



93nd Annual Meeting

2013

**Report to the Membership
And
Workbook**

League of Women Voters of the Houston Area

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

93rd Annual Meeting
League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Wednesday May 22, 2013

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

5:30 pm
 Buffet and Fundraising Raffle

6:15 pm
 Keynote Address
 Dr. Robert Sanborn
 President and CEO
 Children at Risk

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
93rd Annual Meeting
Wednesday May 22, 2013**

Order of Business

Call to Order	Linda Cohn
Organization Appointment of Parliamentarian Appointment of Timekeeper Appointment of Committee to Approve Minutes Adoption of Order of Business Adoption of Rules	Linda Cohn
Treasurer's Report	Barb Swartz
Local Issues: Study and Advocacy Adoption of Proposed Changes to Existing Positions	Jan Wilbur
Report of the Budget Committee Adoption of the Budget, 2013-2014	Barbara McCormick
Awards and Appreciations Report of the Awards Committee	Sharon Cunningham
President's Remarks	Linda Cohn
Report of the Nominating Committee Election of Officers, 2013-2014	Lynn Walshak
Advice to the Board (I wish the Board would...)	Carolyn Mata
Announcements	Carolyn Mata
Adjourn	

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

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

***Procedural Announcements:**

Judy Hollinger shall serve as Parliamentarian.

Ann Herbage shall serve as Timekeeper.

Marcia Miqueloto and Mary Wood 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.

Phyllis Frye moved that the agenda be approved. Motion carried.

Phyllis Frye moved that the rules be adopted. Motion carried.

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

***Vice-President Jan Wilbur** recommended that no new study items be added. Laura Blackburn moved approval of the recommendation, and the motion carried.

***Budget Committee Chair Barbara McCormick presented a motion on behalf of the Budget Committee that annual dues be held at the same level as last year.** The motion carried.

***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.

***Barb Swartz and Ann Herbage presented the report of the Awards Committee:**

For outstanding service chairing Debates and Forums, a special achievement award was presented to Aimee Turney.

For outstanding service in creating policies and procedures for the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area, a special achievement award was presented to Leslie Taylor.

For outstanding service as co-chairs for the Repast and Women's Equality Day, special achievement awards were presented to Ryan Leach and Sarah Schimmer.

The annual Helen Hunter Award is presented to the one individual who, over the course of membership, by productive work and by excellent department, has furthered the mission of the League of Women Voters. The recipient of the 2012 Helen Hunter Award is Nancy Parra.

***Nancy Parra presented the report of the Nominating Committee.** Marlene Lobberecht moved that the report be accepted. The motion passed. As provided by the Bylaws, the terms of office for newly elected leaders commence immediately.

Secretary: Mary Lee Burrus (2012-2013)

Treasurer: Barb Swartz (2012-2014)

Community Relations Vice-President: Jacqueline Alfred (2012-2013)

Organization Vice President: Martha Murphree (2012-2014)

Director: Tom Berg (2012-2014)

Director: Carolyn Mata (2012-2014)

Director: Penny Milbouer (2012-2014)

Director: Sarah Schimmer (2012-2014)

Director: Ryan Leach (2012-2013)

Director: Wayne Derrick (2012-2013)

Director Aimee Turney (2012-2013)

Nominating Committee: Lynn Walshak, Chair (2012-2013)

Nominating Committee: Peggy Hill (2012-2013)

Nominating Committee: Millie Whittington (2012-2013)

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

***The President's Report was presented by Linda Cohn.**

***The Annual Meeting was adjourned.**

-minutes recorded by Mary Lee Burrus and approved by Marcia Miqueloto

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.

Report of the President

Linda Cohn

Welcome to the 93nd Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area.

This has been a year of genuine growth and courageous change, and most certainly another year of outstanding service to the Houston Community.

Our several Committees and League Leaders have tackled organizational challenges with patience and determination. Their reports highlight success, define new paths and offer sturdy proposals for the future. Please take care to consider their assessments. Vibrant discussion and consensus support remain our proven strength.

My term as your president will conclude with this Annual Meeting. I thank you for the honor and the privilege of a lifetime. And I ask you to always remember that we are living the suffragists' dream.

Reports on Special Projects

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

Our third annual Women's Equality Day Observance was held on Wednesday, August 22, at the Julia Ideson Library. The cocktail-style reception featured a salute to four notable Houstonians, premier communicators who set the stage for lively and learned conversation in the modern public square: Mary Benton (KPRC-TV), Ernie Manouse (PBS Channel 8), Grace Olivares (Univision Media) and Mark Pirtle (Houston MediaSource TV). For the second year, competitively-selected "Rising Star" recognitions were awarded to emerging leaders of accomplishment and promise. Mayor Annise Parker and Kathy Hubbard served as honorary co-chairs.

