

# Denton VOTER

*The League of Women Voters of Denton, Texas*  
*Established 1961*

P.O. Box 424945 TWU Station  
Denton, Texas 76204

**September 2007**

Sue Smith, President  
Sondra Ferstl, VOTER Editor

## CALENDAR

**Thursday, September 13, 7 p.m. General Meeting.** Room 176, EESAT Building at the University of North Texas (UNT). Mandated Achievement Testing in the Public Schools of Texas.

**Sunday, September 16, 3:30 p.m. (Note time change.) Board Meeting** at the home of Peg LaPoint, 1900 Highland Park Circle. Members are welcome to attend Board Meetings.

**Thursday, October 11, 7 p.m. General Meeting.** EESAT Building at UNT. The Denton Independent School District Bond Election and the Proposed Amendments to the Texas Constitution: November 6 election issues.

*Membership in the League of Women Voters of Denton is \$50 for an individual member. Household memberships are \$50 for the first person and \$25 for each additional person residing at the same mailing address. Full-time students may join for \$20. Send a check payable to LWV-Denton to P.O. Box 424945 TWU Station, Denton, Texas 76204.*

The new edition of Your Elected Officials is enclosed with this issue. Thanks to Byron Witmer for making the changes and printing the master copy.

## SEPTEMBER MEETING TO LOOK AT TESTING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

How much governmentally mandated academic testing is needed for accountability? How does testing measure higher-level thinking skills? Has testing been effective in narrowing the education gap? What is the impact of testing on teacher time?

These questions will be the topics for discussion at the September 13 meeting of the League of Women Voters of Denton. Barbara Burns, a retired high school teacher and a member of the state study committee, will present the program. In addition, Michele Yardley, an elementary teacher, and Virginia Gallian, a member of the Denton Board of Trustees, will lend their insight to this complex issue.

## GET PREPARED FOR A DISCUSSION OF IMMIGRATION POLICY

When delegates to the League's National Convention adopted a study of immigration policy I took a deep gulp. What a complex issue to take on! But, then I realized that the League of Women Voters would be an organization well qualified to look at this controversial public policy issue. (See page 2.)

## PRESIDENT'S PODIUM



It is not often we have a member of LWV-Denton on a state committee. This year, at the suggestion of Maggie Dodd, we are very fortunate to have Barbara Burns serving on

the Mandated Achievement Testing in the Public Schools of Texas study committee. She will lead us in this study at our first meeting of the year Thursday, September 13, 7 p.m. at the UNT EESAT Building. As usual, bring a friend and come a few minutes early to get a parking hangtag.

On Sunday, September 16 there will be a memorial service for Gerry Smith at 2 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 1111 Cordell. Gerry was a long-time member of the Denton League and served several years working on voters service as our Community Relations Vice President. In her professional life, Gerry was a cataloger at the UNT Library. No wonder we could count on her to ask all the right questions, expect answers, and get all the details in order.

Sue Smith

## GETTING PREPARED FOR A DISCUSSION OF IMMIGRATION POLICY

by Sondra Ferstl

Before we consider the consensus questions at our November meetings, all of us should learn more about immigration to the United States. A good place to start is reading some of the background papers

that the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee has posted on the Internet at [www.lwvus.org/ImmigrationStudy](http://www.lwvus.org/ImmigrationStudy).

This month we are spotlighting the issues covered in four of the eight background papers. (If you cannot access the Internet but would like to read these background papers, call me at (940) 383-3775 and I will send you a photocopy of the background papers you request.)

