



# The VOTER

MAY 2020

League of Women Voters-Corpus Christi

## 75th Annual Meeting Plans Announced

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted every organization's efforts to hold meetings and conduct business, and LWV-CC is facing the same dilemma regarding its 75th Annual Meeting.

The Bylaws specify what business items need to be addressed at the Annual Meeting, including election of officers, adoption of the FY 2020-2021 budget, and adoption of proposed amendments to Bylaws.

At its Board meeting held via Zoom on May 7, Board members voted to hold the League's Annual Meeting virtually on Saturday, June 13, from 1-3 p.m. A workbook for use during the Annual Meeting also will be produced and made available to members ahead of time.

Bylaws call for a quorum of 20%

of the membership to conduct business. The League's official membership is 108, with 22 constituting a quorum.

"We are hopeful, of course, that many more members will choose to participate," said Anne Stewart, president.

Treasurer Annell Neale will work with other Board members to provide direction and instructions to League members planning to participate.

"We know that a large number of our members may feel uncomfortable participating in a 'virtual' meeting," said Stewart. "In the coming weeks, we'll furnish specific 'how to' instructions on how to get your cell phone or computer ready to participate and provide additional information to make this new experience successful. Perhaps we can even have a hands-on practice session ahead of time!"

On Page 3 of this VOTER, three



**75th Annual Meeting  
Saturday, June 13,  
from 1-3 p.m.  
via Zoom**

business action items to be included on the June 13th Annual Meeting agenda are detailed:

- Nominating Committee's Report listing officers to be elected for either two-year or one-year terms.
- Proposed Amendments to the LWV-CC Bylaws; and
- Proposed budget for FY 2020-2021.

## Thanks to These Renewing Members!

Barbara J. Clark, Individual  
 Barbara Craig-Schniepp, Individual  
 Sylvia Whitworth, Individual  
 Sue Williams, Individual  
 Chris Davis Garcia, Sustaining  
 Sharron K. Hines, Individual  
 Lois Huff, Sustaining  
 Alice Upshaw Hawkins, Individual

## 10 Members Participate in Online Convention

For the first time ever in its 100-year history, the League of Women Voters of Texas condensed its State Convention from 48 hours (April 17-19) to 6 hours (on April 18) by using Zoom.

Approximately 200 members from across the state participated, including 10 delegates representing LWV-CC. Please go to Pages 6-8 in this VOTER to read the delegates' reflections about the virtual meeting and their key "take-aways."

## LWV MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan, political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League does not support or oppose candidates or political parties.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Anne Stewart, LWV-CC President

Hello Everyone!

May is the month we usually have our Annual Meeting, salute and thank our officers for their service during the prior year, and install newly elected Board members who will work with those remaining on the Board.

This year, our current Board will remain in office for an additional month as our Annual Meeting has been postponed for a month. And, it will be "VIRTUAL." (See the Page 1 story in this VOTER.)

Not only will the Board continue their work, committees will rev up their commitments and keep on working. Transition from one leadership team to the next really will be seamless.

Here let me share special recognition and heartfelt thanks for generous service and leadership in 2019-2020 provided by Rebecca Huerta, Sandra Heatherley, Peggy Banales, Maria Jimenez, Melody Cooper, Lois Huff, Sylvia Whitworth, and Chris Garcia. All will continue to serve and to lead.

Readers, you're invited to send messages as well as virtual handshakes and pats on the back to these folks!!!

## Planning for Future Voter Registration

By Raul Ramirez, Voter Registration Chair

Voter Registration efforts are essentially at a standstill right now because of the COVID-19 situation. Nonetheless, we are working a plan to address 4 key areas.

- 1.) Informing Nueces County citizens who want to register on how to register without being face-to-face.
- 2.) Reaching out to local media for on-air time to get Voter Registration information out.
- 3.) Reaching out to Nueces County High School Principals to educate them on their role in registering their students - and offering our support as soon as school starts; and
- 4.) Monitoring when the right conditions exist for conducting face-to-face Voter Registration again - and what modifications we'll need to make.



Raul Ramirez

### CONGRATULATIONS TO NUECES COUNTY!

The League of Women Voters-Texas completed its 5th Election Website Review, using a checklist of best practices for presenting election information to the public.

Nueces County was one of 58 counties (out of 254 in Texas) receiving an 'outstanding' designation.

We applaud our county officials for doing their best to keep us informed. We will pass these results on to them and work with them on additional improvements to make the website even better.