Luncheon Honoring Alice May and Don Berthelsen - Chairs: Judy Hollinger, Bette John

The League sponsored a festive luncheon honoring longtime members Alice May and Don Berthelsen on Thursday December 20, 2012 at The Briar Club of Houston. Seventy people attended. Judge Phyllis Frye served as emcee. Speakers included Mayor Annise Parker who presented a City of Houston proclamation, Fred Garcia from the Harris County Task Force on Flood Control who presented a Harris County proclamation, and Linda Cohn, who presented a certificate from the League.

Repast With Political Pioneers – Chairs: Sarah Schimmer, Ryan Leach

The 12th annual Repast Luncheon will be held on May 3, 2013, honoring Elyse Lanier and Andrea White. Ernie Manouse will serve as moderator. A revised Annual Report will include additional information on this event.

“Your America” Public Education Campaign

Beginning in September, 2012, all METRO buses, trains and Park-and-Ride stations were festooned with LWV placards encouraging voter registration, featuring the message: “*Register. Vote. This is Your America.*” These placards were replaced with: “*Vote. This is Your America.*” after the registration deadline. Each placard included a Quick Response code pushing to a special LWV webpage, in English and in Spanish, offering basic voting information. Take-away LWV handouts were available on buses and trains, in English and in Spanish, explaining the voting process.

Organizational Assessment Task Force – Chair: Nancy Parra

An Organizational Assessment Task Force was chartered in October, 2011, chaired by immediate past President Nancy Parra. Members included Mary Lee Burrus, Jan Wilbur, Carolyn Mata and Linda Cohn.

The Task Force arose from an Organizational Assessment of the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area (LWV-HA), facilitated by Ronnie Hagerty of the United Way’s *Nonprofit Connection* services. This assessment was initiated in response to a major funder’s concern about the organization’s long-term sustainability; it highlighted areas where LWV-HA was performing effectively and identified those that could be improved.

On the basis of the assessment, the Task Force was charged with responding to three critical developments:

1. Major grant funding was refused.
2. Membership totals were eroding.
3. Key leadership positions were unfilled or unsuitably filled.

After analyzing extensively where the League needed to improve its practices, the Task Force sponsored a retreat-style evaluation in April, 2012, seeking evaluations and proposals from League leaders. This conference was facilitated by Ronnie Hagerty of the United Way’s *Nonprofit Connection* services.

Based on commentary distilled from this retreat-style conference, three issues were identified as most urgently requiring attention:

1. Membership
2. Board Governance
3. Fundraising

Three working groups were formed, which were charged with evaluating the needs and developing action plans, including goals and objectives, in each of these three areas. The Membership Committee was headed by Martha Murphree, the Board Governance Committee by Mary Lee Burrus, and the Fundraising Committee by Jan Wilbur and Barb Swartz.

Since the conference in April, 2012, and the formation of the committees, several events have resulted in more urgent focus:

- The League no longer has the financial resources to support a paid Executive Director or full time communications staff person
- The financial situation of the League has not yet substantially improved

In spite of these setbacks, the committees continued to work through their analysis of the problems, arriving at some solutions. The Membership Committee developed a new type of membership, the associate membership, which is offered for a lower fee, and has strived to increase membership. The committee was hampered by its inability to find members willing to serve on it and work toward achieving its goals.

The Board Governance Committee, which has perhaps been the most successful, looked at board organization, development and specific board needs. In October 2012, they submitted to the full Board for approval the following four Vice Presidents: Membership Affairs, Civic Engagement, Issues Study and Advocacy and Finance and Development. Working closely with the nominating committee, they then proposed an Executive Vice President, a “president-in-waiting,” rather than a VP of Finance and Development. It was the consensus of the group to support this change, which was then approved by the OATF. The Board Governance Committee also requested that at least two Directors/Trustees chosen for the next year be people who have not previously served on the board.

The Fundraising Committee began looking at standard and innovative ways to raise revenue, such as recognizing significant donors as Leaders for Democracy. A social media campaign to raise micro-donations around Election Day, followed by the year-end donation appeal, brought in about \$1000. A handful of donors (League leaders) made several major donations, including four individuals, who each contributed \$1000 or more, making them eligible for Leaders for Democracy status.

Moving forward, the Organizational Assessment Task Force would like to recommend the following:

- That increasing membership become a focus of next year’s Board and that more people become involved in attaining this goal
- That new sources of revenue other than member donations be researched and applied for, such as corporate donations and small grants for specific projects
- That a new committee be formed under the auspices of the incoming Board to develop a strategic 5-year plan and that this committee take as a basis the analysis and findings of the OATF

Reports of the Vice Presidents and Their Committees

Vice President for Membership Affairs – Martha Murphree

Membership:

Membership at the end of March: 251. Membership is again growing. Of the \$70 paid for individual membership, after State and National per member payments are subtracted, \$17 remains to support the activity of LWV-Houston.

