

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Barbara Murray

Summer is here! Bay Area League members usually take these summer months off for some much-earned rest and relaxation. We use this time to recharge our batteries for the always busy fall schedule of voter registration drives, discussion meetings, and the November election. But this summer will be different for some of us. Read the recap of the speech I gave at the Annual Meeting to learn about the two new voters service initiatives our League will be doing: **High School Voter Registration** and **Vote411 for Galveston County**.

Annual Meeting Report

We ended the year on a high note with our 53rd Annual Meeting. Eighteen LWV-BA members and ten guests were able to enjoy each other's company with a delicious brunch, take care of business, and benefit from a very interesting speaker. I especially want to thank Susan Braymer for hosting the annual meeting in her lovely home in Bay Oaks.

Regarding the business portion of the meeting, we reviewed the treasurer's report for the past fiscal year, re-adopted our current local positions, adopted a balanced budget for 2018-2019, and elected officers and directors. I described the LWV-Texas plan to convert from

our current dual organizational structure [501(c)(4) membership/lobbying arm and 501(c)(3) educational trust] to a single 501(c)(3) organization. (These numbers are sections of the Internal Revenue Code.) Members then suggested topics for future discussion meetings.

Our speaker, Paige Breon of Turtle Island Restoration Network, spoke on plastics and micro plastics in our ocean and their environmental impact. Her presentation along with slide show pictures brought home the harmful impact of plastics to our waters and aquatic animals.

The president traditionally speaks to Annual Meeting attendees about the League's accomplishments in the year that is ending and our plans for the year to come. The editor asked that I share my remarks in this *Bay Area VOTER*, which I am happy to do.

President's Annual Meeting Speech

Welcome to the LWV-Bay Area 53rd Annual Meeting! I can barely read the newspaper in the morning (yes, I still read the actual, physical paper) without feeling the doom and gloom of world events:

- Global warming
- International trade/tariff wars
- Human trafficking
- Immigration policies ripping apart children and parents
- Gun violence terrorizing our students

It can make one feel that we are mired in an unspeakable rut of hopelessness and despair. However, I can't believe that we are doomed. I prefer to take the approach that **"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."** Well, what kind of candles can we light?

In the past year the League has continued to keep many of our candles burning:

VOTERS SERVICE

-Voter Registration

- A dozen individual League members participated in 6 drives – passing out 118 voter registration cards
 - UHCL (2)
 - College of the Mainland
 - Lee College
 - Cinco de Mayo (Galveston)
 - Clear Springs High School

-Voters Guides

- November Constitutional Amendment
 - 1000 VGs – English and Spanish delivered to area libraries
 - Electronic PDF files
- March Primary Election
 - 1000 VGs – English and Spanish delivered to area libraries
 - Electronic PDF files

-Candidates Forum

- CCISD School Board Election - April
- Excellent attendance

PROGRAM

3 Discussion Meetings

- Texas Constitutional Amendments (October)
- The Census, Apportionment, and Gerrymandering Cases (January)
- Redistricting: How districts are mapped along with gerrymandering (April)

FINANCES

Remain strong

MEMBERSHIP

- 51 members – steady from last year
- State-wide membership is up with several new Leagues at Large forming with younger members
- Continuing to mentor the new Beaumont League at Large

However, I am proud to say that our League is getting ready to light a few more candles to combat the darkness. Thanks to the passion and drive of some key League members, the Bay Area League will be involved in two new initiatives.

One of the core mission values of the League has been to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. To me this starts with **registering people to vote**. We, of course, already do this to some extent. But we are now ready to take it to a higher level. Thanks to Judith Oppenheim, the Bay Area League has been working with Elaina Pohlsen of CCISD, and we will be the sole outside group designated to **register high school students** on their campuses. We plan to hold voter registration drives at each of the 7 high schools in the fall and again in the spring. The future of our country rests in the hands of our young citizens. I'm very proud the way many of them have spoken out and assumed leadership roles - especially in the wake of the gun violence on campuses.

Another part of our core mission is to influence public policy through education; i.e., **educate voters on where candidates stand** on various issues so voters can make informed decisions. How do we do this - through our nonpartisan Voters Guides. Currently we purchase and distribute LWV-Texas statewide Voters Guides to our area libraries. We promote the use of **Vote411**, an online interactive Voters Guide. Those of us who live in Harris County can fortunately access Vote411 and receive information on all the races appearing on our ballots from governor down to constable to state senator to state rep, etc. thanks to the Houston League that puts in the effort to contact candidates and create the Vote411 material. Those of us living in Galveston County, Brazoria, and other surrounding counties are not so fortunate. There has been no League available or willing to take on this work... until now. This spring Walter Kelm, a LWV-Houston member who lives in Friendswood (Galveston County), contacted the Bay Area League with a proposal. He is willing to assume the lead in preparing Vote411 entries for Galveston County if the Bay Area league can supply 2 or 3 volunteers to help in the process. The Board has enthusiastically endorsed his request.

So what are we looking at? Judith and Walter cannot light these candles all by themselves. It will take some of you who are willing to give of your time and efforts to make these two initiatives work.

