



90th
Annual
Meeting
Workbook

2010

Report to the Members

League of Women
Voters Houston Area

**90th Annual Meeting
League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Thursday, May 13, 2009**

**Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet @ Hillcroft
Houston, Texas**

5:00 p.m. Silent Auction and Dinner

6:15 p.m. Speaker—Mayor Annise Parker

7:00 p.m. Annual Meeting

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Quorum (Art. VIII, Sec. 3): We need 30 members present to conduct business at this meeting.

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Order of Business

Call to Order	Nancy Parra
Organization of Meeting	Nancy Parra
Appointment of Parliamentarian	
Appointment of Timekeeper	
Appointment of Committee to Approve Minutes	
Adoption of Order of Business	
Adoption of Rules	
Secretary's Report	Shirley Gibson
Treasurer's Report	Martha Murphree
President's Report	Nancy Parra
Executive Director's Report	Christina Gorczynski
Celebration of 50 Year Members	Ann Herbage
Presentation & Adoption of Local Program 2010–2011	Lynn Walshak
Awards	Judy Hollinger
Adoption of 2010–2011 Dues	Barbara McCormick
Presentation & Adoption of 2010–2011 Budget	Barbara McCormick
Nominating Committee Report	Laura Blackburn
Election of Officers for 2010–2011	Nancy Parra
Recognition of Outgoing Officers and Directors	Nancy Parra
Presentation of New Board	Nancy Parra
President's Remarks	Nancy Parra
Direction to Board (I wish the Board would...)	Nancy Parra
Announcements	Nancy Parra
Adjourn	

Report to the Members 2010—2011

Nancy Parra, President

I have enjoyed serving as President of this wonderful organization during the past year, and I want to thank the Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs as well as our Executive Director for their dedication and hard work in making it so successful.

Our League has accomplished a great deal. We began the year with a new study on a Public Defenders Office for Harris County and arrived at a consensus opinion. We developed a marketing campaign and attained two Patriot \$5,000 sponsorships. We held a candidate forum for the mayor and controller races, Rally on the Green, which was co-sponsored and televised by KPRC Channel 2.

We launched a major update to our website; we added new content about the Houston Area League and increased the site's functionality, including online member registration and payments. We also created a Facebook page; in November, we had 20 fans; we now have 954. We created a Twitter account to anchor our Twitter activities. Our new web presence enables us to communicate with a wide range of people and generations.

We registered 14,000 voters and published two issues of the Voters Guide for Harris and Fort Bend Counties for the November Joint Election and the March Primary Election. We answered the telephones at Channel 2 for the Joint Election and answered hundreds of calls coming to the office during the two elections. Our Voters Key was published and distributed to over 1,000 attendees at the State of the County luncheon.

We held general meetings on timely issues such as healthcare, climate change and transportation. We produced Updates on Issues or Facts & Issues monthly. We held several successful events such as the Second Hand Rose party and the Young Professionals Mixer. Our Repast this year was a first in honoring two outstanding men rather than women.

Our league was selected to participate in two important LWV US programs: Connecting Future Legislators with Civil Society, Colombia and Brazil; and High School Voter Registration and Outreach. As part of the first program, we hosted two fellows from Colombia who interned in the offices of Council Member Ed Gonzalez and County Commissioner Sylvia Garcia. As part of the second program, we spoke with and registered students at high schools in the Houston area.

Our league has grown by more than twenty new members since the first of the year, and I believe that we can continue to grow. I look forward to working with all of you for another successful and innovative year.

Reports on Special Projects

A Repast with Political Pioneers 2010—Linda Cohn, Chair

The ninth annual Repast with Political Pioneers, honoring William P. Hobby, Jr. and Jon S. Lindsay, was held on February 25, 2010 at the Four Seasons Hotel. Peggy Hamric and Carol Alvarado were event hosts. Melanie Lawson served as moderator.

The program was generally well-received. Attendance was respectable (about 240 Repast-goers). Net earnings, however, will enter the records as an anemic \$25,000.

Development Committee—Ann Herbage

This committee was established to insure our financial health and stability. We will be involved in seeking grants and in fundraising of all types. We very much value member input for ideas and leads for sources of funding for our voter services and other projects.

Reports of the Vice Presidents and Their Committees

Organization Vice President—Ann Herbage

I want to thank all of the volunteers who have helped with the organization, marketing, and distribution of our publications and to the volunteers who have helped with membership, unit direction, and office functions. Gwen Essinger continued as coordinator of the Bulk Mailing Committee and has done an excellent job, ensuring that the VOTER and other publications are mailed in a timely manner. Barb Swartz, editor of the VOTER, has done a great job soliciting articles from members.

Mary Lee Burris continued serving as Unit Discussion Leader, ensuring that the unit leaders were well-briefed on program discussion questions. Margaret Kolodzie is to be commended as our faithful longtime membership recorder; she retired from this duty midyear when Celia Chipman took over with help from our Office Assistant Michelle Brown. They are responsible for recording new local and national members and for keeping abreast of when everyone's yearly membership is due. Shirley Gibson has done an excellent job as Meeting Arrangements coordinator and Membership Chair.

Office management has been assumed by our new Executive Director, Christina Gorczynski, who has done a remarkable job. Our new Office Assistant Michelle Brown has quickly learned her responsibilities and been creative in solving problems. Thanks also go to Karl Essinger for maintaining our computer system.

Voter Bulk Mailing Committee—Gwen Essinger

Your bulk mailing committee has had several changes this year. We are mailing every other month this year, and much information is sent out by e-mail and available on the LWV website. Please know that this was necessary to reduce our mailing costs. I hope that you have been receiving your LWV mail in a timely manner. Please let the League office know if you do not receive your mail in good condition. We always welcome new volunteers to help with our work. While stuffing envelopes and folding Voters we engage in some lively discussions. Our regular crew members are Lynn Walshak, Millie & Louis Whittington, Ellen Goins and Shirley Gibson. Thank you to each of my volunteers, plus Barb Swartz for her work as editor.

Voter Editor—Barb Swartz

This has been a rather hectic year for the VOTER Editor. The production manager, who had done the formatting and printing for years, suddenly disappeared without notice. Unfortunately this caused a rather major glitch in the production. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we found a member's husband, Mike Williams, who volunteered to take over on the formatting portion. So far I have been very pleased with his work and hope he continues. We will continue to alternate mailed and web-only versions of the VOTER in the coming year.