The Board voted to activate the local only Associate Member category in the Bylaws, with dues of \$40, to be offered to non-renewing members who find the cost of full membership prohibitive.

Since the first of November, in the absence of staff, membership records have been handled by Andrea Seagraves, a volunteer. Full implementation of the Associate Members initiative has been hindered by the absence of staff.

e-VOTER

In February an electronic newsletter was introduced. Judy Hollinger serves as editor and gatherer of material from officers and committee chairs. An independent contractor set up the template in MailChimp, a free electronic newsletter provider. Subsequent issues can be uploaded by part time paid staff.

e-Directory

The e-Directory launched in April. It is housed on Google and accessed by a secure link which was emailed to members. The Directory is based on membership records and will be updated regularly, keeping it much more up to date than a printed paper directory can. The information, other than names and addresses, typically published in the Directory—positions, bylaws, and the like—will be posted on the web site.

Web site and Social Media

Updates to the web site, Facebook, Twitter and the like—normally a staff responsibility—has been handled by the President. Thank you Linda.

Vice President for Issues Study and Advocacy – Jan Wilbur

With no new studies for this year, we have had the opportunity to be more flexible with programming for the monthly public meetings and unit discussions. Since we have few functioning program committees and fewer committee members, we have asked the discussion leaders to be also the resource persons for their units. That seems to have worked very well, thanks to dedicated discussion leaders.

Background papers that provide source material for the unit discussions are now routinely posted online instead of being mailed. In February we eschewed the public meeting in favor of a panel discussion on workforce development in public education on the League's monthly television program moderated by League President Linda Cohn on HMSTV.

The League program year kicked off in September with a well-attended evening meeting with Dr. Stephen Klineberg speaking and showing a video “Interesting Times” reviewing trends and changing outlooks revealed by over three decades of Houston surveys. Houston is facing interesting times as more people express a desire to live where they can drive less and walk more – to work, to shop, and to play; as the skilled workforce of the future can live anywhere and will have to find it attractive to live in Houston in order to choose to do so; and as Houston grapples with the incredible diversity of its population and the challenges and opportunities that brings to its civic life.

Two ballot measures were the focus of the October meeting. Carrin Patman, METRO board member, and Jay Blazek Crossley, Houston Tomorrow, addressed the METRO referendum and Harvin Moore, HISD board member, and Gayle Fallon, executive director of the Houston Federation of Teachers, explained the HISD bond package.

Sustainability is development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and was the topic for the November meeting. Jim Blackburn, environmentalist and professor at Rice University, and speaker for that meeting reminded that one-fourth of the world's population currently consumes three-fourths of the world's resources. Sustainability requires changing that ratio as more and more countries move into the developing and developed column and their populations use more and more of the world's resources. Laura Blackburn (no relation) facilitated the meeting and wrote the background paper.

Local program planning took place in January followed by a look at how public education is preparing young people for the workforce of tomorrow. Stem is the acronym for emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math in education at the undergraduate and college – especially community college – level. Peg Hill facilitated the panel discussion and wrote the background paper.

The League joined with Blueprint Houston to present a program on the need for a general overall plan for the City of Houston. Guy Hagstette, architect an former Blueprint Houston board members, explained that there are many plans but no general plan that puts all the plans together

and meshes them to provide a vision for the City and a plan on how to get there. Martha Murphree facilitated the meeting.

The Newtown massacre of 26 children and teachers put gun violence front and center of public discourse since December and gun safety aka anti-gun violence rounded out the League program year in April with Nile Copeland, a former Concealed Handgun License trainer, and Norri Leder, Moms Demand Action spokesperson, explaining their different points of view and answering a myriad of questions on the issue. Aimee Mobley Turney facilitated the meeting and co-wrote the background paper with Jan Wilbur.

Vice President for Civic Engagement – Jacqueline Alfred

Many thanks to the Chairpersons whose hard work and dedication made the 2012-2013 League year an excellent one for Voter Service and Community Outreach. These activities would not have been possible without **all** of the volunteers who gave so generously of their time and talents—there were so many that any attempt to list them all would be impossible. *I do want to thank each and every one who helped! I hope each of you knows how very much you are appreciated!*

Chairs of Community Relations Committees were:

- *Voters Guide*—Beth Antonius, Sharon Cunningham, Sherle Frost-Watson and Bette John
- *2013 Directory of Elected Officials (Voters Key)*—Annie Johnson Benifield and Marlene Cohn
- *Handy Dandy Guide to the Elections* (editions for both Primary and General Elections)—Linda Cohn
- Voter Registration
 - a) Naturalization Ceremonies—Judy Hollinger, Mary Titus, Ann Wood and Linda Cohn
 - b) Community events—Committee
 - c) Special Voter Registrar Trainings—Ann Wood
- Debates and Forums—Aimee Mobley Turney
- Speakers Bureau—Committee
- Television Programs—Linda Cohn, Aimee Mobley Turney
- Outreach into the Hispanic Community—Tom Berg
- Election Voter Projects with KPRC
 - a) Election Day Phone Bank—Lula Blake, Judy Hollinger
 - b) Election Day Twitter Outreach—Linda Cohn
 - c) Conversations with Candidates Program—Aimee Mobley Turney

Voters Guide

We printed and distributed 30,000 English-version *Voters Guides* for the 2012 Primary Election and 60,000 for the November General Election. We were also able to print and distribute 10,000 Primary Election and 20,000 General Election *Voters Guides* in Spanish. Our thanks go to Mi Familia Vota, a 501c3 organization dedicated to voter education, for providing translation services and distribution assistance for the Spanish language *Voters Guide*.

In addition to printed *Voters Guides*, for both elections 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 as well as candidate websites and political blogs. 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.

The *411* interactive software, provided through LWV-US, was again used to compile the content for the *Voters Guide*. The software program enables us to contact the candidates and receive their responses to our questions, electronically. The 411 system and other electronic means of communication and information sharing is making the work of the VG committee much more efficient and streamlined and expedites the process of developing the database of candidates, contacting those candidates, collecting responses, and developing the layout.

The *Voters Guide* covered candidates and ballot issues at the National, State, County and City level and included comprehensive information about voting and the election process.

2013 Directory of Elected Officials (Voters Key)

We have continued to focused on refining the format and distribution process for this signature LWV publication. Budget constraints forced us to rethink our traditional approach of printing large numbers for distribution free of charge. We posted the updated DEO online in an easily downloadable format and added a supplement that included information about elected judges and school board trustees. We printed a small number of copies (250) for those who preferred to purchase a printed version. These are currently available for a suggested donation of \$5/copy for LWV members and \$6/copy for non-members. (Please contact the LWV office if you are interested in obtaining a printed copy of the DEO.)

Information about the availability of DEO has been shared with a wide network of individuals, news outlets and bloggers, and sister civic organizations.

(Note: Online version of the DEO will be updated again following the May Election as required.)

Handy Dandy Guide to the Election

Once again we are grateful to our President, Linda Cohn, for updating the *Handy Dandy Guide* for the Primary and then again for the General Election. This truly is a “handy” little publication that is a “dandy” resource for voters. The format of this one-sheet, two-sided little publication can be easily shared with outside groups and individuals and is inexpensively printed and updated for each election ensuring that all the information is absolutely current, pertinent and timely for the end user.

Thanks to a small grant of \$250 from LWV/TX we were able to print and distribute about 1000 copies of the Handy Dandy Guide for the two 2012 elections. We also shared a link to the file with over a dozen organizations to be distributed to their constituents.

Voter Registration

Naturalization Ceremonies

Our biggest success story in registering citizens to vote continues to be our outreach at the monthly Naturalization Ceremonies. From April 2012 through March 2013, with small flags waving and much applause (and some tears of joy), League volunteers witnessed 22,394 new citizens take the Oath of Citizenship, and accepted voter registration applications from 18,021 of our new follow citizens –a robust 80 percent.

January - April 11, 2013, thirty-five (35) students, primarily from Houston community colleges, highlighted voter registration applications for use at the Naturalization Ceremonies. The average number of applications highlighted by each student was 600.

Our thanks to our student volunteers, our sister civic organizations, independent voter registrars and the staff from the County Tax Assessor Collector's Office for their assistance in assuring the success of this project.

Voter Registration Community Events—Committee

The League continued its efforts to register new voters at smaller venues and events in Houston and surrounding areas. We provided services to over thirty community events sponsored by a wide variety of organizations, schools, colleges and universities. LWV volunteers registered more than 900 new voters at these events.

Many thanks to all who worked to assist aspiring voters complete applications at community events. Our ability to respond to requests for Voter Registration services throughout the community is limited only by the number of volunteers who are available to staff events. If you are not a certified Voter Registrar, please consider taking the training and helping provide this service in the future.

Debates and Forums

LWV-HA again partnered with Houston MediaSource TV to sponsor a series of one-hour "Candidate Conversations" programs prior to the November General Election. The format for the programs was informal but informative with each candidate being given an opportunity to speak individually with LWV moderators, Linda Cohn and Aimee Turney.

