

Directors One-Year Term (2012-2013)

Ryan Leach
Wayne Derrick
Aimee Turney

Officers and Directors continuing for the year 2012-2013

Officers

President Linda Cohn
Program Vice President Jan Wilbur
Advocacy Vice President Laura Blackburn

Directors

Marcia Miqueloto

Nominating Committee 2012-2013

Lynn Walshak, Chair
Peggy Hill
Millie Whittington

Submitted by the Nominating Committee

Nancy Parra, Chair
Alice May Berthelsen
Ellen Goins
Ann Herbage
Jan Wilbur

Biographies of the New Nominees

Treasurer: Barb Swartz joined the League in 1965 when a new League was forming in the Pittsburgh area. Since then she has served in many capacities in Leagues in Dade County, the Pittsburgh area, and in Houston. She presently serves on the LWV-TX Board as Secretary. She will fill another term as Treasurer, one of the positions she held before in the Houston Area League.

Organization VP: Martha Murphree has been active in League work since retirement as Executive Director of the American Institute of Architects Houston, serving on the Board and as Treasurer. She is now executive director of Blueprint Houston, an organization that advocates planning for the City of Houston. Martha is on the Steering Committee for the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning process, a member of the Advisory Panel for the Barbara Jordan/Mickey Leland School of Public Policy at Texas Southern University, a member of Houston City Breakfast Club, and a free lance consultant on awards presentations.

Community Relations VP: Jacqueline Alfred is a fundraising and development consultant with her own firm, JA Consulting. She served as president of the LWV-HA (1989-1991) and the Greater Youngstown (OH) League (1980-82). She also served both Leagues as a director and vice president. As *Voters Guide* editor in Houston and Youngstown, she worked to develop the *Voters Guide*'s popular newspaper format. She has worked on League study committees and voter service projects, including the special workshop for Speakers Bureau members. In 1994, she chaired the League's 75th Anniversary Celebration. Alfred has served as co-chair and chair of the Repast with Political Pioneers.

Secretary: Mary Lee Burrus returned to the League about ten years ago after retiring as an event planner at Rice University. She has a particular interest in promoting engaging discussions of current issues at League unit meetings and to that end has resurrected the briefing session to help educate discussion leaders. And because she enjoys energetic discussions she also belongs to three book groups!

Director: Ryan Leach is starting his second year as a League Board Member. He co-chaired the 2011 Women's Equality Day Celebration as well as the 2011 and 2012 Repast Luncheons. Ryan has been the General Counsel for Pasadena ISD since 2010. Prior to that, he served as chief of staff to Council Member and Repast Honoree Sue Lovell. Ryan is training for his first triathlon to take place in April.

Director: Wayne Derrick is an engineering graduate of Rice University and worked in the petrochemical industry until retirement. He is a returning board member of the League. He is interested in improving elections in Texas and has been an election judge many times in order to better understand the election process. He especially wants to

increase voter turnout and is aware of many possible improvements used in other states. He is also a volunteer in the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Houston.

Director: Aimee Mobley Turney has been involved in Houston politics since her childhood when she proudly displayed a Sissy Farenthold sticker on her tricycle and tagged along with her father when he volunteered for the campaign. She served as Deputy District Director for Texas Representative Borris L. Miles, HD-146. In 2010 she co-chaired the LWV-HA Debates and Forums Committee, and in 2011 she chaired the committee. Aimee has a part time career in healthy food evangelism as a hoop dance instructor and staff member of Central City Co-op. She enjoys gardening and teaching others how to garden and is a recent graduate of the Texas Master Gardener program.

Director: Tom Berg is a defense attorney who practices in Federal Court. He is active in the State Bar of Texas, Houston Bar Association, the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association and the Harris County Criminal Lawyers Association where he is in his second term on the board of directors. Tom is recently retired from the United States Army with the rank of Colonel. He has served as a military judge in the United States Army Trial Judiciary. Raised in Mexico, he is fluent in Spanish and identifies as Hispanic. Tom is relatively new to the League and has been registering voters at the Naturalization Ceremonies for over a year.

Director: Carolyn Mata is interested in matters of public policy, especially those regarding the environment and animals and has chaired the LWV-HA Natural Resources Committee for a number of years. She has previously served on the League Board and, having now retired, intends to become more active in the League.

Director: Penny Milbouer is beginning her second term on the board. She serves as co-editor of the VOTER and has worked on the LWV-HA Website. She was a member of the Human Trafficking study group and developed the Human Trafficking web page. The last twelve years before she retired, she was a paralegal in a major law firm's health section where she worked on Medicare and Medicaid provider enrollment and legal and policy research; she also wrote and edited a monthly newsletter on HIPAA (patient privacy law) topics.

Director: Sarah Schimmer has been a League member since 2007 and active in assisting the League with public relations and media outreach. She served as Co-Chair of the League's 2011 Women's Equality Day Celebration as well as Co-Chair of the League's 2012 Repast Event. She is part of the Public & Government Affairs team for AAA Texas & AAA New Mexico, facilitating traditional media relations, social media, public affairs and community programs. Sarah also worked in federal and local government, serving in Washington, D.C. as a Press Secretary for a member of the Texas Congressional delegation and as Chief of Staff to a Houston City Council Member. Sarah earned her Political Science & Journalism degree from Texas A&M University.

Nominating Committee

Lynn Walshak, Chair, holds an undergraduate degree in History and Biology from South West Texas St Univ. MLS and Biology, North Texas Univ. Graduate work in Public Administration, at Georgia Southern Univ. She retired as Professor Emerita after 30 years as library faculty at Georgia Southern University. Lynn joined the Houston League Dec. 2003. Served on Board of Directors 2006 - 2011, Voters Guide Coordinator 2006-2008; Program Vice President 2009 - 2011. Chair of HOA Committee 2008 - to date.

Peggy Hill presently serves on the LWVUS Board as Director and Chair of the Education Study. She served as League President in Richardson, Texas. She was a member of the LWV-HA Board, serving as Election Central Chair, Education Chair, and Unit Chair. Peggy is Associate Professor Emerita at the University of Houston Clear Lake.

Millie Whittington is a teacher, and for the last 18 years, has been teaching conversational English to foreign students at the University of Houston. She was the chair for many years of the LWV-HA International Affairs Committee and, in 2010, was the recipient of the Helen Hunter award for her outstanding contributions to the Houston Area League. The League is of primary interest to her because of its principles, goals and strengths.