**What Motivates Immigration to America?** is a paper by Patricia Hatch, LWV of Howard County, MD. The author first presents historical motivating factors, most notably the search for religious freedom, freedom from oppression, or economic conditions. Motivations of more recent immigrants include humanitarian protection, family reunification, the search for jobs and a better standard of living. Immigrant networks have developed. The timeline for legal immigration to the United States is daunting. Ms. Hatch notes "As of January 2007, an employer applying for a typical worker who does not hold an advanced degree or have demonstrated ability in one of the designated 'shortage occupations' (Schedule A Workers and Priority Workers) would need to wait a minimum of four and a half to five years after all paperwork is approved by three government agencies successively (Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State) before visa processing could begin. The causes for this lengthy delay are quotas and backlogs." (My underlining)

**U.S. Immigration Policy: Family Reunification** is another article by Patricia Hatch. Prior to 1965 family reunification depended on how long it took for a first family member to secure a job and shelter,

then save funds to bring the spouse and children to this country. The 1965 Immigration Act eliminated the national origin quota system that had favored immigrants from Europe to the exclusion of those from other parts of the world. This Act adopted instead a “family preference” quota framework that systematized the sponsorship of relatives by legal immigrants. Spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens, as well as parents of adult U.S. citizens, are granted visas without regard to numerical quotas. Other relatives fall under the jurisdiction of one of four preference categories; the wait for an immigrant visa can vary depending on the relationship category and country of origin. This background paper explains the application process and the approval process. Ms. Hatch cites this observation from *Placing Immigrants at Risk: The Impact of Our Laws and Policies on American Families*, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, “Forcing families to immigrate separately rather than as a family unit because the petitioner does not earn enough to sponsor the whole family at once is an unintended consequence of these financial requirements that repeatedly fragment families. These requirements inevitably place major strains on families already fragile from years of separation.”

**Immigrants: Diversity and Inclusion**, written by Deborah Macmillan, LWV of East Windsor-Hightstown, NJ, looks at the U.S. as a country that has always been a country of immigrants. She writes that “immigration policies have favored diversity of country of birth since 1965. The policies have both capped the number of immigrants from a given country and allowed for a ‘diversity lottery’ to ensure at least some possibility of entry from all countries.” Diversity is

more evident in some regions of the country. The number and variety of immigrant languages today and the ability of their speakers to attain fluency in English also has an impact on the communities in which immigrants live. This paper shares the results of recent research on the advantages derived from a diverse population and the barriers and costs of community cohesion. The matters of transience and permanence, that is, whether the immigrants remain in this country or return to their country of origin (or move to yet another country) have changed since the early 1900’s.

**Federal Immigrant Policy: Enforcement Issues** by Barbara Margerum, LWV of Santa Barbara, CA, examines legislation about border control since the late 1970’s. In her article we learn about the Immigration Act of 1990, the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act in 2001, and the Secure Fence Act of 2006. Subjects discussed include workplace enforcement and employer sanctions; border enforcement; the catch and release program; and visas and entry-exit monitoring. The author concludes that “Current border control programs that attempt to deal simultaneously with protection against terrorists, apprehension of criminals, and the illegal entry of people and goods using a single approach may not be effective or efficient.”

I hope the brief summaries of these four background papers on immigration will encourage you to read the originals for yourself. Most of the papers are five to seven pages long, including footnotes. We’ll continue next month with comments about the other four papers.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS LWV-DENTON

Sue Smith, President  
[lwvdenton@earthlink.net](mailto:lwvdenton@earthlink.net)

Peg LaPoint, Program VP  
[tnplapoint@msn.com](mailto:tnplapoint@msn.com)

Linnie McAdams, Organization VP  
[LMMcAdams@verizon.net](mailto:LMMcAdams@verizon.net)

Ann MacMillan, Treasurer  
[amacmill@music.unt.edu](mailto:amacmill@music.unt.edu)

Ken Ferstl, Secretary  
[kferstl@charter.net](mailto:kferstl@charter.net)

Barbara Coe, Director  
[barbarajcoe@charter.net](mailto:barbarajcoe@charter.net)

Maggie Dodd, Director  
[maggiedoddenton@aol.com](mailto:maggiedoddenton@aol.com)

Sondra Ferstl, Director  
[smferstl@charter.net](mailto:smferstl@charter.net)