"Candidate Conversations" programs held prior to the General Election covered countywide races for District Attorney, County Attorney, County Tax Assessor Collector, and Sheriff as well as State Board of Education races (moderated by Mary Benton) and the race for U.S. Senate featuring the candidates representing the Green and Libertarian Parties. A similar program was

presented in January 2013 featuring candidates running in the Special Election that was held to fill the vacant Texas Senate District 6 seat.

The programs were telecast and streamed live from the studios of Houston MediaSource TV on Thursday evenings, were rebroadcast several times on the Houston MediaSource channel and were available for on-demand viewing via the internet at <http://vimeo.com/channels/lwvhouston>. In addition to being available on the LWV website, the on-demand link was embedded on political blogs, candidate websites and websites of sister civic organizations. On-demand views of “Candidate Conversations” programs numbered well over 4,000.

Additionally, as part of our General Election partnership with KPRC (Ch 2), we provided questioners for the “Coffee with the Candidates” program. LWV collaborated with KPRC in planning this programming and LWV representatives interviewed candidates for the US House of Representatives and the open seat on Houston City Council in a series of interviews. The program was covered live and then made available on the KPRC and LWV websites.

In all, our Election Forums covered 20 races.

Speakers Bureau

Limited availability of speakers continued to limit our ability to respond to speaking requests; many speaking requests also included a request for Voter Registration services. We did make several presentations at high schools and colleges promoting our Youth Engagement efforts, provided resource people for several informal Q&A discussion programs and did some general presentations about LWV and our action agenda at all government levels.

Our partnership with Houston MediaSource enabled us to produce round table presentations on a wide variety of topics of importance to the community. The one-hour League programs aired on the first Thursday of each month. These are a very effective means of sharing information since the reach of these programs (original live broadcast, live streaming, rebroadcast and on-demand viewing on our website) is far beyond what we can achieve by sending speakers to small groups and organizations or even at our wonderful monthly general meetings. We do not have a way of measuring the numbers of broadcast viewers but we do know that on-demand views of these programs were well over 1,500; no program received less than 100 on-demand views.

Hispanic Community Outreach

Under the capable leadership of Tom Berg supported by Linda Cohn, LWV continued to expand our outreach into the Hispanic community through community events, television programs, Twitter and other social media outreach. This year we were able to work with partners Univision, NALEO, Mi Familia Vota, Neighborhood Centers, Inc., and FIEL in numerous bilingual voter registration efforts and GOTV programs at Reliant Center and various Ripley House facilities. Voter registration services were also provided at Tacos & Votes events.

Tom used his bilingual skills to represent the League and discuss voter registration and voter participation on several shows telecast on Univision during the election season, provide live

commentary in Spanish during Telemundo's Election night coverage and collaborate with Univision in developing a Spanish-language documentary about the League of Women Voters.

KPRC Election Hotline

LWV once again partnered with KPRC (Channel 2) to provide election hotline services for both the Primary and General Elections. Over 100 volunteers answered phones from 6 am until 7 pm Primary and General Election days. Hotline volunteers assisted over 2,500 aspiring voters who had questions and concerns.

For both election days, we also had three people per shift who engaged voters on Twitter resulting in a total for both election days of almost 2 million impressions—proof that social media will definitely be a component of successful outreach as we move forward.

Local Issues: Study and Advocacy for 2013-2014
Report of the Programming Committee
Jan Wilbur, Vice-President

Members attending local program planning made a comprehensive and thorough review of the League's current positions and recommend no new study items for the 2013-2014 League program year.

It is recommended that all current positions be retained.

It is recommended that Financing City Government and Budget Process be updated in order that members be educated on those positions.

Action is recommended on Comprehensive Planning, Education, and Election Laws and Voting Rights, which is a state position.

The following changes are recommended:

1. Under **City Government**,

“...7. Oppose term limitations for elected officials. Support of appropriate measures, or “(escape) exception clauses,” which (will) would enable citizens to vote for candidates of their choice if term limitations are in effect...”

2. Move the position **Building Codes in Coastal Areas** from its place following **Toxic Substances** to the place following **Flood Control**. The Board approved this as an editorial change not requiring member approval and the change has already been made.

3. Under **Bilingual Education**,

“...* Because (of) the preservation of ethnic cultures is the responsibility of the home and other institutions...”

4. Move **Sexuality Education and Reproductive Services** from its place following **Mandatory Homeowner associations** to the place following **Health**. The Board approved this as an editorial change not requiring member approval and the change has already been made.

Although LWV HA does not have local positions on these items, interest was high for Mental Health, Payday Lending, Immigration, Management Districts and Gun Control, which are suggested for consideration for Public forums or meetings in the coming year.

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.

Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2013-2014
Report of the Budget Committee

Barbara McCormick, Chair
Martha Murphree, Co-chair

Committee: Barbara McCormick (Chair), Martha Murphree (Co-chair), Carolyn Mata, Aimee Turney, Sharon Cunningham, Barb Swartz, Linda Cohn (ex officio)

Please note that the membership is presently charged with approving a budget for the League of Women Voters of the Houston Area only. A budget for the League of Women Voters of Houston Education Fund will be approved by the LWV-Education Fund Board of Trustees at their first meeting of the 2013-2014 fiscal year. Items pertaining to the LWV-Education Fund are included for information only.

Budget data charts begin on page 32 and conclude on page 34.

	EXPENSE	YTD 3/28	Budget	YTD 3/28	Budget	LWVHA	LWVHEF	TOTAL
226	Directory of Elected Officials			512	750		550	550
227	Facts & Issues				50			0
228	Election Information				900		300	300
229	Mobile Voter Education Project				6,000			0
230	Program Study				0			0
231	Debates & Forums				3,000		2,000	2,000
232	Fall Fundraiser/Special Event	1,546		6,195	5,000		6,500	6,500
233	Repast			203	24,000		25,000	25,000
234	Annual Report		15		85			0
235	Public Relations				400			0
236	Dues to Coalitions/Organizations			730	775		1,300	1,300
237	Member List Rental/Sale				2,000			0
238	LWVUS Grant Expenses							0
239	Office Administrator	2,490	7,200	15,512	40,800	1,560	8,840	10,400
240			150		850			0
241		1,244	3,600	7,756	20,400			0
242	Payroll Taxes	447	1,310	2,823	7,425	120	660	780
243	Auto Expense		40		210			0
244	Staff Development		40		210	40	210	250
245	Professional Services	450	3,000	600	4,500	3,000	6,000	9,000
246	LWVUS PMP	3,309	4,500	1,655	4,500	3,500	3,500	7,000
247	LWV-TX PMP	2,356	3,400	1,178	3,400	2,400	2,400	4,800
248	Web Site		1,100	4,115	7,900	75	425	500
249	Bank & Pay Pal Charges	244	500	624	665	500	665	1,165
250	Credit Card Lease			387	600		520	520
	TOTAL	14,640	35,870	70,454	177,175	19,105	106,295	125,400
	Difference	3,962	-2,670	-932	175	4,345	22,355	26,700

Report of the Awards Committee

Sharon Cunningham, Chair

Committee: Sharon Cunningham (Chair), Carolyn Mata, Nancy Parra, Linda Cohn (ex officio)

The Awards Committee has the pleasure of recognizing League members for distinguished service. In keeping with custom, choices will be revealed at the Annual Meeting. Criteria used to evaluate honorees are presented as part of this report, along with recommendations to future Awards Committees.

1. Continue the practice of presenting Outstanding Service Awards for notable accomplishment to individuals who, over the course of the League year, have shepherded a significant program or project to great success. Criteria, or yardsticks, to evaluate activities and performance, include:

Is the activity mission-critical?

Is it driven by the organization's goals, (e.g. financial development, membership growth/diversity, strong leadership, organizational excellence, community outreach)?

Is it relevant?

Did it attain results?

The number of Outstanding Service Awards presented each year should not be limited, but the Awards Committee should take care to maintain high standards and avoid citing too many recipients so that these recognitions remain a distinctive and meaningful honor.

2. Continue the practice of presenting an annual Helen Hunter Award, but only when there is a suitable candidate.

Helen Hunter served as League President from 1982-85. Our present guidance states that "The Helen Hunter Award is presented to the individual who, over the course of membership, by productive work and by excellent deportment, has furthered the mission of the League of Women Voters." We recommend additional research into Helen Hunter's background and vision to further detail criteria for this award.

Report of the Nominating Committee New Officers and Directors: 2013-2014

Lynn Walshak, Chair

Committee: Lynn Walshak (Chair), Jackie Alfred (Board member), Joan Golding (member), Peggy Hill (member), Sarah Schimmer (Board member)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE EVOLUTION OF IDEAS

The Nominating Committee was challenged to gather a Slate of Candidates that would foster a growth in membership, that would create good continuity in the leadership of the League, and to support the development and financial circumstances of the League.

The League By-Laws states there can be four Vice Presidents on the Board. It does not set out what the responsibilities of the Vice Presidents are to be. During conversations of the Board Governance Committee, discussions of the NC, and random remarks from various persons, an idea evolved and achieved consensus that one VP could be an Executive VP, in effect, a *President Elect*. No revision of the By-Laws would be necessitated for this to be carried out. This organizational change would be a boon to the continuity of the leadership, granting the President a close assistant for a variety of purposes, as well as a confidant when issues are burdensome. This also prepares the ExVP to have knowledge and to be aware of the workings of the League so they are ready to step into the position of President at the next election time. The plan does include the fact that this ExVP would need to be elected when their term as ExVP ends, to assume the President position. Future Nominating Committees would also have an easier time filling their Slate because of having the Executive Vice President at hand to become President.