Advocacy Vice President – Jan Wilbur

Without the pressure of a legislative session, we were able to experiment with some different ways of advocacy at the local level this year.

In December we held LWVHA's first-ever Brown Bag Luncheon with Rep. Patricia Harless in the Spring/1960 Area. Linda Cohn organized and coordinated the event with her usual grace and perseverance.

Lessons learned: (1) it is easier said than done; legislators have numerous demands on their time even in interim years and Linda spent many phone calls and much time nailing down a date. (2) We need to do a better follow-up job with neighborhood newspapers and with the legislator. (3) It is definitely worth doing again in other areas of the Greater Houston Area.

A stellar Advocacy Team (The "A" Team) was formed. The core team consisted of Laura Blackburn, Shirley Gibson, Marlene Lobberecht, and Leslie Taylor. Others participating from time to time were Joanne Peschel,

Wayne Derrick, Judy Hollinger, and Nancy Parra. Alice May Berthelsen, Gwen Essinger, Millie Whittington, and Louise Greeley-Copley assisted primarily via email consultation.

The “A” Team developed questions for and organized the LWV HA’s first-ever City Interviews, modeled on the Legislative Interviews and Congressional Interviews we do routinely. Our objective is to interview all City Council members, the City Controller, and the Mayor. These interviews are ongoing at the time of writing. Lessons learned: (1) advocacy has always been and still is a vital force in the League. (2) The League has as fine a cadre of experts in their field as you will find in the area. (3) We can’t do everything; we have to prioritize. Our local priorities this year are: Air Quality, Term Limits, Transportation/METRO, and City Budget with Laura Blackburn, Jan Wilbur, and Leslie Taylor carrying the ball on these priorities.

City council named a Commission on Term Limits in December and charged it with considering modifications to term limits but expressly forbidding it to recommend elimination of term limits, which the League advocates. We have, therefore, pushed for two or three four-year terms with a lay-off provision before that person could run for the same seat again. The Commission will make its recommendation to Council this summer. Council may accept, reject, or amend its recommendations, and the issue may be on the ballot in November.

Health care reform has dominated our advocacy at the national level, and although we were unable to get a single-payer system, we are relieved that a reform bill did pass. Gwen Essinger and Joann Peschel have been our local standard-bearers on health care reform with Gwen serving on the board of Health Care for All Texans.

We sent letters to our Congressional Delegation, strongly urging them to cosponsor H.R. 1826, the Fair Elections Now Act that would provide public financing for elective Congressional office. Our letters to Sheila Jackson Lee and Gene Green thanked them for cosponsoring the bill.

HOA (Home Owner Association) reform is still front and center in the interim and the League gave its testimony before the Intergovernmental Relations Interim Committee the first of April (see Lynn’s report).

Community Relations Vice President—Judy Hollinger

Many thanks to the chairs and committees who made the 2009-2010 League year an excellent one for voter service and community outreach.

City Council Observer—Shirley Gibson

Voters Guide—Sherle Frost Watson

Voters Key Harris County—Tony Sirvello

Directory of Elected Officials Ft. Bend County—Nelda and Martin Gay

Marketing—Judy Hollinger

Voter Registration—Linda Cohn

Debates and Forums—Ann Wood

City Council Observer—Shirley Gibson

Shirley attended most of the weekly sessions of Houston City Council. She wrote monthly reports for the VOTER and for the League Board to keep us apprised of matters coming before Council.

Voters Guide—Sherle Frost-Watson

Joint Election November 3, 2009

The Harris County Voters Guide for the City of Houston, HISD and HCC elections went to press by the target date. The English version was completed October 12, in time to be inserted into VOTER mailing on Oct. 14, to be put on our website, and to be distributed in time for Early Voting. All 70 candidates running in opposed races had responses, and we were only missing one photo. Proofreading was accomplished online. Our graphic artist, Sherry Collier, did a great job setting up both the English and Spanish versions.

The Spanish version was online by the start of early voting on Oct .19. The volunteer translation team produced an excellent, faithful document. They were proud of their work and felt that they were providing a real community asset. However, the translation process took longer than they anticipated, and one procedural section was never translated. The majority of feedback on the Spanish version was positive, and the absence of a print edition was not considered a particular disadvantage.

Ad-Vanced Web Printing ran off 35,000 copies of the Harris County 20-page edition, which included the LWVTX Constitutional Amendment Guide. In Ft Bend County we produced and distributed 15,000 customized Ft. Bend Constitutional Amendment Voters Guides for a nominal cost to the League of \$500. Total cost \$5385.

Primary Election March 2, 2010

Two versions (Harris County and Ft Bend County) of the Voters Guide were printed and distributed Feb. 12-15 before early voting began on Feb. 16. Both versions were available on the LWV website by Feb. 17. The Harris County VG was sent out in the VOTER mailing to members on Feb 18. Of 164 opposed candidates in Harris County, we received responses from 157, or 95.7%. The team, including Sharon Cunningham, Nellie Gay and Sherry Collier, did a wonderful job of compiling the information and getting it to the printers in a very short turn around time.

25,000 copies of the 32-page Harris County VG were printed, with 20,000 of those copies pre-ordered by schools, libraries, corporations and nonprofits. 11,000 copies of the 12-page Ft Bend County guide were printed, with 10,000 copies distributed in the Herald Coaster newspaper and the remaining copies distributed within the community. Total cost \$8655.

Runoff Election April 13, 2010

We unfortunately had to give up the idea of another VG; even the layout for Web only versions were outside of budget. Instead, we used our website and Facebook page to provide voter information and relevant website links for voters.

Marketing—Judy Hollinger

The Marketing plan for 2009-2010 was approved by the Board at its July 2009 meeting. Recommendations were for a commitment to an updated website, participation in social media such as Twitter and Facebook, the ability to make online donations and payments as well as a sponsorship package for corporate partners. The changes in our online presence have been implemented and continue to be enhanced. Marketing packets were developed and assembled and distributed to approximately 60 companies and individuals. From this effort, we acquired two corporate Patriot/\$5,000 sponsorships, and established some valuable contacts for future fundraising efforts.

Voters Guide Marketing Committee—Ann Herbage and Louise Greeley-Copley

Our Voters Guide for the general election of 2009 and for the primary election of 2010 was distributed to more than 50,000 people via corporate sponsors, nonprofit organizations, schools and libraries. These copies are provided free of charge to the schools and libraries requesting them. We do charge a small fee to our corporate sponsors and nonprofits. We are constantly refining our list of recipients of the Voters Guide and depend on our members' feedback for new contacts. Email seems to be the most effective way to communicate at this point although we do still use some letters and many phone calls. Members take copies to their meetings of other organizations and to their churches, and this is an essential part of our distribution process. Many people choose to read the Voters Guide on our website as well.

