

**A POTPOURRI
OF TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY**



*Carolee,
Happy
Birthday!
It is great
being 75.
Best wishes,
Betty Carr
m.w.u.s*

**in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the
League of Women Voters of Texas**

founded October 10, 1919



researched by

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TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1919-1929

PEOPLE Minnie Fisher Cunningham, president, adjourns final meeting of Texas Equal Suffrage Association. Delegates form Texas League of Women Voters and elect Jessie Daniel Ames of Georgetown first League president. Ames, a widow with three children, is co-owner with her mother of the local telephone company. Eleanor Speer of El Paso directs prison reform project. LWV publicity chair Jane Y. McCallum of Austin later serves as Texas Secretary of State. Presidents also include Helen B. Moore of Texas City, Dr. Alice Merchant of El Paso, Mary Jagoe of Denton, and Louise Kempner of Galveston. Louise Masterson of Houston, praised for her fundraising skills, is elected president in 1929.

PLACES Annual conventions in San Antonio, El Paso, Houston, Fort Worth, and Galveston.

PROGRAM LWV joins five other statewide women's groups in 1920 in Joint Legislative Committee. Powerful "Petticoat Lobby" works on American citizenship, protection of women in industry, social hygiene, child welfare, efficiency in government, and uniform laws concerning women. League takes lead on efficiency in government and education for citizenship. Adds prison reform at second convention.

PROJECTS Get Out the Vote (and pay the poll tax so you can vote) is major citizen participation project with goal in 1924 of registering at least 75% of qualified voters.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES All of Petticoat Lobby's 1923 legislative priorities become law as do most of their 1925 bills.

QUOTES "Our minds and sympathies were stirred with the determination to right the wrongs affecting women and children..." *Jessie Daniel Ames, LWV-Texas president, on the League's work on human welfare issues.*

"Scores of people in public life have expressed agreement with a former well-loved governor of this state who openly stated that the Petticoat Lobby was unquestionably the greatest power for fearless, unselfish, progressive legislation in Texas politics...With the election of...[Gov. Moody in 1926], some were encouraged to believe that their political problems were at an end. Others felt that the individual organizations would be equally effective working alone. Any unpurchasable political power becomes a target for scheming politicians to try to break if they cannot bend, and even new, enthusiastic citizens sometimes weary in well doing. The Petticoat Lobby ceased functioning following the 1927 session of the Legislature. But activities of women in Texas politics did not cease. Quite a bit of good legislation is due primarily to their efforts" *Jane Y. McCallum, leader of the Women's Joint Legislative Committee in "Activities of Women in Texas Politics, II," her account of women's political activity in the ten years following their enfranchisement.*





TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1930-1939

PEOPLE Houston produces Texas League presidents Louise J. Masterson, Oveta Culp Hobby, and Frances Putnam, followed by Ella Sealy Newell of Galveston and Louise Dietrich of El Paso. Culp served on board while parliamentarian for Texas House of Representatives and as president around the time of her marriage to former Governor Hobby.

PLACES Local Leagues at various times in Austin, Brenham, Dallas, El Paso, Galveston, Houston, Fort Worth, Denton, San Antonio, and a college League at Rice Institute. State board members also from Waco. Conventions at the Hotel Galvez in Galveston, the Driskill and the Texas Federation of Women's Club Building in Austin, and the Rice Hotel in Houston.

PROGRAM Leagues nationally work for "Better Personnel in Government Service" with the motto "Find the Man for the Job, Not the Job for the Man." Texas Leagues also focus on property rights for married women, child welfare, legal status of women, voter registration, rural schools, immigration, and international cooperation to prevent war.

PROJECTS LWV celebrates 10th anniversary with rolls of honor. First bulletin, *The Voters' News*, later becomes the *Lone Star Voter*.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Texas League 1929-31 budget is \$4650, with income provided by six local Leagues and the board staying in \$3.00 hotel rooms. Annual income for 1939-40 is \$652, with \$500 income from local League donations. By 1933 only three Leagues attend Convention (Galveston, Houston, El Paso). The Great Depression takes its toll, with only four active Leagues in 1940: Austin, Dallas, Galveston, and Houston. Local Leagues nonetheless enjoy frequent visits from 1938-40 president Louise Dietrich, RN, from El Paso.