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<http://www.lwv-cc.org>  
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lwvcorpuschristi@gmail.com

### LWV-CC Board, 2019-2020

#### President

Anne Stewart, 361-850-0663; emlean@gmail.com

#### Secretary

Rebecca Huerta, 361-826-3105 (wk);  
361-442-8745 (cell)

#### Treasurer

Annell Neale, 512-771-3026; annell@ebns.us

#### Vice President, Member Services

Sandra Heatherley, 361-876-4321;  
sheatherle@cs.com  
(Chair, 100th Anniversary Planning Committee)

#### Co-Vice Presidents, Program

Peggy Banales, 361-726-9404  
Maria Jimenez, 361-888-7560

#### Vice President, Voter Services

Paula Breighton, 970-820-0661; paulabr@mac.com

#### Director, Website/Social Media

Debbie Noble, 410-271-1167;  
debleenoble@gmail.com

#### Director, Media/Communications

Melody Cooper, 361-994-4952

#### At-Large Director--Lois Huff, 361-774-1500;

Ich764@gmail.com (also Chair, 2020 Women's  
Equality Day Committee)

#### Appointed Director/Archivist

Sylvia Whitworth, 361-853-9990

#### OFF-BOARD CHAIRS

##### Voter Registration Committee

Raul Ramirez, 361-774-0937;  
raul.ramirez.05.rr@gmail.com  
Ruth Falck, 548-2615

##### Diversity Committee

Alice Upshaw Hawkins, 361-947-1958  
afhawkins49@gmail.com

##### Study Committee, "Potential for Lead

Contamination in Our Communities' Drinking  
Water" Sally Farris, chair; s.farris@att.net

##### 100th Celebration Committee (Historical Display):

Sue Williams, 361-779-8593;  
aswilliams17@gmail.com

##### VOTE411 Voters Guide: Kathryn Oler, 806-773-1535;

Kathryn.oler@gmail.com

##### Nominating Committee

Peggy Duran, Chair, 361-696-9366

**Non-Board Members:** Brenda Hamby, Sylvia  
Campos. **Board Members:** Lois Huff, Maria  
Jimenez

##### The VOTER Editor

Chris Davis Garcia, 361-991-2784; (hm);  
cell 244-4193; garciachris1714@gmail.com

## Proposed Budget for FY 2020-2021

The Budget Committee, chaired by Chris Davis Garcia and composed of Lois Huff, Peggy Duran, Pat Anderson, and Annell Neale, submits the following budget for approval:

### INCOME

Per Member Payment (PMP)* (90 Individuals@\$60; 15 Household members@\$30; and 10 Students@\$5)	\$5,900
Sustainers' Gifts	\$600
Friends of the League	\$90
Monthly Luncheons	\$1,190
2020 Annual Meeting	\$0
2020-2021 Fundraising	\$3,900
Community Support/Contributions	\$250
Advertising in the VOTER	\$600
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$12,530</b>

### EXPENSES

Per Member Payment to LWVUS	\$3,120
Per Member Payment to LWVTX	\$2,145
Credit Card Fees	\$250
Monthly Luncheons	\$982
2020 Annual Meeting	\$0
2020-2021 Fundraising Events	\$299
Community Participation/Outreach	\$400
Voter Services Publications	\$2,000
Voter Registration Events	\$400
Printing	\$400
Electronic Meetings (12@\$14.99 per mo)	\$200
Website Maintenance & Upgrade	\$600
Admin/Postage/Supplies	\$300
PO Box Rental	\$134
Leadership Training/Travel	\$500
Centennial Celebration	\$500
Lead Study Community Forum	\$300
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$12,530</b>

\* NOTE: PMP is based on projected 90 Individual members, 15 Household members, and 10 Students. Of the membership funds collected by LWV-CC, the payments to LWVUS and LWVTX respectively are \$32/\$22 per Individual and \$16/\$11 per second Household member. Student payments to LWVUS and LWVTX have been suspended for the past two years.

## Report from the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee, chaired by Peggy Duran and composed of Lois Huff, Sylvia Campos, Maria Jimenez, and Brenda Hamby, submits the following report for approval at the Annual Meeting:

### Two-Year Terms (2020-2022)

Vice President, Member Services: Dr. Mary Jane Garza  
Vice President, Program: Julie Travis Rogers  
Secretary: Elizabeth Riggle  
Director/Media Communications: Victoria Munt Rogers

### One-Year Term (2020-2021)

At-Large Director: Pat Anderson (completing the unexpired two-year term of Lois Huff)

Chair, Nominating Committee: Peggy Duran; Committee Members, Mary Sherwood and Christy Stockman/  
(Note: Two additional Nominating Committee members will be appointed from the League Board in summer of 2020.)