Four corporations contributed a total of \$3,000 for publication of the November 2009 and the March 2010 Voters Guides. An additional \$5,500 from the Patriot sponsorship packages was allocated to fund the Voters Guides.

Voters Key—Tony J. Sirvello III

Tony Sirvello once again compiled and arranged for the printing of the Harris County Voters Key. The Voters Key is 40 pages long and contains names and contact information of all officials representing Houston and Harris County at the federal, state and local level. We printed 3,000 copies, which were distributed to the attendees of the State of the County luncheon, our Patriot sponsors, government officials and high school teachers. Additional copies can be obtained at the League office for a suggested donation of \$2.

Voter Registration—Linda Cohn

In calendar year 2009, over 14,000 citizens entered the electorate with our assistance. As in previous years, the largest block by far represents sign-ups at Naturalization Ceremonies where we continue to offer an on-the-spot voter registration service. Ten Naturalization Ceremonies were held; our rate of on-site response averaged out to a very healthy 79%.

Our scrupulous commitment to ideological, policy, commercial and partisan neutrality provides the foundation for all voter registration and educational work.

Debates and Forums Committee—Ann Wood

Rally On The Green

A new and much heralded voter service event for the November 2009 campaign was an LWV-HA sponsored public televised (KPRC Channel 2) debate before the Houston City Elections with the three major candidates for mayor and the three leading candidates for controller. The mayoral debate was broadcast live, and the controller debate was taped and aired at a later date. All candidates for City of Houston, HISD, and HCC races were invited to the Rally, given a space for campaign materials and an opportunity to meet the public. Although a rainstorm necessitated a move to a covered area, approximately 40 candidates came, along with enough League members and the public to fill the smaller space. The Rally was funded by contributions from corporate and community partners

Televised Debate for Mayoral Runoff Election

A runoff election was needed to determine the winner of the mayor's race, so LWV-HA and KPRC Channel 2 cosponsored a studio televised debate with the two candidates. Both the Rally and the studio televised debates featured Twitter and Facebook interaction with voters .

Houston Housing Authority Elections

LWV-HA helps to conduct and monitor the required elections at Houston Housing Authority venues. This year the Debates and Forums Committee covered elections at 15 of these sites.

Program Vice President—Lynn Walshak

The programs this year have been timely, either at the local, state or federal level. The November meeting was organized by Leslie Taylor, held at and co-sponsored by Center for Law & Policy of Univ. of Houston, on topic Public Defender Office. The February meeting was held at United Way, arranged by Gwen Essinger, on topic of Health Care Reform. U S Rep Al Green gave his thoughts on the work of congress to pass a health care reform bill. This session was attended by a large number because of the extensive interest of citizens in the current legislation under consideration. Climate Change was the topic for the March meeting, arranged by, and with Facts and Issues prepared by Laura Blackburn. Nobel Prize recipient Ron Sass was a very interesting and informative speaker, who generated questions from the audience. The April meeting was arranged by Carolyn Mata on transportation that is a major issue for Houston area at this time, held at the St. Paul's United Methodist Church, with Dr. Crossley as speaker.

December was our annual luncheon and recognition of newly elected officials. Ann Wood arranged an outstanding display of local League of Women Voters historical documents. The October meeting was on topic Increasing Voter Participation, arranged by Wayne Derrick, who was also a presenter. Voter Participation is one of our issues that the LWV Texas took up and is in process of reaching a consensus position. The September meeting was held at the Hess Club with speaker County Judge Ed Emmett on Ethics in Government. Laura Blackburn, who served on committee appointed by Judge Emmett on Ethics, arranged the meeting.

The January program planning meeting resulted in three issues being approved for request of LWV Texas to take up studies or concur with position. (1) Predatory Lending Practices; (2) Prostitution and human trafficking; (3) The position reached by LWV Houston Area in 2008 on Mandatory Homeowner Associations. None of the three issues were accepted by state League. However, all procedures have been completed so that the Mandatory HOA issue will be brought to the floor of State Convention for vote by the delegates in attendance as to whether or not

LWV Texas will concur with our position on Mandatory HOAs. A significant event is that on April 7th, President Nancy Parra, gave testimony at a Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee hearing at Texas Southern University, that was exploring issues on Foreclosure of homes in HOAs.

Children's Issues—Betty Oertel and Marlene Lobberecht

LWV-HA members continued participation in One Voice Texas with a member representative serving on each of the Work Groups, and attending the 2010 Membership Open Forums. One Voice announcements and minutes were provided to the Board of Directors. Covering other issues, oral and written testimony was provided at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) Houston-Area hearing regarding improvements to the Child Care Licensing standards. The League was represented in numerous Texas and national conferences regarding early childhood education, child abuse, child care issues/licensing, child advocacy, child health/safety, and child nutrition/obesity. As the LWV-TX Early Childhood Program Chair also, LWV-HA is represented on the House Interim Economic & Workforce Development Committee Work Group at the request of TECEC. The work group lead by TECEC at the request of Rep. Mark Strama is reviewing ways to meet increasing demand for child care services while preparing children to succeed in school through a subsidy from the Texas Statewide Child Care Assistance program which provides low-income working families with affordable child care options.

A free eBook, [Texas Advocacy Playbook](#), and training materials were developed to assist our membership and Texas citizens with understanding how the Texas Legislature does it's work and how to gain awareness on any issue, problem, or situation. The 40-page eBook explains what activities non-profit groups can legally do, common legislative terminology, how to be an effective advocate at any one of eleven levels of involvement with simple step-by-step assistance, and contains a simple summary on parliamentary procedures.

Health Committee—Gwen Essinger

Members: Diane Long, Ellen Martin, Ada Montare, Celia Morgan, Jo Ann Peschel and Sandra Walsh. Committee members active in coalition organizations are Jo Ann Peschel – Care for Elders and Gwen Essinger – Mental health Association of Houston and Health Care for All Texans.

We have not held committee meetings this past year because we had done all of our work in defining our position on health care. We had a meeting in February on health care and we are happy that a bill has made its way through Congress and to the desk of President Obama. It is not the bill that we thought we would receive, but we are hopeful that it will help some people who are waiting for health care availability. I am sure that changes will keep surfacing, and new bills will make their way through Congress to solve our health care problems.