The NC believes that the Slate of Candidates who have made a commitment to place themselves before the membership for League Board service, is one that is well qualified to carry out the many services traditionally provided by the League of Women Voters-HA. Even to enhance those services where technology has created new opportunities to do so. It is expected that this Slate, combined with the ongoing Board members with unexpired terms, will be able to move our League forward with visionary efforts. It is thought an effective committee can be created from the new board members and ongoing board members for Finance and Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF NC FOR FUTURE NOMINATING COMMITTEES:

- *Begin Committee meetings early in the year, e.g. September
- *Have interview sessions with candidates to learn the talents of the Candidate in order to place them in the best positions.
- *Ask that resumes be provided at interview time for best use of that document.
- *Interviews also provide Candidate with good information about league methods and specific information about their term period.
- *Nurture the *Rising Star* program for a source of new professional board or committee members.

**REPORT OF THE LWV HOUSTON AREA NOMINATING COMMITTEE
TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE MEMBERSHIP**

APRIL 3, 2013

The following list of candidates contains five names that are currently members of the Board, three in different positions. Three names are LWV members who have been providing volunteer service as ARising Stars.® Three have been LWV members for varying length of times but never Board members. Those shown as the next Nominating Committee have served for various terms as officers of the Board.

**SLATE OF NAMES AND POSITIONS FOR TERMS COVERING 2013-2014 OR 2015 AS
RECOMMENDED BY THE LWV HA NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR ELECTION
BY THE MEMBERSHIP AT THE ANNUAL MEETING MAY 22, 2013**

CAROLYN MATA, President. Term 2013-2015. **Degrees:** MA in Counseling, Sonoma State University; BA in Sociology, University of Houston. **Experience:** Retired from Retina Research Foundation in 2011, after eleven years of service; previously employed at Rice University for fourteen years. League member 15 years, served on the Board of Directors 8 years. Current Board member and member of the Long Range Planning Committee; Chaired the Natural Resources Committee many years. **Interests** include all environmental issues, especially survival of wild animals; baseball, travel, gardening, good literature and art.

AIMEE MOBLEY TURNEY, Executive Vice President. Term 2013-2015. **Attended** Univ. of Texas at Austin. **Experience:** Central City Co-op, Volunteer Director of Operations; Rice Univ. Graduate Admissions Coordinator; Rice Univ. Editorial Assistant; Schlumberger, Information Specialist. Henley for Winning Schools; Deputy Dist. Director for Rep. Borris L. Miles; Current Board member. Chair, LWV Debates and Forums 2010-date. **Expertise:** Public relations, Public Policy, Public Speaking, Campaign management, Community Outreach, Social Media, Volunteer management, Strategic Planning. **Interests:** Fitness training.

CLAUDIA ORTEGA HOGUE, Vice President Civic Engagement. Term 2013-2015. **Degree:** Bachelor Degree in International Business; Masters of Business Administration in process. LWV HA *Rising Star*. **Experience:** National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. Title: Texas Director of Civic Engagement. Responsible for development and implementation of naturalization and voter engagement mobilization programs across the region. Organized citizenship and immigration forums, naturalization workshops, voter education forums, voter registration drives, and non-partisan GOTV campaigns in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. **Community:** Co-Chair City of Houston Citizenship Week; Active member of Mayors Advisory Council of International Communities, Harris County Clerk's Office Hispanic Advisory Committee, and Nuestra Vida/Univision 45

Advisory Council.

JANUARI LEO, Vice President Program and Advocacy. Term 1 yr, 2013-2014. **Degrees:** Masters from Univ. Of Houston Graduate College of Social Work in 2010; B.S. from Univ. Of Houston-Downtown in 2001. *LWV Rising Star.* Active on 2013 Repast Committee. **Experience:** Legacy Community Health Services, a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center serving the greater Houston area. **Title:** Public Affairs Field Specialist. **Expertise:** Healthcare policy issues at local, state and federal level; Organizes various communities to take action. **Community:** Branch Chair for the National Assoc. Of Social Workers-Houston branch; serves on board for National Coalition of LGBT Health.

MARY ELLEN WHITWORTH, Secretary. Term 2013-2015. **Degree:** Master of Science, Louisiana State Univ. and the Univ. of Houston. Registered Professional Engineer. **Experience:** Currently fund raiser for Earth Share of Texas through workplace giving. Served as Executive Director of the Bayou Preservation Association for 10 years; Director of Environmental Policy for the City of Houston under Mayor Bob Lanier for 5 years; Serves on the HLWV Natural Resources Water Quality subcommittee and is member of the COH Water Conservation Regulatory subcommittee.