*NOTE: League Bylaws, Article IV-Officers, Section 1. Election of Officers governs which officers are elected in even or odd-numbered years. Article VIII governs Nominations and Elections and notes that nominations may be made from the floor by any voting member, provided the consent of the nominee is secured prior to the election. The Bylaws also direct how voting will be accomplished if floor nominations are received.*

### **Officers Continuing on the Board**

The following officers are completing the second year of their two-year term and will continue serving through May 2021:

President: Anne Stewart  
Vice President Voter Services: Paula Brighton  
Treasurer: Annell Neale  
Director/Website & Social Media: Debbie Noble

## Proposed Amendments to LWV-CC Bylaws

At the May 7, 2020, monthly Board meeting, conducted in a virtual meeting, Board members received a recommendation from three Board members (Kathryn Oler, Lois Huff, and Chris Davis Garcia) to consider and approve two Bylaws amendments addressing virtual/electronic meetings. The Board approved the amendments which will be placed on the agenda of the Annual Meeting for membership approval, as per the Bylaws.

**(See Page 4 for the current wording and recommended changes in Article V and Article VII of the League Bylaws.)**



# First Zoom Meeting for the Board!

Thanks to Board Member Debbie Noble for taking this screen shot of the Board's first Zoom meeting on April 23. Sixteen members participated to discuss decisions on items such as how best to conduct the Annual Meeting, meeting programs currently planned, and strategies for voter registration and Fall election activities.



## Proposed Amendments to League Bylaws

### Amendment 1:

#### Current Article V. Board of Directors, Section 6. Quorum.

A majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum. Any one or more members of the Board may participate in a special called meeting by means of electronic communication. Participation by such means shall constitute presence at a special called meeting. After the electronic meeting, business items and actions taken must be reported in the minutes of the next monthly Board meeting.

#### Proposed Amendment Article V. Board of Directors, Section 6. Quorum.

A majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum. Any one or more members of the Board may participate in a **regular and/or** special called meeting by means of electronic communication. Participation by such means shall constitute presence at a **regular or** called special meeting. After the electronic meeting, business items and actions taken must be reported in the minutes of the next monthly Board meeting.

### Amendment 2:

#### Current Article VII. Meetings. Section 3. Quorum.

One-fifth of the membership shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of LWV-CC.

#### Proposed Amendment Article VII. Meetings. Section 3. Quorum.

One-fifth of the membership shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of LWV-CC. **Any one or more members may participate in a meeting or annual meeting by means of electronic communication. Participation by such means shall constitute presence at a meeting or annual meeting. During the electronic meeting, key discussion points and actions taken should be captured by the presiding League member (or a designee), prepared as written minutes, and made available to those who participated in the meeting.**

## IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

**Monday, June 15** - Last day to **register** for Primary Run-off Elections

**Thursday, July 2** - Last day to sign up to **vote by mail** for the Primary Run-off Elections (see related story on Pg 9)

**Monday-Friday, July 6-10** - Early Voting for Primary Run-off Elections

**Tuesday, July 14** - Primary Run-off Elections

**Tuesday, November 3** - Election Day

# VOTE SAFE



## Practice good hygiene



Stop hand shakes and use **non-contact greeting methods**



Clean hands at the door and schedule **regular hand washing reminders**



**Disinfect surfaces** like doorknobs, tables, and desks regularly



**Avoid touching your face** and cover your coughs and sneezes



**Increase ventilation** by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

## Vote by mail if you qualify



- Will be out of the county on election day and during early voting
- Are 65 years of age or older on Election Day
- Are sick or disabled
- Are confined in jail, but are eligible to vote

SOURCE: LWVTEXAS.ORG

## Download and complete a voter registration form

- Check your voter registration status at [votetexas.gov](http://votetexas.gov)
- Voters who move to a new address within the same county or changed your name while remaining in the same county, you can update your information online.
- New voters or voters who move to another county may use the League's [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) voter registration tool or print a voter registration application, fill out, sign, stamp and mail in or turn in to your county election office.
- No printer? No problem! You may fill out a voter registration application and have it mailed to you at [register2vote.org](http://register2vote.org) or from the Secretary of State here.



## Practice physical distancing

Attempt to maintain a 6 ft distance with others



I challenge you  
— TO COMPLETE —  
the census to shape  
the future of  
your community

Responses to the 2020 Census will shape how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed to local communities annually.

#shapeyourfuture

## CENSUS 2020

Don't forget to complete the Census 2020 form for your household. It was mailed in mid-March (with individualized ID code for each address) and takes less than 10 minutes to complete and return electronically to CENSUS 2020. Because of the pandemic, the deadline has been extended. LWV--at both the state and national levels--are partners and urge every League member to participate. Reminder: You can also complete the Census without the ID code.

