



The Corpus Christi Area

# Voter

November 2014

League of Women Voters  
PO Box 8276  
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## Evening Meeting Planned Tuesday, November 18

We are changing the day and time for our November meeting. Instead of noon the third Thursday, we will meet at 6PM on **Tuesday, November 18, in Room 106**. The meeting location will remain at the Del Mar College Center for Economic Development, 3209 S. Staples, across the street from Ray High School.

The Board of Directors voted to offer two evening programs during this fiscal year, one in November and one in April, in order to give our members who can't attend luncheon meetings an opportunity to attend and stay informed about the League activities. Since all of our meetings are open to the public, the Nov. 18 meeting is also open to the public.

The topic for the evening is the current status of the **Move to Amend** initiative. This is a grassroots movement to encourage the Congress to offer a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*. that established "personhood" for corporations. There will be a panel discussion regarding the progress that has been made by this initiative in the past year and the stance taken by LWV regarding money in politics.

We will gather in **Room 106 at 6:00 PM** for registration and light refreshments with the program commencing at 6:30. There will be time for questions and answers from the audience. Make plans to attend.

## Join Us for Holiday Gathering

*Our League's holiday party for members will be on Thursday, December 11, from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. at the Cactus and Vine, 2115 Ayers Street, near Del Mar College. Join members and other special guests in enjoying wine and cheese. In keeping with the season's spirit of giving, each member is invited to bring a donation of pet food for PALS no kill animal shelter.*



# President's Message

By Sandra Heatherley

Once again, our LWV-Corpus Christi has done its part to "Make Democracy Work" by printing and distributing the Voters Guide throughout the community and hosting two candidate forums to help inform the public regarding issues and candidates willing to address the issues.

At this writing, early voting has ended and we are awaiting Election Day with great anticipation.

I want to thank all the members who participated in the distribution of the Voters Guides by dropping bundles off at the public libraries and public buildings across the county. Pat Parr, Chris Garcia, Donnie Sluyter, Nancy Devlin, and Margaret DiClemente were all instrumental in the rapid dissemination of the guides.

Bryan Bode, Judy Telge, Pat Parr, Sally Farris, and Chris Garcia all assisted in the success of the two candidate forums. More than 150 people attended each forum and both audiences were

engaged, submitting challenging questions for the candidates.

Now that the election process has run its course, our local League can turn its attention to the program issues that we ratified last year; mainly learning more about the local transportation system and its accountability to taxpayers and revisiting the city's Master Plan.

The League of Women Voters of Texas is currently studying the practice of "payday loans" and the laws regulating these transactions. In the spring, we will receive the results of their study in the form of "Facts and Issues" and be asked to arrive at consensus of the questions proposed.

On Tuesday, November 18, LWV-CC will host an evening



Sandra Heatherley

public forum at the Del Mar Center for Economic Development to discuss and track the progress of the **Move to Amend** initiative. Our support of this initiative is aligned with the LWV-TX and LWVUS positions on campaign finance reform.

In fact, just last week the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-Texas) congratulated the Texas Ethics Commission for passing a rule which requires that the donors of "dark money" be disclosed. Make plans now to attend, and bring a friend.

## LWV MISSION STATEMENT

**The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan, 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.**

**The League does not support or oppose candidates or political parties.**

CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS



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Mayor

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www.ccliteracy.org

**Mary V. Gleason**  
Executive Director



**THANKS  
to these  
new and  
renewing  
members!**

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Colleen Johnson  
Joan Veith  
Carla and David Gardiner

#### **RENEWING MEMBER**

Ann E. Smith

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## **Voters Guides Distributed**

LWV-Corpus Christi printed and distributed 7,000 local Voters Guides for the November 2014 General Election to public libraries, county courthouse, municipal buildings, and businesses. Members also took bundles to distribute.

Approximately 600 copies of the guides were purchased by the Port of Corpus Christi Authority, member Sue Williams, Young Business Professionals, and KRIS-TV for distribution to their employees and members. LWV-CC appreciates this support!

The League also purchased and distributed LWV-Texas produced nonpartisan guides to share. All guides were available online.

## **LWVUS Recommends Changes To Improve Senate Ethics**

*LWVUS last month sent correspondence to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell which read as follows. Co-signing the letter were Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), Common Cause, Democracy 21, and Judicial Watch.*

“The current Senate ethics process is widely – and accurately – perceived as insular and opaque, failing to adequately identify ethical lapses and ensure public confidence in the institution. LWVUS urges you, in bipartisan agreement, to publicly endorse the following constructive changes to improve a process that is often described as a black hole:

- **Create an Office of Senate Ethics**

The ethics process in the U.S. House of Representatives was significantly improved with the creation of the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE). The Office has provided a place for allegations of ethical violations to be credibly heard and investigated, and has alleviated some of the most serious concerns about a process that had become utterly dysfunctional. An equivalent Office of Senate Ethics (OSE), with appropriate subpoena power, would enhance the public credibility.