ANNIE JOHNSON BENIFIELD, Director. Term 2013-2015. **Degrees:** Ph.D in Political Science, Univ. Of New Orleans; M.A. in Political Science, Atlanta Univ.; B.A. in History, Alabama A. & M. Univ. **Experience:** Current Chair of Social Sciences Dept, Professor of Political Science at Lone Star College, Tomball. 15 years teaching Political Science. **Expertise:** Work with LWV HA on voter registration projects (Naturalization Ceremonies) for 10 years. Has served all executive officer positions from Treasurer through President, of Texas Community College Teachers Assoc.(statewide organization) including being responsible and informed about legislative issues and education advocacy, for more than 10 years. **Community:** Member of Houston Alumni Chapter of Alabama A. & M. Univ.

RYAN LEACH, Director. Term 2013-2015. **Degrees:** J.D. from Texas Southern Univ., Thurgood Marshall School of Law 2006; BFA in Theatre from Univ. Of Texas at Austin 2000. Current Board member. Co-Host of 2013 Repast Committee and 2 previous Repasts. **Experience:** General Counsel for Pasadena I.S.D. 2010-date. Chief of Staff for Houston Vice Mayor Pro Tem, 2006-2008; Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Special Projects. Private practice. **Expertise:** Community Outreach; Public Speaking; Fund raising; Public Policy; Staff Development. Policy Analysis; Social Media. **Interests:** Kemah Olympic Triathlon, Half Marathon.

MOLLY R. SALAZAR, Director. Term 2013-2015. **Degree:** B.S. from Univ. Of Texas at Arlington, 1977. Associate Degree in Insurance Underwriting. **Experience:** Owner and President of BondAxis Group, Inc., retail insurance agency that focuses solely on the placement of

commercial and small contract bonds. **Expertise:** Insurance Career began in 1978 as a bilingual Spanish Claim Specialist, advanced to Claim litigation specialist and commercial underwriting and reinsurance. **Community:** Current treasurer and past Vice President for the Fondren Civic Club; member of the Memorial Lutheran Church Bell Choir, plays flute & piano. Married, 2 children.

VANNESSA WADE, Director. Term 2013-2015. **Degree:** B.A. in Communications from Univ. Of Houston. Vanessa is new to LWV as a *Rising Star* but not new to community involvement. **Experience:** She is the founder and CEO of Connect The Dots PR, working with clients in the non-profit, media, and entertainment fields. Vanessa has worked professionally with many organizations including UNICEF, Music World Music, The Office of Presidential Correspondence and Sharpstown High School. **Community:** She has been recognized for her personal community work especially as a Sickle Cell advocate and a tutor of non-native English speakers.

SHERRY R. WALSHAK, Director. Term 1 yr, 2013-2014. **Degrees:** MBA, Marketing and Finance, Univ. Of Houston, BS in Economics, Texas A&M Univ., **Experience:** Eighteen years with Hewlett-Packard as Senior Marketing Manager for WW Strategic Solutions; previously with American General Corp. as Management Consultant for Improvement/Innovation and Black, Gillock, and Langberg, V.P. Advertising & Communications. **Expertise** includes business development, marketing communications & research, program management, budgeting, strategic planning, events planning/execution. **Community:** coach volleyball for 3rd & 4th grade girls at Harriet Foster YMCA; volunteer for Travis Elementary School in reading, gardening, events. Children - two girls ages 14 and 10.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE,

MARY LEE BURRUS, Chair, Term 2013-2014

NANCY PARRA, Member, Term 2013-2014

LYNN WALSHAK, Member, Term 2013-2014

**League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Board of Directors: 2013-2014**

Position	Name	Term of Office
President	Carolyn Mata	2013-2015
Secretary	Mary Ellen Whitworth	2013-2015
Treasurer	Barb Swartz	2012-2014
VP: Membership	Martha Murphree	2012-2014
VP: Civic Engagement	Claudia Hogue	2013-2015
VP: Issues -Study and Action	Januari Leo	2013-2014 (unexpired term)
VP: Executive VP	Aimee Turney	2013-2015
Director	Tom Berg	2012-2014
Director	Sherry Walshak	2012-2014 (unexpired term)
Director	Penny Milbouer	2012-2014
Director	Sarah Schimmer	2012-2014
Director	Ryan Leach	2013-2015
Director	Annie Benifield	2013-2015
Director	Molly Salazar	2013-2015
Director	Vannessa Wade	2013-2015
Nominating Committee Chair	Mary Lee Burrus	2013-2014
Nominating Committee Member	Nancy Parra	2013-2014
Nominating Committee Member	Lynn Walshak	2013-2014
Nominating Committee Member	TBD (board member)	2013-2014
Nominating Committee Member	TBD (board member)	2013-2014