(At left) LWVUS has developed several CENSUS 2020 public service announcements and promotional art for local Leagues to utilize to encourage everyone to complete the Census questionnaire. Reminder: You can also complete the Census without the ID code.

# “Takeaways” from the 2020 LWVTX Convention

LWVCC was represented at the “Virtual” 2020 LWVTX Convention by 10 volunteer delegates. They all utilized Zoom and participated in the business session called by State President Grace Chimene. What follows are our delegates’ “takeaways” from the almost 6-hour session.

## Anne Stewart

Attending the state convention this year was very interesting. I had not been able to do that in earlier years. The staff was most helpful during a variety of conversations.



My three “takeaways” are:

1) I can depend on state leaders to share their responses to my questions both with consistently thoughtful and timely explanations.

2) There is a definite difference in the use of “veterans” and “currently serving military personnel” in the League’s speech and written communications. Honoring both groups as we/I do, these terms need to be correctly utilized on every occasion of usage.

3) I believe that our membership applications ask for the name of the individual applying and that of any family member applying as well as areas of interest to be considered in being appointed to committees and work groups. Lists of words designating sexual interests and identities are not necessary, add complications, and provide more information than we need to fulfill our mission statement--individually and collectively. Adding the words suggested to our bylaws diminishes the strength and clarity of our purpose. I do hope state officers see the beauty in the simplicity of Corpus Christi’s membership application and bylaws before implementing any changes to our state documents.

Many thanks to all who participated in the convention.



Victoria and her cat Tony in front of computer screen.

## Victoria Munt Rogers

1. Under the current crisis, LWVTX has only lost \$1,500 from our total asset value - that’s amazing! We have done a great job of investing in low-risk opportunities.

2. Our development community reacted quickly when CASES was released - they applied for nonprofit opportunities and may get \$17,800 to continue our work. They also applied and received a \$25,000 grant from National LWV to help us continue our work. This is VERY important as our major fundraising MDW dinner event was canceled due to virus. (Making Democracy Work)

3. We need to have more statewide discussions concerning our position/stance on ‘Drug Laws and Policy’ specifically regarding medical marijuana. This discussion/debate needs more attention. This was brought up to amend a League position written in 2006.

## Elisa Gonzalez

Hello All, whew! 7:16 pm and done!

1) First and foremost, the motions that took the most time were disagreements about the wording. I know that being online affected how the debates developed and that it might be quite different at a regular convention, but it seems to me that these discussions, for the most part, need to be resolved prior to the convention.

Someone did state that there was a questionnaire that was sent out requesting input to the board. I don’t remember such a request, but I do think that many of the questions came up because there is not enough discussion about these issues prior to the LWVTX making amendments to positions. It might be helpful to decide at the local level and submit to the state level with enough time before the convention.

2) During the Treasurer’s report, I was struck by how much the League benefited from the expenditure on new tech such as One-Click Politics (of which I avail myself often!), the Texting program and more. The ability to have webinars and video conferencing as proved by this convention speaks loads to the value of continued investment in new technology, and, very importantly, in the training in the use of that technology. Hats off to the very tech savvy people who kept this online convention moving despite the continual objections and rewrites.

3) My other takeaway has to do with the impact of the Coronavirus. The Treasurer made clear those aspects of the budget that have been impacted by the virus such as the enormous effects on fundraising which would have happened at the convention. Quite encouraging though to see how resourceful the League has been in getting donations from private donors.

On the other hand, the information on how Covid’s presence makes it imperative that we focus on how to register from home, how to get and send in mail-in ballots and educating voters on what is going on. What was emphasized was that it is imperative the League take a leading role crucial to keep people voting during this time. The League is willing to use resources to this effect because those resources will be recouped somewhat by the \$25,000 grant by Make Democracy Work and the \$17,000 that was applied for.

In general, this was really educational for me. It would have been fun to be meeting people in person and discussing things in person, especially you all! It was well-planned despite the short time in which to prepare.



Continued on Page 7.....





### Linda Snider

Let me start out by mentioning that I was impressed by the professionalism and technological ability of the LWVTX Officers, Board Members, Position Chairs, and staff. I know first-hand how much work goes into a state convention, and how much scrambling that had to occur when it was necessary to conduct it online.

The treasurer mentioned that because the convention wasn't in person they estimated an actual loss of what would have been an additional \$20,000 in revenue. She also bemoaned the stock market dropping as an additional blow to LWVTX income. That being said, it is very impressive that they only anticipate a \$1,000 deficit in two months when the year officially is over.