QUOTES "...we all realize that the reason for a State League is to afford interested women in local leagues greater opportunities for service beyond their city limits, in a larger group and a larger field." *Louise Masterson, LWV-Texas President, 1929-31.*

"The number of (program) items chosen has been smaller as we have come to realize that the small membership in so large a state necessitates a careful evaluation of items on which to focus the interest of those members in order to avoid as far as possible a scattering of effort." *Helen Taft, commenting on 1938-40 program adoption at Convention.*

"Jury service for women is the subject of perennial interest to the Texas League. It has so far not been accomplished in our state, but it remains a topic for study and we hope some day to be able to support a suitable bill that will give the women of Texas this important responsibility." *Helen Taft, 1939*





TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1940-49

PEOPLE State presidents are Mary Esther Hill of Austin, Novella Calvin of LaMarque and Galveston, Elizabeth Brownscombe of Dallas, Annie Laurie Gill of LaMarque, and Betty Anne Row of Dallas. As Dallas president, Row attends signing of UN Charter.

PLACES From the four Leagues that survived the Great Depression, LWV-Texas expands to Midland, Port Arthur, San Antonio, Tarrant County, and Texas City by 1947. Conventions meet in Dallas, San Antonio, Galveston, Houston, Austin, and Fort Worth.

PROGRAM International issues at the forefront before and after the war, with 1948 "Know Your United Nations" workshops "outracing all our expectations." Focus also on efficient government and elections, voting machines, education, and appropriations for welfare department. Merit system for government employees at federal and state levels pushed by League. Campaign for secret ballot launched, with the top 1939-40 program item "elimination of ballot numbering." First state League environmental study in 1949 looks at federal water programs and policies in Texas.

Texas League adopts study of Family Courts for Texas in 1947, presents resolution for their establishment at 1948 party convention, is directed to write a bill amending the 1943 Juvenile Court Act, has the bill introduced in the 51st Legislature, and builds public support for it. Signed into law in 1949, it mandates establishment of a juvenile court in each Texas county.

PROJECTS "Win the Battle of Production" booths in public places to distribute quizzes on defense to stimulate sale of defense bonds and saving stamps. Leagues conduct surveys of effects on international trade on local communities. *Know Your State* study begins in 1948.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Need for gas coupons and tires to drive to meetings during war years. LWV-Texas budget in 1948 is \$10,540. Final adoption of a more secret ballot in 1949 results from League work begun in 1936.

QUOTES "Ten thousand Texans, half a million other Americans are playing the newest quiz-game *Am I an Isolationist?* Not accepting at face value the thesis that isolationism died at Pearl Harbor, members of the LWV are probing their minds and the minds of Mr. and Mrs. America for unsuspected isolationists' attitudes. The ten point true-false variety has set off a barrage of discussion over the position the US should assume toward other countries now and after the war. The quiz-game is part of the League's nation-wide emphasis on paving the way for the future by clearing the tracks of isolationists' barriers." *Lone Star Voter*, Spring 1943.





TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1950-59

PEOPLE Mrs. Ed Kilman of Houston, Eleanor Richards of Waco, and Arthelia "Cookie" Smith of Austin serve as state presidents.

PLACES More than forty active Leagues and 5000 members at peak. Imperfect records list Leagues in Abilene, Amarillo, Arlington, Austin Area, Bandera County, Baytown, Beaumont, Brownsville, Cleburne, Corpus Christi, Corsicana, Dallas, Dickinson, Eagle Pass, Edinburg, El Paso, Freeport, Galveston Area, Harlingen, Houston, Irving, Kingsville, Lake Jackson, Laredo, Longview, Lubbock, Midland, Mission, Nederland, Odessa, Orange, Pampa, Pasadena, Robstown, San Angelo, San Antonio Area, South Jefferson County, Fort Worth (later Tarrant County), Taylor, Texas City - LaMarque, Tyler, Victoria, Waco Area, Wichita Falls. Campus Leagues at University of Texas at Austin, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas State College for Women (now Texas Women's University) in Denton, and Rice Institute in Houston. Campus Leagues are disbanded by 1956 LWWUS Convention action.

PROGRAM Work resumes on legal status of women. Working with Texas Legislative Council, League reports to 1957 Legislature on civil disabilities arising from a woman's marital status. *Know Your State* study of 1948 leads to push for revision of 1876 Texas Constitution.

PROJECTS League publishes first edition of *Texas Constitutional Review* in 1955 and 20,000 copies are sold as textbooks for high school and college civics classes. The bulletin becomes *The Texas Voter* in 1954.