- **Create timetables for public reports on status of investigations.**

While we appreciate that ongoing investigations are sensitive and necessitate discretion, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics has taken these understandable considerations to the extreme. Information goes in, but no information is generally and routinely available until a final disposition is reached, leaving the public in the dark. The process should have established timetables to help manage public expectations, able to be waived only under extraordinary circumstances.

- **Increase transparency of/access to the Senate Ethics Committee**

Because the Ethics Committee continues to do almost all of its work behind closed doors, reasonable suspicions arise that the Committee is more interested in protecting individual Senators and staff than the integrity of the institution. One important step that can be taken to increase the Committee’s credibility is to increase and improve the public availability of documents pertaining to Senate ethics, such as all current and historic guidance issued by the Committee.

- **More frequent ethics training for Senators and Senate personnel**

Each Senator and Senate staffer should undergo an ethics training session every four years.

- **Review current travel rules**

The Committee should review current travel rules, especially those governing pass-through transactions, to ensure the rules accurately reveal the purpose and nature of privately financed Senate travel.



# Details for LWV-TX Lobby Days Shaping Up

## League Members Invited to Be in Austin Feb. 23-24

Lobby Days, a two-day event sponsored by LWV-Texas, provides an opportunity for League members across the state to focus on advocacy and visit their legislators to talk about the League's top priorities.

2015 Lobby Days will be held in Austin at the state capitol beginning at noon, Monday, Feb. 23, and continuing through Tuesday noon, Feb. 24.

Speakers confirmed to speak to League members on Monday afternoon include Chad Dunn, legal counsel for the plaintiffs in the Texas Voter ID litigation, and Dr. Andrew Sansom, executive director of the Meadows Center for Water and the Environment.

Other presenters will be announced soon by Laura Blackburn, LWV-TX Advocacy VP.

A banquet on Monday evening, Feb. 23, at the UT Alumni Center, will also be held.

Registration fees and banquet meal prices will be announced after January 1.

A block of rooms is being held for League members planning to participate in Lobby Days.



The rooms are at La Quinta Inn Austin Capitol, located at 300 East 11th Street, within walking distance of the Capitol. The room rate is \$139, plus tax, and the block of rooms will be available through Sunday evening, Feb. 8, 2015.

Call the Group Reservations Department at 1-866-527-1498 and identify yourself as a member of LWV-TX (confirmation number **09071417**.)

If other League members will share your room, please provide the hotel with their names. Hotel amenities include free Bright Side Breakfast featuring waffles, hot and cold cereals, pastries, juice, milk, and coffee and free Internet access. Only Valet Parking is available at the hotel, at \$12.99 per night.



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# MY VIEW: Reforming Texas Elections

By Bryan Bode  
VP Community Relations, LWV-CC

It is often said that the political process is like sausage-making. Don't ask about how it is made; accept the outcomes. But that is not how it should be in Texas. Individuals should constantly seek out ways to improve the process to allow for significantly better outcomes.

Texans could be much better served in elections by implementing the top-two primary system and judicial retention elections.

Before I continue, I must explain how a top-two primary works.

Every candidate of every major party runs on the same primary ballot. The top-two vote getters then advance to the general election. This results sometimes in two Republicans, two Democrats, one of each, or even other combinations ending up on the general election ballot.

The benefits of top-two are numerous. First, top-two allows voters more of a choice for who to vote for in primaries. A voter can vote in the primary for a Republican in one race and a Democrat in another. The voter no longer would have to make a commitment to only vote for one party's candidate.

Second, top-two serves as a moderating influence on elected officials. Candidates can no longer

count on primaries being decided by a small group of partisans. Top-two broadens the primary electorate to include independents and people of the opposite partisan view. Candidates now must appeal to voters outside of the base just to make it to general elections.

California recently implemented top-two and has consistently seen partisans on both sides beaten in general and primary elections by more moderate candidates. The state was once considered ungovernable because of the lack of compromise on fiscal matters. Now the state is running a surplus and solving its long-term fiscal issues in a bipartisan fashion. Top-two has been a boon to California in this regard.

Another political reform Texas could implement is the elimination of partisan judicial races. Texans could consider implementing the system of judicial retention elections that currently exists in 20 states.