I think the meeting went way too long, but I enjoyed seeing democracy at work as they made a huge effort to allow everyone who had a comment or question to be heard. It was interesting hearing so many perspectives and I realized that some of the differences seemed more regional in nature. (ex. the El Paso delegate concerned about secret flights sending refugees seeking asylum to Guatemala; she was successful in getting that added to an LWV study.)

It was very clear by comments made about the One-click Politics software and other technologies being used that the League is very capable of staying current with getting out the word to members, as well as contacting politicians when it needs to be done fast. (ex. sending an impressive 54,000 emails to politicians this year.)

I learned a lot from this experience.

## More “Takeaways”



Alice on Zoom

### Alice Hawkins

Here are several items that I wanted to share with each of you. Several topics have already been touched on but here are a few:

1. I was impressed to learn that the state LWV has lost only 12% if its investment portfolio since the stock market dropped as a result of the COVID19 Pandemic. In addition to that I was surprised, as others have noted, to learn how much the convention affected our bottom line in savings and expenses.

2. I am glad that the LWV will be focusing on studying children and all people, and asylum seekers whose rights to asylum and citizenship has been violated. It was noted that many of these individuals are not from Guatemala, but they are loaded on planes and dropped off there and left to find their way back to their home countries.

3. Grace Chimene's "What the Heck Texas?!" speech chastised our current voter suppression laws and advocated for reformation existing laws. The "What the Heck Texas?!" was a repeated refrain to bring attention to the suppression tactics and in support of vote by mail opportunities for all Texas voters.

4. It was 7 hours of Zooming. I not only learned a great deal about the LWV'ers, but the first time Zoom platform helped to shine some light on how best to conduct a meeting with such dense topics for discussion. In fairness to the process, President Chimene did explain that the normal process at convention was a 2-day event, and we were committed to one online meeting.



Chris had the convention workbook handy while she tuned in via cell phone

### Chris Davis Garcia

As a former state board member (2010-2016) and convention planner, I must admit I missed being at an actual convention site! (Some of you may not know or remember that LWV-CC hosted the 2006 state convention! There's something special about personal engagement with other League members from across the state. That said:

1. Glad to hear that the development committee has money in reserve and can help with LWVTX voter registration projects impacted by lost revenues.

2. Glad to hear that local student membership dues can be kept low and that state will not assess student PMP payment from local leagues.

3. Delighted to know that about 175 plus delegates participated online. In past years, 2014-2016-2018 conventions actual attendance at state was less than 90 delegates.

4. Impressed with state Program positions and the efforts to review and tweak phrases and words. Although I had to leave the Zoom meeting early to tend to a family concern, I learned later that the convention didn't conclude at 3 p.m but closer to after 7 p.m. Thanks to our delegates who stayed tuned in until the end!

Continued on Page 8.....

# More “Takeaways”



Sandra at computer

## Sandra Heatherley

The “virtual” state convention for the League of Women Voters of Texas was a technological success. Using Zoom and its advanced features, we were able to follow the President’s remarks and comprehend the Treasurer’s report. Individual delegates were able to ask questions and receive answers. So, from the technological viewpoint, the convention did succeed. I was most struck by the portion of the treasurer’s report dealing with the annual meeting which highlighted the cost savings and the associated revenue reduction that resulted from delegates being unable to meet in person.

I had committed 2 hours of my time to be a virtual delegate to the state convention, 1 to 3 pm on Saturday, April 18. At 4 pm, I lost patience with the wordsmithing related to the issue statements under consideration, and I left the meeting. I applaud those delegates who lasted for more than 6 hours online.

Although the technological part of the meeting succeeded, I much prefer the gathering of members together in one location as the best means of governance and adding to the camaraderie of members who share similar interests. I will not volunteer in the future to be a delegate to a “virtual” business meeting.

## Annell Neale

I found this method of meeting and “hearing” so many other voices chiming in with ideas and suggestions that I thoroughly enjoyed the whole event. It was supposed to last 2 hours and ended up lasting over 6; the time didn’t actually fly by but it definitely held my interest. The rest of the audience had such thoughtful insights into additions, deletions and wording changes ...things I would probably never have thought of but was happy to be included in the discussion.

Anne asked us to jot down 3 particular items of interest that we could share with the rest of the membership. I did take notes but they are so cryptic that I’m not 100% sure about what I was thinking at the time but here goes...

1. The League’s stance on redistricting was probably the highest on my list. I hope their efforts to promote more fair and inclusive mapping are successful.