Texas Leagues participate in the Freedom Agenda Program sponsored by the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, a national League educational organization. A venture in large scale popular education, the Freedom Agenda project is dedicated to better understanding of the fundamental principles of individual liberty and the role that individual rights play in the maintenance of our system of constitutional democracy. In addition to League unit meetings using a series of pamphlets to stimulate discussion, the program encourages local community committees, workshops, discussion groups, and so on. Pamphlets include *The Bill of Rights and Our Individual Liberties*, *Where Constitutional Liberties Came From*, *Freedom of Speech and Press*, *Constitutional Liberty and Seditious Activity*, *The Constitution and Congressional Investigating Committees*, and *The Constitution and Loyalty Programs*.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Allen Shivers signs Clean Elections bill in presence of the League. Jury service for women achieved in 1954 after 18-year effort.

QUOTES "We believe that enlightened public discussion of the major issues of individual liberty will inevitably have a healthy and beneficial effect upon our national life. A larger understanding of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the main principles of a free society may confidently be expected to increase the respect and reverence of all Americans for individual liberty and constitutional democracy."

The Freedom Agenda Program in Brief, 1954.





PEOPLE State presidents are Glen Boller of Houston, Dorothy Brown of Waco, and Ruth Joor of Houston.

PLACES Conventions held in Echo Hotel in Edinburg, Driscoll Hotel in Corpus Christi, Hotel Texas in Fort Worth, and in San Antonio.

PROGRAM Every legislative session finds League in forefront of efforts to promote Texas constitutional revision. Surveys, interviews, workshops, library projects, newspapers, and precinct and county conventions are used to build awareness of need for revision.

President Dorothy Brown makes five-city flying press conference tour to promote repeal of poll tax the week prior to 1963 election. Effort unsuccessful due to whispering campaign pitting liberals against conservatives, race against race, and rural against urban interests.

Selection and tenure of judges selected for study in 1964. Permanent voter registration efforts gain headlines. Texas election laws study sets stage for election code reform. Study of state and local intergovernmental relations acknowledges need for coordinated services. Research on the three branches of state government yields more suggestions for constitutional revision. Natural resources studies include the Texas Water Pollution Control Board, "a state agency that seems destined to be a major influence in state water problems."

PROJECTS *Texas Constitutional Review* textbook reissued in 1966 with 63,500 copies. First League Lobby School opens in 1969 in Austin with 120 League members among the eager students. Texas Land and Water Use Seminar is held for community leaders in 1965 by national League Education Fund and LWV-Texas.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Opportunities for women for furthering their education and paid employment are applauded but result in fewer members with time to "live League" according to President Brown.

LWV-Texas Education Fund established in 1966 with board including non-members. Originally designed to attract tax-deductible funds to further its educational programs in non-League areas, LWV-TEF amends trust agreement to allow local Leagues accounts. Convention delegates in 1968 vote to establish a permanent state League office by 1970, if possible. (Office has rotated with president.)

QUOTES "The past is prologue...Who we are today--what we are--must surely be a reflection of the events during these past forty years of our lives." *LWV-Texas president Cookie Smith to delegates of 1960 Convention, celebrating the 40th anniversary.*





TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1970-79

PEOPLE State presidents are Veta Winick of Dickinson, Betty Anderson of Lubbock, and Diana Clark of Dallas. Joann Lovelace becomes executive secretary.

PLACES Conventions at Royal Coach Inn in Houston, Adolphus in Dallas, Red Carpet Inn in Beaumont, Paso del Norte Hotel in El Paso, the Fort Worth Convention Center, and the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio.

PROGRAM League credited with influencing passage of amendment to have the Legislature sit as a Constitutional Convention. Other study and action focus on property tax reform, voting rights and election laws, financing state government, and public school finance. Water planning, air quality, land use positions adopted. Texas Leagues conduct major fundraising campaign for Equal Rights Amendment.

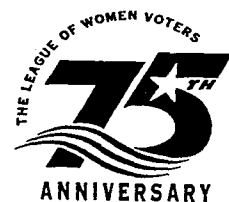
Combined study of Texas criminal justice system and juvenile justice begins in 1975. Action in 1977 on new position results in legislative creation of first statewide probation system and appointment of Diana Clark, study chair, to Texas Adult Probation Commission. Success repeated when Juvenile Probation Commission is established with League lobbying. *Facts and Issues on Juvenile Justice* used by local juvenile departments to train new employees.

PROJECTS Early Texas Committee for the Humanities grant supports workshops for humanists and the public to explore humanistic implications of constitutional issues. LWV-TEF and Texas Utilities cosponsor energy dialogues. LWV-TEF, Tenneco Chemicals, and University of Texas School of Public Health sponsor conference on environmental cancer.