In this system, a commission of lawyers and judges appointed by the state bar nominates 3 candidates to the Governor. The Governor then picks the best choice for the bench.

After two years, the Governor's pick comes up for a retention election. Voters are then asked if the judge should be retained on the

*Bryan Bode submitted this viewpoint article to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times in October for publication.*

bench for a full four-year term. If voters say the judge should be retained, he/she is elected to a full term. If voters say "no," the process starts all over again. If voters say "yes," the judge appears on the ballot every four years thereafter.

This process is far superior to the status quo. In this process judicial elections are not partisan elections. Judges are not asked to rule from the bench as a representative of their political party. Judges should be much above that. This non-partisan system solves the problem.

In addition, voters are oftentimes confused by the sheer number of judges and opponents on the ballot every election cycle. In Harris County this election cycle, voters will vote in over 70 judicial races.

Most voters will have no clue whether or not many of the candidates are even qualified for the position they are running for. Invariably, some of these folks will win and Texas will suffer. The top-two system solves this problem.

Are the top-two system and retention elections perfect? Absolutely not. They don't solve every single problem that inherently exists in the way we conduct elections. But they are an important step to increasing and bettering the choices that voters have in elections.

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# Help shape Corpus Christi's future. *(It could make your holiday shopping a little more fun!)*

Drop in for 20 minutes at one of **eight open houses** in November. Find out more about Plan CC, the city's new comprehensive plan, and tell us which of three growth scenarios you like best. Share your feedback, and we'll enter you in a drawing to **win one of three La Palmera mall gift cards** (worth \$300, \$200 or \$100)

**Save the date!**

Find a meeting near you (on the back) and join us on November 10, 11, 12 or 13!



**Our City.  
Our Plan.  
Our Future.**

WWW.PLANCC2035.COM

**League Members  
Invited To Attend  
Plan CC Open House  
Nov. 10-Nov. 13;  
Help Shape Corpus  
Christi's future!**

## Join us at a Plan CC open house on November 10 to 13.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 4-7PM	
<b>District 2</b>	Lindale Recreation Center 3133 Swantner Street
<b>District 4</b>	Janet F. Harte Public Library 2629 Waldron Road
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 4-7PM	
<b>District 1</b>	Owen R. Hopkins Public Library 3202 McKinzie Road
<b>District 5</b>	Dr. Clotilde P. Garcia Public Library 5930 Brockhampton Street
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 4-7PM	
<b>District 1</b>	Radisson North Beach 3200 E. Surfside Boulevard
<b>District 3</b>	Ben F. McDonald Public Library 4044 Greenwood Drive
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 4-7PM	
<b>District 1</b>	Oveal Williams Senior Center 1414 Martin Luther King Drive
<b>District 4</b>	Garden Senior Center 5325 Greely Drive



**Our City.  
Our Plan.  
Our Future.**

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# MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK



LWV-Corpus Christi thanks all candidates who participated in the two candidate forums in October at City Council Chambers and who answered questions for the Voters Guide.

The League is especially grateful to the Hispanic Women's Network, Leadership Corpus Christi Alumni, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. for their partnership in sponsoring the forums and recruiting members to serve as greeters and moderators.



Except for the two photos at left and top on this page, Debbie Nobles of Noblest Photography took a couple hundred candid photos of candidates participating in the Oct. 15 Forum. She has allowed the League to feature a handful of her photos on this page. Thank you, Debbie, for sharing your talent with the League.







League of Women Voters  
 --Corpus Christi Area  
 PO Box 8276  
 Corpus Christi, TX 78468

Business-card advertising space in the VOTER is available! The cost is \$100 for 10 issues during a calendar year. Send check and your business card or advertising copy to LWV Treasurer Maria Jimenez at the League address noted above. Your support is sincerely appreciated!



If you have not renewed your League membership for 2014-2015, please do so!

**LWV-Corpus Christi Area  
 Renewal/New Membership Application**

*Join now and help to promote political responsibility through informed, active participation in government.*

Type of membership: New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$60\_\_\_\_ Student \$30\_\_\_\_ Household \$90 (2 individuals residing at same address)

Sustaining Member \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ (includes the \$60 membership)

Friend of the League |\$30 \_\_\_\_\_ (non-voting)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Household Member's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to receive League correspondence ( ) by email ( ) by mail

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work or Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax number \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form with your payment (check or money order) to:  
 League of Women Voters-CC (Attn: Treasurer)  
 PO Box 8276  
 Corpus Christi, TX 78468  
**Membership is from June 1 through May 31.**