2. The discussion on addressing Voting Rights and Election Laws also struck a chord with me. The efforts by not only Texas but other states around the US to disenfranchise voters is unfathomable to me.

3. Last and by no means least, a woman from Kingsville brought up an item she asked to be included in future Studies by the Texas League on Immigration policies. The initial discussion primarily centered around the immediate care of detainees and the separation of families. She asked that they also look into the covert pre-dawn ICE flight out of El Paso and Brownsville airports and depositing refugees in Guatemala with no further plan to get them back to their respective homes. I’ve since learned that the US has an agreement with Guatemala regarding this policy. Refugees from not only Mexico but places like Puerto Rico and Africa are left there with no means to arrange travel home.

If you’d like more information on any of these topics or those mentioned by others, please visit <https://my.lwv.org/texas/convention>



Annell on Zoom on her front porch



Colleen’s selfie was taken outside

## Colleen Johnson

1) Key take-away - Very important that we continue to have these discussions, and move activities such as this convention virtual where possible while we are supporting efforts to control the pandemic. Including virtual components even when in-person meetings are allowed to resume could be useful as well, as it increases access for those who may not be able to get away to the convention.

2) Great to see the detailed discussion, but a few of the discussions (cannabis, and the detailed discussion on the scopes of pending studies) were longer than necessary, but it is good to see solid parliamentary procedure.

3) The state LWV board executives have put in a tremendous effort, and we have a valuable organization we can all be proud to support.



Paula’s devices

## Paula Brighton

What an interesting process! Here are my takeaways:

1) We need to address holding virtual meetings (board and annual) at the local level (written into Bylaws).

2) If such meetings were to take place, we need to have procedures in place to make them as time effective as possible. (I do NOT volunteer to be parliamentarian ;-)

3) It was great to see that 180+ delegates were in attendance at the start and 120+ were still online at 6 pm. I wonder if we had some of our monthly meetings in the virtual space if we would get more diverse participation.



# Pandemic Voting Update

By Debbie Noble  
Director/Website & Social Media

Judge Tim Sulak of the 353rd Civil District Court in Travis County issued an injunction on April 17th, allowing all Texas voters to use the “disabled” excuse to apply for a mail-in ballot to help prevent the community spread of COVID-19.

The lawsuit was brought by the Democratic Party and ACLU of Texas, with several individuals, the League of Women Voters of Texas, and additional voter rights groups joining in.

Attorney General Paxton has appealed the injunction.

In a press release issued May 1 and titled, “AG Paxton Advises County Officials to Avoid Misleading the Public on Vote by Mail Laws,” he wrote, “public officials shall not advise voters who lack a qualifying sickness or physical condition to vote by mail in response to COVID-19... Mail ballots based on disability are specifically reserved for those who are legitimately ill and cannot vote in-person without assistance or jeopardizing their health.”

“Ken Paxton’s letter — which is not binding — gets the law wrong and serves no other purpose than to attempt to intimidate voters and county officials,” said Thomas Buser-Clancy with the ACLU of Texas, which is also involved in the case. — Alexa Ura, Texas Tribune.

## Here’s what Mail-In Ballot looks like:

In the meantime, the League of Women Voters of Texas is urging anyone who IS eligible (over 65, disabled, out of the county, or confined to prison, but otherwise eligible) to apply for a mail-in ballot.

The application may be printed from the county website, signed and mailed in. You may also use the website, email, or phone to request an application be mailed to you if you do not have access to a printer.

LWV-CC continues to remain in contact with our Nueces County election officials and have pledged to help in any way that we can to ensure safe, secure, and open elections.

## Here are statements issued by several of the lawsuit participants following Judge Sulak’s injunction on April 17:

**Sophia Lin Lakin, deputy director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project, said:** “The court recognized the gravity of not allowing all eligible voters to have a mail-in option during the pandemic. It is a common-sense solution to protect democracy and people’s well-being during this public health crisis.”

**Thomas Buser-Clancy, senior staff attorney for the ACLU of Texas, who presented oral argument, said:** “We are grateful for the judge’s decision issuing a temporary order that permits all Texans to vote by mail based on the COVID-19 pandemic. As our local and state leaders work with public health experts to handle the COVID-19 crisis, we are appreciative of this step forward in clarifying the law in a manner that will permit all Texans to exercise their fundamental right to vote during this extreme time without jeopardizing their health.”

**Joaquin Gonzalez, staff attorney in the Voting Rights Program at the Texas Civil Rights Project, who also presented oral argument, said:** “Common sense and the spirit of the law won over the Attorney General’s inexplicable stance that voters’ susceptibility to COVID-19 isn’t a physical condition under the law today. There’s more work to do to protect our democracy through the pandemic, but we’re pleased counties now have more clarity to prepare for upcoming elections.”