LWV-Texas Education Fund produces *A Guide for Jurors*, the *Citizens Handbook*, *When You Go to Austin*, and studies of election laws and public school finance. Helps underwrite expenses for local League delegates to attend National Municipal League 1973 conference in Dallas. In 1976, LWV-TEF board becomes LWV-Texas board.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES League establishes permanent office in Austin in 1975. Twenty Leaguers serve as active Lobby Corps during Texas Constitutional Convention. Bylaws change to hold LWV-Texas Conventions in odd-numbered years. Historians gain access to Texas social and political history when League archives go to Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University in 1971. Leagues celebrate 50th anniversary.

QUOTES "It is humbling to consider the vast amount of work that a generation of League members has so selflessly given to League research, study, and action. It is with appreciation that one views the sheer tenacity of League members, the stubborn refusal to drop an item before goals have been reached. This may account for a long list of items, but as a League publication in 1957 said, "In a democracy reforms do not come overnight but often take sustained attention over a long period of time." This is clearly illustrated by our present program." *Ruth Joor, LWV-Texas President, 1966-70, in a 1976 Texas VOTER.*





TEXAS LEAGUE HISTORY 1980-89

PEOPLE State presidents are Diana Clark of Dallas, Lois Carpenter of Midland, and Diane Sheridan of Taylor Lake Village (LWV-Bay Area). In 1989, Tom Gooch of Fort Worth (LWV-Tarrant County) is first male state board member, elected 15 years after LWVUS Convention votes to admit men as full members.

PLACES Conventions at Red Carpet Inn in Beaumont, North Park Inn in Dallas, Hilton in Austin, Worthington Hotel in Fort Worth, and J.W. Marriott in Houston.

PROGRAM Women's and children's issues dominate studies: women under Texas law, child support enforcement, domestic violence, health care for medically indigent, services for seriously mentally ill, child care, and child abuse and neglect. LWV-Texas is founding member of People First! health and human services funding coalition. League refusal to take stands on 25+ constitutional amendments in 1987 draws editorial support but memories of 1970s defeat limit support for constitutional revision. Advocacy and education on water, air, and hazardous waste are environmental priorities. Albeit with reservations, LWV supports rather than opposes a Texas Water Plan for the first time. LWV in forefront of Keystone process to involve citizens early and effectively in waste management facility siting. Receives pen from governor for help writing consensus hazardous waste legislation. Provides leadership to Texas Risk Communication Project's industry, governmental, and environmental participants.

PROJECTS First statewide televised gubernatorial debate between William P. Clements and Mark White in 1982. LWV-TEF sponsors national health care debate in Dallas. First direct mail voter registration drive cosponsored with Secretary of State and Val-Pak coupon companies sends voter registration cards into 1.5 million Texas homes, enough to fill an 18-wheeler truck.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Under Lois Carpenter's leadership, LWV-Texas Education Fund purchases office space at 1212 Guadalupe. Capital fund drive raises nearly \$190,000 in four and a half years and is completed in 1989 with note-burning ceremony at the 70th anniversary celebration at Convention.

Board moves from portfolios to committee system but retains program portfolios. Fierce competition among nonprofits for clout, members, dollars, and visibility demands more sophisticated approaches, policies, procedures, structures, and equipment. Board adopts long range plans for LWV-TX and LWV-TEF, and computerizes office (but still uses mimeograph machine for big mailings).

LWV-Texas Education Fund receives prestigious award for research on services to seriously mentally ill, which included interviews with service recipients. League news conference announcing results draws few when goose gets loose in Capitol rotunda.

QUOTES "Half-dreaded, the mysterious visitor from the East, Karnak the Magnificent, again appeared at the podium to announce the winners. Able assistant Barbara Weinstein and League delegates were the butt of several "May the bird of paradise" remarks by the bathrobe-clad Karnak, who sported a tablecloth turban and very decorous knee socks." *Spring 1989 Texas VOTER article describing Silent Auction awards and proving Leaguers subscribe to the Chinese philosophy that sometimes, in order to be wise, we need to be silly.*





PEOPLE State presidents are Diane Sheridan of Taylor Lake Village (LWV-Bay Area), Evelyn Bonavita of San Antonio and Ruthann Geer of Arlington. Staff includes two full-time and one part-time employees, sometimes a paid or unpaid student intern, plus a contract lobbyist during the legislative session.