International Affairs Committee—Millie Whittington

In preparation for the January unit meetings on Global Hunger, the Committee spent the past year researching and analyzing many facets of this international scourge. The scope, alleged causes, possible solutions, and significance of this worldwide killer were included in the Facts and Issues we wrote. We sent resource people to each of the unit meetings. The topic questions each generated good response, but the one on possible solutions topped the others in interest and discussion.

I have been working as the LWVTX Chair on immigration-related bills filed in the 81st Texas Legislature. I am happy to report that no bills hostile to the new LWVUS position were passed in Austin, although many negative bills were filed.

Most Committee members are actively involved in international organizations such as the United Nations Association, the World Affairs Council of Houston and Great Decisions discussion groups.

Please welcome Marge O'Connor. She will become chair of the Committee as of the Annual Meeting in May.

Natural Resources—Carolyn Mata

The Natural Resources Committee members continued their involvement in several community environmental groups.

Programs

- April General Meeting, which featured a talk on Transportation by David Crossley.
- March General Meeting, which featured a talk on Climate Change by Ron Sass, PhD.

Meetings and Conferences Attended

- Monthly RAQPAC (Regional Air Quality Planning Committee) at Houston Galveston Area Council
- Monthly meetings of the Harris County Flood Control District
- Quarterly meetings of the Galveston Bay Council
- Quarterly meetings of the Public Participation & Education Subcommittee and the Budget & Priorities Subcommittee of the Galveston Bay Council

Public Defender Study—Leslie Taylor, Study Co-Chair

The League of Women Voters Houston Area undertook a study as approved at the last general meeting. The study committee worked throughout the summer and early fall. We published a Facts and Issues and presented a November general meeting with four panel speakers. Committee members served as resource persons at each unit meeting. Consensus was reached by the Units. A notebook of research materials and electronic copies of research materials are available at the league office.

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.

League of Women Voters 2010—2011 Long Range Planning Committee Report

Members Present: Shirley Gibson, Chair; Laura Blackburn; Linda Cohn; Louise Greeley-Copley; Nancy Parra

Communication

The board will

- analyze, publish, and distribute material according to the most efficient way we can serve our target audience
- update membership material and survey our members to ascertain their interests
- focus on internet communication and encourage useful links on our website

Public Relations

The board and membership will

- revitalize the Speakers Bureau
- interface with corporate organizations to enhance visibility
- compile an email list of Houston Area corporate and civic leaders

The board will

- increase the use of press releases to the general media as appropriate
- continue to emphasize our brand

Participation

The board and membership will

- continue to increase participation by various types of activities such as brown bag luncheons
- identify membership concerns

The board will

- continue to refine internet communication protocols to inform members of activities and policies
- place more emphasis on developing partnerships with other organizations
- provide board training for the board each year

Leadership

The board will develop a workshop on how to mentor new members

Finance

The board will

- develop avenues for micro-contributions, including virtual cards for impulse donations

- continue to encourage the membership to identify contributors, both from the membership and population at large
- seek sponsors for workshops
- accept responsibility for raising funds

The board and membership will

- participate in a workshop on fundraising
- investigate creative ways to raise funds that extend beyond our core mission

Administration

The board will

- continue proper utilization of the Office Assistant and Executive Director
- examine the number and type of meetings that are scheduled to maintain a balanced calendar

Programs

The board will develop program committees to create events with wide appeal.

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)

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

The budget requires a majority vote.

Voting Procedures

Voting procedures for program adoption are described in "Adoption of Program."

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.

2010–2011 Adoption of Local Program

Adoption of Program

Program adoption consists of presentation, discussion and debate, and voting. Presentation will be in three parts:

1. Recommended retained program -- support and action positions carried forward from past years to be retained or dropped.
2. Recommended new program -- new items suggested by the members and recommended by the board.
3. Non-recommended items -- issues suggested by the members but not recommended by the board...

Some board guidelines for recommending items are member interest and potential for active involvement; local scope; timeliness in terms of community interest and political climate; impact of League involvement.

Recommended Retained Program: Presentation of retained local program will be by category, that is “Social Policy,” “Natural Resources,” and “Government.” The specifics under each category appear in the Workbook and full details are in the Local Program for Study and Action. Following presentation questions for clarification may be asked. Debate and discussion will not occur until all other program items have been presented. Each program item will be debated and voted on in the order of original presentation.

Recommended New Program: Presentation will be by item, following which questions for clarification may be asked. Debate and discussion will not occur until all program items have been presented, as indicated in the agenda. Each program item will be debated and voted on in the order of original presentation.

Non-Recommended Program: Following presentation of the above recommended new program, any member may move consideration of a non-recommended item provided *the president has been notified prior to the presentation of the recommended new program*. Only items previously proposed to the Board may be presented. Two copies of the motion of consideration should be given to the secretary. The member moving consideration is allowed three minutes in which to state the reasons. Questions for clarification may then be asked. The vote on the motion to consider will follow immediately. A majority vote is required to order consideration of the non-recommended item. Items voted consideration will be allotted time in the period set aside for discussion and debate of proposed new program items.

Amendments: Amendments to the wording may be made for the purpose of clarification, emphasis, or editorial change. Amendments may not enlarge the scope or change the meaning of the item. Further action will be postponed until the time set for adoption.

Recommended New Program

The board recommends one new local program study: Human Trafficking.

Focus: A study on human trafficking in the Houston Area

Scope: Study the current sex and labor trafficking in the Houston Area.

- Develop an overview of dynamics and characteristics of human trafficking.
- Identify the laws that address the problem and determine how they are being enforced locally and ways to improve enforcement.
- Identify successful solutions and processes that lead to prevention, rescue and recovery of human trafficking victims.
- Promote awareness of human trafficking in the Houston Area.
-

Rationale for League of Women Voters Houston Area Study: Human trafficking is one of the three largest illegal businesses in the world and is in every country including Texas. A study by Children at Risk in Houston reports that “Texas is a hub for international human trafficking because of its many busy interstate highways, international airports, bus stations, the shipping commerce through the Gulf of Mexico, and its shared border with Mexico.” This border is the number one supply site for young children used in sex and labor trafficking.