Voter Registration

We will be holding trainings this summer for people to become deputy voter registrars, so we will have enough warm bodies to staff the various voter registration drives to be scheduled in September and February. We were able to schedule a drive in Clear Springs High School just this past week. While there are a few things to iron out, I think our high school project shows great promise.

Vote411

The bulk of the work needs to be done probably in late August/September with a goal of getting the Vote411 information online by early voting in October. We would limit a Galveston County Voters Guide to just northern Galveston County. We agreed that we would limit this VG to just three races - US Congressional District 14, Texas State Representatives Districts 23 and 24. We felt that starting small and doing it well is the best way to proceed. Volunteers would help in research, contacting candidates, and publicizing Vote411.

If you have any questions about voter registration or Vote411, please let me know. There is a sheet that you can sign if you would like to be contacted on how to get involved.

I hope that you will give careful consideration to these two new opportunities. If each of us lights a small candle, together our greater glow will cast a bright light that can dispel the darkness!

I am very excited about what's in store for our League in the coming year! I also want to welcome the 5 new members who joined at the Annual Meeting. I hope everyone has a wonderful summer, and I look forward to seeing you in the fall.



*See page 2 for two opportunities to help
Make Democracy Work*

High School Voter Registration Project

We will be hosting two volunteer deputy voter registrar trainings. One is scheduled for **Tuesday, July 17, from 4:00-5:00 at the Clear Lake City-County Freeman Branch Library**. The other will be held in August (date to be determined) at the library in Friendswood. You can attend either training – it doesn't matter what county you reside in. Once you are deputized for one county it is a simple process to get certified for another county. Judith Oppenheim will be emailing members in the next few weeks with details.

Vote411 for Galveston County

Several of you signed up at the Annual Meeting to be a part of this project. Walter Kelm will be emailing you later this summer about our initial organizational meeting to take place in August and plans for the fall. If you were not at the Annual Meeting and would like to be part of this committee, just email me at lwvbatx@gmail.com.

Thanks for helping the League at all levels by joining, inviting friends to join, and volunteering when you can!

STATUS OF GERRYMANDERING CASES

The Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law tracks the status of gerrymandering cases before the US Supreme Court. Their blog on state redistricting litigation is an easy-to-read resource for those who are interested. The center also has information on other democracy-related topics of interest to League members. See <https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/state-redistricting-litigation>

PLASTICS AND MICROPLASTICS IN THE OCEAN

Paige Breon, an intern at Turtle Island Restoration, spoke to Annual Meeting attendees about plastics and microplastics in the ocean, their environmental impacts, and their effects on the food chain. Breon is an upperclassman at Texas A&M Galveston. A few highlights of her informative presentation:

- When marine life ingests plastics, they feel full and do not eat. Bags also suffocate them.
- Plastics bags in the ocean look like jellyfish to turtles. During beach cleanups, plastic bags are always in the top ten categories of waste collected.
- The Great Garbage Patch, first found in the North Pacific gyre in 1975, is one of 5 gyres in the world's oceans. It is now 20 feet deep and the size of Texas. It contains an estimated 3.5 million tons of plastics. It is expected to double in size in the next 5 years.
- Plastics found in the bodies of marine animals and birds include whole fishing line, 6-pack holders, plastics bags, water bottles, and even large items.
- Microplastics found in sediments are not only small pieces of plastic like pellets but also small pieces that remain after big pieces have photodegraded. Critters that eat sediments ingest the plastics.

- Plastics reach the ocean when rain flows through watersheds to the sea.
- Because of the currents along the Texas coast, it is the most littered of any state.

Breon showed several posters from www.lessplastic.co.uk that build awareness about plastics pollution. See next page. Their theme:

Refuse – Reuse -- Reduce

Refuse (single use plastics). **Reuse** (choose reusables). **Reduce** (plastics pollution).

9 WAYS YOU CAN REDUCE OCEAN PLASTIC

- 1** Boycott single-use plastic
- 2** Join the reusable revolution
- 3** Shop local & request plastic-free packaging
- 4** Minimise bathroom & cleaning products
- 5** Purchase second hand instead of buying new
- 6** Buy fewer, high quality items made to last
- 7** Choose products made from recycled materials
- 8** Consider sharing or hiring instead of owning
- 9** Lead by example to inspire others too

#BeTheChange #UseLessPlastic

LESS PLASTIC.

WWW.LESSPLASTIC.CO.UK

VISIT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA WEBSITE

www.lwv-bayarea.org

Want to contact your election officials?

You'll find them in our *Bay Area Guide to Elected Officials* at

<http://www.lwv-bayarea.org/CitizensGuide.pdf>

ELECTION AND LEAGUE CALENDAR

July 2018

17 Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar Training

August 2018

26 Women's Equality Day

October 2018

9 Last day to register to vote for November election

22 First day of early voting by personal appearance

26 Last day to apply for ballot by mail (application received, not postmarked. May apply starting Jan 1 each year.)

November 2018

2 Last day of early voting by personal appearance

6 Election Day

6 Last day to receive ballot by mail (by 7:00 p.m. with a few exceptions)



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WHERE TO FIND THE LEAGUE

www.lwv.org - www.lwvtexas.org - www.lwv-bayarea.org

LWV-Texas may be found at:

www.facebook.com/LWVTX/

@LWVTexas

<https://www.youtube.com>