PLACES Conventions at St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio, Southland Center Hotel in Dallas, and Omni Hotel in Austin. Leagues include Amarillo, Arlington, Austin Area, Bay Area, Baytown, Beaumont, Brazos County, Cleburne Unit, Comal Area Provisional, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Denton, Edinburg/McAllen, El Paso, Fort Bend County Unit, Gainesville, Galveston Area Provisional, Houston, Irving, Kerrville Area, Lubbock, Marshall/Harrison County, Midland, Montgomery County, Pearland Area, Plano/Collin County, Richardson, San Antonio Area, San Marcos Area, Sherman, Tarrant County, Tyler, Victoria, Waco Area, and Wichita Falls.

PROGRAM Study of Political Campaign Process selected in 1991 and Juvenile Violence and the Juvenile Justice System in 1993.

PROJECTS Two statewide televised primary gubernatorial debates in 1990 broadcast in English and Spanish and closed captioned for the hearing impaired. All 14 primary candidates invited and most participate. 1990 general election debate cancelled when one candidate refuses to participate. Senatorial candidates debate held for 1994 primary. Voters Guides published for every statewide election except one special election. Board training program for local Leagues broadens into Leadership Training with multiple modules and a corps of trainers, themselves trained annually.

OBSTACLES AND SUCCESSES Reflecting challenges faced by many nonprofit groups with mostly women members, membership is static, leadership is older. Many state board members have outside employment and more work is therefore delegated to staff. Legislative director's full-time volunteer lobbying and *Legislative Newsletter* duties are turned over to paid contract lobbyist when volunteers can no longer be found for that position.

LWV-Texas Education Fund continues to sponsor unbiased, balanced research and publish Facts and Issues on policy issues while it publishes *Voters Guides* for statewide elections, *Voting in Texas*, and *When You Go to Austin*.

QUOTES "As always, the relationship between the state League and local organizations is constantly being reevaluated. What is the role of LWV-Texas? What are its responsibilities? Is a state League necessary? What does it do that cannot be done by local Leagues? As many board responsibilities shift to office staff, which ones should be retained by board members? Or should the LWV-Texas Board of Directors become one that sets policy only--like so many non-profit boards? These questions--and their answers--will define the future of LWV-Texas as it moves into its next 75 years. Evelyn Bonavita, LWV-Texas president, 1991-93.





THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS, IN BRIEF

OUR MISSION The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

OUR GOALS The League acts after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all levels of government. We build citizen participation in the democratic process. We engage communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy. Through the Education Fund, we study key community issues in an unbiased manner and we enable people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and conflict management.

OUR BELIEFS AND INTENTIONS We believe in respect for individuals, the value of diversity, and the empowerment of the grassroots, both within the League and in communities. We also believe in the power of collective decision making for the common good. We act with trust, integrity, and professionalism. We operate in an open and effective manner to meet the needs of those we serve, both members and the public. We take the initiative in seeking diversity in membership. We acknowledge our heritage as we seek our path to the future.

OUR STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES Founded as a "living laboratory of democracy," we are organized on three levels to model the three levels of government. We make key decisions by consensus because we believe in governing with the consent of the governed. When representative democracy rather than direct input is needed, Leagues select delegates to elect state and national board members, revise bylaws, and adopt a budget as well as a program of study and action. We study before we act because democracy rests on an informed citizenry that actively involves itself in governmental process.

OUR TRADITIONAL WORK "Mission work" falls into categories we call Program and voters service/citizen education. Program consists of study and action. It rests on grassroots-level input and includes program planning and adoption, efforts to reach positions by consensus or concurrence, and a range of advocacy activities to implement those positions. Voters service includes candidates debates and publications such as *Voting in Texas* and *Voters Guides* that promote informed involvement in the election process. Citizen education provides balanced information about public policy issues by means of educational conferences and publications such as *Facts and Issues*. Advocacy work is conducted by the League of Women Voters of Texas, the membership organization. Voters service and citizen education activities are sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund. These two legally distinct organizations make up what the public perceives as the state League.

OUR FOCUS Public policy issues are our focus. Issues make us relevant to our communities. Members join because of an interest in either issues in general or a specific issue. People support us either because of the positions we advocate or our ability to educate people in an unbiased manner about public policy issues or candidates' views on issues.

OUR APPROACH TO ISSUES We are a multi-issue organization working in the general areas of government, international relations, social policy, and natural resources. We tackle issues via study and research, citizen education, or advocacy, depending on public needs, political reality, and internal resources. Sometimes we use the contacts we make on all sides of an issue during our studies to facilitate the public policy dialogues of diverse interest groups. We use *Voters Guides* and candidates debates to inform voters about candidates' positions on issues. We publish legislative directories such as *When You Go to Austin* so citizens can find their legislators and share their views on issues.

OUR VISION To empower all citizens to shape better communities across the state.