*NOTE: Special thanks to LWV-CC member Elisa Gonzalez for contributing to this story.*

### Another Lawsuit Re: Mail-In Ballot

Another lawsuit regarding Texas voting rights has been filed, this time in San Antonio. Several individuals in their 20s have asserted that the current law allowing people of 65 years of age or older to apply for a mail-in ballot is age discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional. Most states allow anyone to apply for a mail-in ballot. Texas remains one of the few that requires an authorized excuse.

— Information furnished by Debbie Noble

# Redistricting Still Top Priority

**Background:** LWVTX has promoted Redistricting (redrawing the lines for Congressional districts as well as state legislative districts) and recommended a nonpartisan Redistricting Commission for many years.

League members may recall that last year, the Texas House Redistricting Review Committee established a calendar for 2019-2020 to hold public hearings in more than a dozen Texas cities around the state.

The Corpus Christi meeting was held at the Del Mar College Center for Economic Development, Room 105, on Monday evening, November 4, with many individuals and organizations, including LWV-Corpus Christi, presenting prepared testimony in favor of or in opposition to redistricting efforts.

In this May 2020 VOTER, Pages 10 and 11 capture the LWVTX position, a general introduction to Redistricting from FairMapsTexas.org, and a Q&A to provide information.

It is important to remember why Redistricting is important: The US Constitution requires that the federal government takes a census every 10 years. (Census 2020 is under way.) The census allows Texas and all states to know demographic changes and “to adjust districts to meet those changes to ensure that each voter gets an equal say, therefore an equal vote.”

## Introduction to Redistricting from FairMapsTexas.org:

**Voters should pick their representatives, but because of the partisan redistricting system in Texas, politicians are picking their voters.**

Career politicians have been drawing and approving gerrymandered legislative maps for decades, allowing them to close ranks and entrench their power. This unfair approach to legislative maps reduces competition, prevents Texans from being able to cast a meaningful vote and discourages new people from running for office.

Competitive elections are critical to holding politicians accountable and ensuring that citizens are truly in control of their government – not the special interests and political bosses. Voters deserve to have a voice in how their district maps are drawn.

**Fair Maps Texas is a nonpartisan reform effort aimed at fixing the broken redistricting system in Texas.**

Ultimately, we want to get reform passed in the state legislature. En route to accomplishing that, we plan to pass a number of reforms and resolutions at the local level and across Texas.

This reform effort includes a broad range of nonpartisan coalition partners who help raise public awareness, build support for reform, host events, initiate grassroots activism, and provide policy expertise.



## Here's the LWVTX position on Redistricting:

Support for a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny.

## Here's the LWVUS statement on redistricting and gerrymandering:

“There is a whole component of citizen education dealing with transparency and public engagement that is absolutely vital to any redistricting system. People need to understand what the current redistricting process is, why it's so bad, and what can be done about it in clear, simple terms. We need good material in all formats and good speakers to share that material. We need volunteers who represent our diversity to help us inform our communities.

We need to focus on creating a more transparent process. We need people to watch when the new maps are drawn to guard against gerrymandering. Sunlight disinfects. If the line drawers aren't doing anything 'funny,' then there is no reason to go behind closed doors. The public needs to see and understand who is drawing the maps and how they are drawn.” - Chris Carson, President, League of Women Voters, US



## REMINDER:

***Your Membership Renewal Matters! Please plan to renew your membership as soon as possible. (See renewal notice and form on Page 12.) Please return the form with your payment.***

# From Fair Maps Texas – FAQ’s on Redistricting:

<https://www.fairmapstexas.org/copy-of-resources>

## 1) What is Redistricting?

Redistricting is the process in which political districts are divided to determine political representation in local governments, state legislatures, and the United States Congress.

## 2) Why do we have to Redistrict?

The United States Constitution requires that the federal government takes a census every 10 years. The census allows us to know demographic changes and to adjust districts to meet those changes to ensure that each voter gets an equal say, therefore an equal vote.

The process of redistricting is determined by the states. In a majority of states, the legislature is the entity that draws the maps. Some legislatures have commissions that advise them or that draw the districts in the event of a deadlock. Some states keep politicians out of it, and have independent commissions who draw these districts.

Redistricting affects the agenda of our body politic nationally and locally. It determines who has power and which groups or communities of interest they can choose to ignore by allowing politicians to choose their voters. Some line-drawing can protect an incumbent while others can ensure they have a potent challenger (which can be done in a vindictive manner due to the incumbent not aligning himself with those holding power).