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 City Government Committee undertook its extensive two-year study of Houston’s City Government in May 1991. In recognition of the substantial growth and change in the City of Houston and city governance since the 1980 consensus position, the Committee re-evaluated its current relevancy, efficiency, and political effectiveness. The first year addressed representation. The second year addressed political structure, responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the strong mayor council form of government.

Action: Use this position to oppose term limits for elected officials; oppose elimination of at-large council seats during the court challenge by a Hispanic group; support Council efforts to get special elections for filling council vacancy; advocate 4-year terms for elected officials with staggered terms for Council members; and advocate rewriting of city charter.

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: Used the position to oppose restructuring Public Revenue bonds in 1991; oppose the issuance of bonds to repay judgments against the City; oppose transfer of funds from Water and Sewer Funds to the General Fund to cover increased health care costs of city employees; support adequate funding for the Planning and Development Department following the defeat of the zoning ordinance; and express concern that the 93-94 annual budget was predicated on the debt-extended structure, Metro funds and anticipated revenue projections.

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: Focus #47 (December 1976), entitled "Financing City Government," outlined LWV-HA's consensus position on the budget process which was reached in spring, 1975. The Committee chose to study the budget process in 1987 chiefly to reassess the progress achieved in over a decade of change in city government. As in 1975, the 1988 consensus emphasized public input, long range planning, availability of budget documents, a budget calendar, and support for integrating the Capital Improvement Budget with the Operating Budget.

Action: Advocated for the adoption of the budget calendar (since achieved); passage of the Capital Improvement Budget integrated with the Operating Budget; earlier inclusion of council members in budget process; more reasonable time between public hearing on the annual budget and its placement on the council agenda for approval; and following the timelines of the budget calendar as adopted.

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. In 2002 wrote letter to Houston mayor and council members opposing the shortening of service hours for city libraries. Our monitoring is on-going.

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;
 - establishes 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 first use of this position has been with the recent annexation of Kingwood and others.

Action: In addition to the general meeting on annexation, the Houston League has issued a press release and written to Houston's elected state officials urging their support for maintaining the city's annexation powers. Testimony was given before a state legislative committee against a bill seeking to weaken Houston's annexation powers.

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 short-term and long-term capital improvements budget planning;
 - a city ordinance requiring the setting aside of land for open space and parks. (1984)

History: League members thought there was a lack of long-range planning in both the City of Houston and Harris County. The League wished to expedite better planning and coordination both in and between city and county. Studies in 1976 and 1984 addressed these issues.

Action: This position was used between 1990 and 1993 by LWV-HA to lobby for a zoning ordinance for the City of Houston. In 2003 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 siting 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: No action has been taken under our new position.

Ethics: Support of effective ethics regulation with strong enforcement.

History: This position was adopted in 2007.

Action: Laura Blackburn has been appointed to the Citizens Task Force on Ethics established by County Judge Ed Emmett.

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: In 2002, we joined the Houston Quality of Life Coalition, and we support the coalition’s goals. In 2003 wrote letter to Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept supporting more aggressive land acquisition and water conservation policies. In 2004-05 we supported 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. Impetus for study began when the city purchased a local bus company and set up an agency to run it.

Action: League members monitored transit use and served on state transportation committees. 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 are being 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 land fills;
- 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: LWV-HA continues to lobby on this topic, urging reduction in packaging so less waste is generated, greater use of recycled materials, and economic incentives which enable recycled materials to compete effectively with “virgin” materials. In October 1997, the League held an all-day workshop on waste reduction and recycling

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. A backgrounder was published in January 1980. After several general meetings, the 1983 consensus was reached.

Action: Shortly after the passage of the act, League members served on the Toxic Substances Task Force and as chair and vice chair of the Houston Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Members now serve on the Regional Air Quality Planning committee, the Clean Air Coalition, the LEPC, and the Environment Committee of the Greater Houston Partnership. They also monitor state and local legislation and work to educate the public about toxic substance issues. In 2003 wrote letters to U.S. senators opposing the loosening of pollution controls. In 2005, we testified before Houston City Council and at a town hall meeting about air quality in the Milby Park area, and we testified before the Texas Senate Natural Resources Committee concerning proposed air toxics legislation. We also wrote letters to federal, state and city officials 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: Lobbied for repeal of Penal Code 21.06 to decriminalize consensual sexual activity between adults. LWV-HA sponsored a Conference at the UH Law School in September 1991 on Criminal Justice that was broadcast on the Community Access Channel. In 2002 participated with the Texas Criminal Justice Reform Coalition in programs to educate the public about voting rights of ex-felons. In 2002 held general meeting on capital punishment.

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. the 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: In May, 1998, The League of Women Voters of Houston adopted a two-year study of bilingual education in the Greater Houston Area to review and evaluate the federal and state laws, funding mechanisms, and policies relating to bilingual education; how programs are being implemented in the Greater Houston Area, criteria used for evaluating the success or effectiveness of the programs, and who makes the evaluations. After study and consensus, the position was adopted on April 24, 2000, by the League of Women Voters of Houston.

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: The 79th Legislative Session now underway is very important for Child Abuse and Neglect reform. Prevention programs need to be restored with health care provided for all our children in protective care. Caseworker caseloads need to reflect the national standard of 12 to 18 cases per worker. CPS needs 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: We have had a position on domestic violence since 1983.

Action: Anti-stalking law was revisited and revised in the 1997 Texas Legislative session. The new law was

signed and took effect immediately after the Governor signed the bill. Also a concern is the Federal Welfare Reform Bill with heavy focus on welfare-to-work programs. This poses several challenges to survivors of family violence. The 15% cut in the Social Services Block Grant (which in the 96/97 biennium comprised 97% of the budget for family violence programs), coupled with mounting need for services, threatens the funding level of state family violence programs. We are members of CADA (Coalition Against Domestic Abuse).

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.

Action: Recent activities include monitoring state legislation on school finance (especially vouchers), and the impact of the religious right through affiliation with the Texas Freedom Network and Let Freedom Ring. The school tax base impact of tax abatements was considered in the recent LWV-HA Tax Abatement study. Lobbied House Education Committee members opposing pro-voucher bill. Committee members monitored Comptroller Sharp's performance review of HISD. In 2002-03 committee members began a restudy of the LWV-HA position on education. We wrote many letters in 2004-05 opposing vouchers and supporting adequate education funding. We attended the presentations before the Texas Supreme Court regarding education and will be monitoring the Special Session on education.