## 3) Why don’t we just use computers to evenly split districts by population?

Computers may not be able to maintain communities of interest that have wildly different views, cultures, and interests. For example, a community of farmers will have similar interests and would like representation that reflects that interest. The farming communities interests will be different from a community of city-folk who want to maintain their way of life in a disparate fashion from those living in the farming community

## 4) How is Redistricting done in Texas?

The Texas legislature draws the lines for Congressional districts as well as state legislative districts. This is passed just like a bill and must be approved by the governor, and is subject to his/her veto.

In the year after the census is taken, that data is delivered to the legislature no later than April 1st. As soon as this data is available to them, they begin to draw districts. If state house and Senate districts are not drawn at the conclusion of the first regular session after the decennial census, then a Legislative Redistricting Board

(composed of the Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Speaker of the House, and General Land Office Commissioner) shall draw up their own plans. The jurisdiction of the board follows only in the months immediately after that legislative session. If the Board fails to enact a plan within those months, then it is up to the governor to call a special session. If the governor declines to call a special session, then a federal district court or state court will order that districts drawn-up.

## 5) What is “cracking?”

Cracking splits a voting bloc, group, or community of interest into several other districts in order to dilute their voting power. This practice aims to limit the ability of these groups to form majorities.

## 6) What is “packing?”

Packing concentrates members of a group or community of interest into one district thereby reducing the voice and power of that particular group or community of interest in other districts. This allows for all other districts in a state to be non-competitive.

## 7) What are “communities of interest?”

“A group of individuals united by shared interests or values” who should be kept together in a district so they can get fair and effective representation.

They can be a result of common history or culture, a common ethnic background, or a variety of other ties that create a community of voters with distinct interests, such as: Shared racial or ethnic background, common history and/or culture, common religion or language, shared socio-economic status, transportation, economical regions, income status, languages spoken, etc.

Questions to consider: What bonds your community – what do you see as the common links in your community? Where is your community located – what are the boundaries of your community? Why should the community be kept together – or separate from another area?

## 8) What is going on in the courts regarding redistricting?

### San Antonio District Court

- Decision of 2-1 struck down 3 Texas Congressional districts, Will Hurd R-23 (SA-El Paso), Blake Farenthold R-27 (Corpus Christi), Lloyd Doggett D-35 (Austin)
- Court found that there was evidence that map drawers packed and cracked on the basis of race with the intent to dilute minority voting strength.



# May Is Month To Renew Your Annual Membership

LWV-Corpus Christi was established in 1945-46 and is approaching its 75th anniversary. Your continued support of LWV-CC, through your annual membership dues, ensures that the League will continue to address its mission.

Did you know that local League membership makes you also a member of the League of Women Voters-Texas (LWVTX) and the the League of Women Voters-US (LWVUS)? Both “agitare, advocate, and educate” when it comes to state and national policies, including voter suppression.

The League’s membership year is June 1 through May 31. Membership categories are \$100 Sustaining; \$90 Household (two persons residing in the same household); \$60 Individual; \$5 Student; and \$30 Friend of the League (non-voting). Please utilize the membership application & renewal form below and also on the League’s website.

The Board reminds you that paying your membership dues by check or money order allows the League to keep the entire amount rather than incur electronic fees!



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL FORM

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS - CORPUS CHRISTI AREA

PO Box 8276 • Corpus Christi, TX 78468-8276

**LWV-CC membership runs June 1 to May 31** and supports local, state and national LWV actions to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy. We welcome your membership. Please complete this form and return it to the League at the address noted above.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Select Member type and remit payment or visit: <http://www.lwv-cc-org/JoinRenewOnline.html>

- Individual \$60       Household (2 people, same address) \$90       Individual Sustaining \$100  
 Student \$5       Friend of the League \$30 (without voting privileges)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to attend:      Luncheon Meetings \_\_\_\_\_ Dinner Meetings \_\_\_\_\_

I'm interested in volunteering my help with one or more of the following activities:

- Register Voters       Prepare/Distribute Voters Guides       Organize Candidate/Issue Forums  
 Advocate for Issues       Investigate Issues/Conduct Studies       Network/Facilitate Community Dialogues  
 Budget/Fundraising       Media/Communications       Membership Services  
 Governance/Bylaws       Observer Corps (monitor local government meetings)  
 Special/Community Projects       Attend Austin "Lobby Days" During Legislative Session  
 Train/Serve as Nueces County Volunteer Deputy Registrar       Advertise in Monthly VOTER Newsletter \*

\* Note: Business card ads in the monthly VOTER newsletter are priced at \$100 for 10 issues.