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: LWV-HA determined the need to evaluate 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 and given testimony at Harris County Commissioners Court to prevent cuts in the Hospital District budget. In 2002, LWV-HA wrote a letter to the Houston mayor and council members opposing shortened hours for city clinics. In 2004, a League member served on the public health sub-committee of the Greater Houston Partnership study.

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. 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: The LWV used its position to work with Houston City Council to create a housing code, which led to improvements in rental housing stock. The League also supported the City's 1993 stricter revisions to the Housing Code. At present, the City does not generally provide relocation help for displaced low-income families other than providing lists of other available housing.

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 Texas Legislature regularly considers measures aimed at regulating abortion services. In 1997, parental notification and licensing standards bills were on the agenda. The League also supports providing foreign aid for family planning. Congress has authorized family planning foreign aid, but stipulated that no funds be used for abortions. In 2002 wrote letter to US senators urging ratification of CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) treaty.

89th Annual Meeting Minutes
League of Women Voters of the Houston Area
Thursday May 14th 2009

Speaker: The keynote speaker, Leo Vasquez spoke before the meeting.

Call to Order: The Meeting was called to order at 7:20 PM, Laura Blackburn, president presiding.

Adoption of Order of Business: The first order of business was to appoint the following people: Madeline Appel as parliamentarian, Barb Schwartz as time keeper, and Millie and Louis Whittington as minutes reviewer.

Laura showed the power point she compiled of Ernie Manouse from PBS who sponsored eight debates; the Christmas Party; the Birthday Party; the Repast; and the new offices.

Adoption of Rules: Laura Blackburn referred to the proposed rules of operation on page 12. One minute would be allowed for debate; to change dues requires 3/5 of quorum; 2/3 votes to approve of action by the house; and the budget requires a majority. The rules were voted on and passed.

Secretary's Report: Shirley Gibson was asked to read where the minutes were printed in the Annual Meeting Workbook, which was page 26.

Treasurer's Report: Martha Murphree was asked to read where the annual budget was located, pages 28-29 and pages 30-31. She said that the area of concern was the membership dues being in on time.

President's Report: The state of the League was addressed by the president, Laura Blackburn: Laura said that the League was in very good shape but not excellent. There are a couple of problems such as funding and getting new members. We have to focus on getting grants for the programs and the Voters Guide. We will have two fund raisers this coming year, one in the fall and our Repast in the spring. We have continued to add our stature in the community due to the presidential elections and to our attention to congress on global warming. We had eight debates with Chanel 8. We have moved into new clean offices. We completed two new studies, Home Owners Associations and Coastal Building Codes. These program goals should be a source of pride for all of us. Laura Blackburn thanked us for allowing her to lead such a fine organization.

Executive Director's Report: The Executive Director, Pat Downing reported next: Pat Downing said that it is hard to know where to begin. She hit the ground running beginning in June of 2008; she had to quickly become knowledgeable about the running of the league with Laura Blackburn's help and tutelage. There were policy procedures, people to learn about; and fund raisers. There were ways to learn about saving money. There were board meetings and general meetings and then there was moving to new offices. These were challenges and learning experiences. Pat Downing wants to thank you for your support and confidence and especially thanks go to Laura Blackburn for her help and guidance. This has been a good year and she is looking forward to working with Nancy Parra and the new board. Last of all she presented a bouquet of flowers to Laura Blackburn.

Presentation and Adoption of Local Program: Laura Blackburn called Jan Wilbur to present the program. Jan Wilbur came forward to present the rules on page 13 for adopting a program. The current program is on pages 15-25.

First the presentation of the local program: the adopting of the new studies that were included in the 2008 program, the HOAs and Coastal building codes. We need to see if we want to keep them or drop them.

Government: Financing city government; city charter; budget process; capital improvement; annexation and

deannexation; comprehensive planning; tax abatement; and TIRZ. Natural Resources: Transportation; Solid waste; Flood control; Toxic substances. Social Policy: Administration of Justice; Bilingual education; child abuse and neglect; Domestic Violence; Education; Health; Housing; Sexuality education and reproductive services. Jan moved that we accept the existing positions on Government, Natural Resources and Social Policy as it appears in the Annual Meeting Workbook. The motion passed.

Jan then moved that we adopt the position on Home Owners under Social Policy under Housing and Costal Building Codes to be placed under government following comprehensive planning. Alice May Berthelsen disagreed with using Miami Dade statistics. The question was called and passed.

The board is recommending two new study items. The first is the study of Public Defender for Harris County. We have two people who have agreed to chair the study of public defenders: Leslie Taylor and Ernestine Dansby have agreed. All in favor of the motion. Discussion: Several people spoke against the Public Defender, Bunny Mason and But Golding. The question was called and the motion passed.

The second study is the study of Election Administration in Harris County. So far we have no one to chair this study. A vote was called and it failed.

The program was adopted for 2009 and 2010.

Awards: Awards were presented by Gwen Essinger.

Millie Whittington was given the Helen Hunter award; Sharon Friedman was given an award for her and her late husband for their many years covering commissioner's court.

Marty Gay was given an award for his great effort to get out the Voter's Guide in Fort Bend; and Laura Blackburn was given an award for her time as president.

Presentation and Adoption of 2008-2009 Budget and Dues: Barbara Mc Cormick came forward to present the annual budget. She commended the committee, Laura Blackburn, Pat Downing, Ann Herbage, Martha Murphree, Nancy Parra and Jan Wilbur.

She began by asking if there was any discussion about the dues since Shirley Gibson had ask for time at the April board meeting. Shirley Gibson wanted to roll back the dues to 2007 because it was her position that many senior citizens couldn't afford \$65.00.

There was discussion. Martha Murphree said that if the dues were lower we would have to get 46 members to replace the dues to be lost. The question was called and the motion failed. The dues remain \$65.00. Barbara Mc Cormick thanked Shirley for her motion.

The Budget is located on pp. 28-31 of Annual Meeting Workbook. Barbara said that it's difficult to come up with a budget because of the recession and funding is lean. She said that however they were able to include most everything.

Barb Schwartz spoke up on behalf of the Voter which will only be published every other month. She asked for and additional \$100 for graphics. Louis Whittington suggested that we sell adds to help fund the Voter. No one commented.

The money from the HA would be drawn from Ed Fund rather than vice versa. The Ed Fund and HA will be separated. The primary necessity in the coming year is for grant money since our present grants will play out this next year. The Budget was submitted for approval as it was amended. Joan Golding called the question. The new budget passed.

Election of Officers for 2009-2010: Barb Schwartz came forward to present the officers for the board for 2009 and 2010. The Nominating committee was Millie Whittington; Joan Golding; Gwen Essinger; Lynn Walshak; And Barbara Schwartz.

The Officers are Nancy Parra, President; Lynn Walshak, program vice-president; Jan Wilbur, Advocacy Vice President; Shirley Gibson, Secretary. Other officers are, Organization Vice President, Ann Herbage; and Judy Hollinger as Community Relations VP. Director is Mary Lee Burus.

Officer continuing this coming term is Martha Murphree, Treasurer, and Director, Gwen Essinger. The board members no longer serving are Laura Blackburn, Peggy Hill, Betty Oertel, and Lula Blake. The officers were duly elected.

Nancy Parra was presented and she introduced the board, followed by her acceptance speech:

Nancy Parra said that she is really honored to accept the presidency of the Houston Area League of Women voters. She said, "I consider it a privilege to carry on the work of the League in areas of program, study and community service. I am really excited about working together in the coming two years. I have worked with many of you in the past as Organization Vice President and hope to work with many more of you in my tenure as president. The League faces many challenging hurdles, some of them are membership which needs to include younger members and make our image and accomplishments more prominent among the public. We need to strengthen the League's financial foundation.

During the coming two years we can emerge with younger members which we can motivate to carry our image to the public and we can partner with other organizations to make our presence more visible in the community and we can increase our funding capabilities. I recognize that we can only achieve these goals with all of you playing an active role in our endeavors so join me and the rest of the board in this journey.

I would like to recognize Laura Blackburn and the outstanding accomplishments of the League under her leadership, and thank everyone for having confidence in me and selecting me for this position.

Direction to the Board: Nancy Parra then asked for any suggestions to the board for the coming year. Joan Golding said that she would like to be informed what the board will be doing during this year. Nancy asked for any other suggestions. None appeared.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Shirley Gibson, Secretary
League of Women Voters – Houston Area

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS HOUSTON AREA PROPOSED 2010—2011 BUDGET

	2009-10	2009-10	Actual	2010-11		Proposed
Revenue	Adopted	Revised	League	Proposed		Combined
Membership Dues	20000	20000	14478	20000		20000
Program						
Annual Meeting	1200	1200	270	1500		1750
General Meetings	3200	3200	1455	0		4000
Holiday Luncheon	1000	1000	1540	0		1500
Program Planning	700	700	0	0		0
Birthday Party			197			0
Fund Raisers						
Silent Auction						1500
Repast						52000
Fall Fundraiser	15000	1500				12000
Second Hand Rose			2181	1500		1500
Contributions						
Discovery Green						7000
Voter Key						4000
Voter Guide Underwriting						10000
Corporate Contributions						0
Memorials						0
Member Donations	4000	4000	2995	3000		6000
Non-Member Donations						500
Grants						
HEI						0
Hershey						1000
Global Democracy						1500
Youth Engagement						3000
Other						30000
Publication Sales	100	100				200
Total Revenue	45200	31700	23116	26000		157450
League	2009-10	2009-10	2009-10	2010-11		Proposed
Expense	Adopted	Revised	Actual	Proposed		Combined
Board Expense	200	200	0	0		0
Web Site	200	200		400		1400
Credit Card Machine Lease						600
Telephone	400	400	940	525		2100
Rent	1440	1440	1450	2562		10250
Maintenance			100	300		1200
Public Relations	100	100	14			420
Programs						
Annual Meeting	1200	1200		1500		2000
General Meetings	3200	3200	2075	0		3500
Holiday Reception	1000	1000	2190	0		1000
Program Planning	700	700	0	0		0
Program Development	100	100		0		0

Program Study						0
Birthday Party			137			0
Printing and Reproduction						
Fund Raising Materials						300
Facts & Issues				0		1200
Voter	450	450	212	700		1400
Annual Report						300
Annual Meeting Workbook	400	400		300		300
Directory	600	600	442	450		450
Membership Materials				100		100
Hershey Fund (other)						225
Postage and Delivery	300	300	1441	950		1900
Office Supplies	1000	1000	488	625		1250
Insurance	150	150	948	500		2000
D & O						
Voter Service						
Rally on the Green						3000
Voter Registration						250
Voters' Guide						8000
Voters' Key						2700
Dues						
National PMP		0				9400
State PMP	3500	3500	3576	3575		7150
Greater Houston Partnership						550
One Voice						150
CEC						75
Sales Tax						0
Payroll Expenses						
ED Salary						43600
Admin Asst. Salary	26900	26900	4858	4750		19000
Payroll Taxes						
Equipment			120			100
Maintenance			298			300
Automobile Expenses						200
Staff Development						500
Professional Services	500	1000	1400	1200		2400
Fund Raisers						
Repast						19000
Silent Auction						0
Fall Fundraiser						6000
Member Finance Drive	250	250		250		250
Global Democracy						750
Youth Engagement						2500
Bank Service Charges	500	500	500			0
Total Expenses	43090	43590	21189	18687		157770
Revenue-Expense	2110	-11890	1927	7313		-320

Barbara McCormick, Chair; Christina Gorczyński, Ann Herbage, Martha Murphree, Nancy Parra, Lynn Walshak

**LWV HOUSTON EDUCATION FUND
2010—2011 PROPOSED BUDGET**

This budget is presented for information only; it is approved at the June Board meeting.

	2009-10	2009-10	2009-10	2010-11
Revenue	Adopted	Revised	Actual	Proposed
Membership Dues				
Program				
Annual Meeting	800	800		250
General Meetings	800	800	940	4000
Holiday Luncheon				1500
Program Planning				0
Birthday Party				0
Fund Raisers				
Silent Auction		1500		1500
Repast	55000	48500	39720	52000
Fall Fundraiser				12000
Second Hand Rose				0
Contributions				
Discovery Green			4000	7000
Voter Key		4000	30	4000
Voter Guide Underwriting	10000	10000	9750	10000
Corporate Contributions	4000	4000	2058	
Memorials				
Member Donations	3500	3500	2385	3000
Non-Member Donations	4000	400	665	500
Grants				
HEI	40000	40000	40000	0
Hershey	1500	1500	1000	1000
Global Democracy			1916	1500
Youth Engagement				3000
Other	25000	25000		30000
Publication Sales	100	100	190	200
Total Revenue	144700	140100	102654	131450
Ed Fund				
Expense	Budget	EdFund	EdFund	2010-11
	Adopted	Revised	Actual	Proposed
Board Expense				
Web Site	0	1600	2080	1050
Credit Card Machine Lease	0	500	409	600
Telephone	1600	1600	1628	1575
Rent	8160	8810	7385	7688
Maintenance			350	850
Public Relations	200	200	87	420
Programs				
Annual Meeting	800	800		500
General Meetings	800	800	698	3500
Holiday Reception				1000

Program Planning				
Program Development				
Program Study		450		
Birthday Party			117	
Printing and Reproduction				
Fund Raising Materials	400	400	156	300
Facts & Issues		500	738	1200
Voter	250	450	175	700
Annual Report	250	250	288	300
Annual Meeting Workbook				
Directory				
Membership Materials				
Hershey Fund (other)	1500	1500	855	225
Postage and Delivery	1500	1500	229	950
Office Supplies	1500	1000	1234	625
Insurance	850	850	323	1500
D & O				
Voter Service				
Rally on the Green			3568	3000
Voter Registration	250	250	40	250
Voters' Guide	10000	10000	12190	8000
Voters' Key	3500	3500	3006	2700
Dues				
National PMP	8500	9464	9064	9400
State PMP	3550	3500	3575	3576
Greater Houston Partnership			550	550
One Voice				150
CEC				75
Sales Tax			67	0
Payroll Expenses				
ED Salary	58216	58216	49162	43600
Admin Asst. Salary				14250
Payroll Taxes				
Equipment	500	500	309	100
Maintenance				300
Automobile Expenses	400	400	587	200
Staff Development	150	500	258	500
Professional Services	500	1000	1200	1200
Fund Raisers				
Repast	21000	21000	14129	19000
Silent Auction		200		
Fall Fundraiser				6000
Member Finance Drive				
Global Democracy			1250	750
Youth Engagement				2500
Bank Service Charges	150	150	617	0
Total Expenses	124526	129890	116324	139084
Revenue-Expense	20174	10210	-13670	-7634

Report of the Nominating Committee

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

Officers (2010-2012)

Community Relations VP	Shirley Gibson
Organization VP	
Secretary	Alice May Berthelsen
Treasurer	Barb Swartz

Officers (2010-2011)

Advocacy Vice President	Laura Blackburn
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Directors (2010-2012)

Mary Lee Burrus
Gwen Essinger
Penny Milbouer

Officers and Directors continuing for the year 2010-2011

Officers

President	Nancy Parra
Program Vice President	Lynn Walshak

Directors

Linda Cohn
Marlene Lobberecht
Louise Greeley-Copley
Leslie Taylor
Wayne Derrick

Nominating Committee 2010-2011

Betty Oertel
Millie Whittington
Ann Herbage

Submitted by the Nominating Committee

Laura Blackburn, Chair
Alice May Berthelsen
Mary Lee Burrus
Millie Whittington

Biographies of the New Nominees

Alice May Berthelsen is a longtime League member, serving as president three times, with many portfolios in between presidencies. Meeting a former member of the Houston Planning Commission who served on the commission at the same time as she did, he said "you are still with the same organization!" And Alice May said "of course!"

Laura Blackburn has served the League in many capacities, including two terms as president and two terms as Advocacy VP. She has been active on the NR Committee and currently serves as Air Quality and Climate Change Chair. She has served on the state board, was on the LWVUS energy committee, and is currently on the LWVUS Nominating Committee.

Mary Lee Burrus was active in the Houston League in the late 60's, serving on the HR committee and as a unit discussion leader, but dropped out when she returned full-time to the work force. Since her retirement from the staff of the Association of Rice Alumni in 1999, she has returned to active membership in the League and focused her energies on discussion leaders once again, resurrecting a monthly briefing session.

Gwen Essinger joined the League in the early 70's because the League cared about recycling. After joining and learning the many facets of the League, she became a devoted member and she has served in many capacities in the Houston League, the Montgomery County League and the Texas State League.

Shirley Gibson joined the League in 2004. She has been board secretary, City Council reporter for the Voter, and membership chair. She was also discussion leader for the Southwest Unit and is currently Discussion Leader for the New Member Unit. Shirley also chaired our LWV gala 89th and 90th Birthday Parties.

Ann Herbage has been a League member for several years and has been involved in volunteer work since her early retirement from an airline. Another rewarding activity is volunteering for a scholarship foundation and study group called the Delphians. Recent activity with LWVHA includes acting as Marketing Coordinator for the Voters Guide, serving as Development chair, and serving as Organization Vice President.

Penny Milbouer came to Houston in 1984 as a Property Analyst in oil and gas at a major law firm after a career of teaching German language and culture and running the Studies Abroad Office at Boise State University and an appointment as a visiting professor at the University of Florida. The last twelve years before she retired, she was a paralegal in the law firm's health section, where she worked on Medicare and Medicaid provider enrollment and legal and policy research; she also wrote and edited a monthly newsletter on HIPAA (patient privacy law) topics and was web mistress for a client consortium.

As alumnae representative for her undergraduate college, Penny visited high school college fairs, interviewed applicants, and organized a college essay writing workshop at Rice University and a visit from faculty to lecture on urban development in Berlin after the fall of the Wall. Her current project is the translation from German to English of the book *The Asbestos Lie*, which is the story of the Swiss asbestos cartel, Eternit, whose management is now on trial in Turin on charges of criminal negligence.

People she come to respect and admire attracted her to join League of Women Voters, whose approach to issues fits her idea of what active citizenship should mean.

Betty Oertel has been a member of the Houston LWV since the 60's. She served term as secretary on the state board and several years on the local league board. She was domestic violence chair and child abuse chair for many years. Betty chaired the child abuse study for the state league in the late 80's and helped with the formation of the domestic violence unit at the DA's office. She recently passed the child issues chair to Marlene Lobberecht.

Barb Swartz joined the League in 1965 when a new League was forming in the Pittsburgh area. Since then she has served in many capacities in Leagues in Dade County, the Pittsburgh area, and in Houston. She was VOTER Editor for the past few years and sits on the LWV-TX Board as Secretary. She looks forward to serving as Treasurer, a position she held before in the Houston League.

Millie Whittington is a teacher, and for the last 17 years she has been teaching conversational English to foreign students at the University of Houston. She has been the chair of the LWVHA International Affairs Committee and is an active member of several foreign affairs organizations. The League is of primary interest to her because of its principles, goals and strength.