

# **Denton VOTER**

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

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

**February 2008**

**Sue Smith, President  
Sondra Ferstl, VOTER Editor**

[www.lwvdenton.org](http://www.lwvdenton.org)

## **CALENDAR**

**FEBRUARY is FINANCE DRIVE MONTH!!!**

**Thursday, February 14, Birthday of the League of Women Voters of the United States.**

**Sunday, February 17, 3:00 p.m. Board Meeting** at the home of Peg LaPoint, 1900 Highland Park Circle. Members are welcome to attend Board Meetings. (This meeting was rescheduled from February 10.)

**Tuesday, February 19. Early Voting begins.**

**Thursday, February 21, 7 p.m. General Meeting: Gas Wells in Denton County.** Room 176 EESAT Building, University of North Texas.

**Friday, February 29. Last Day of Early Voting.**

**Tuesday, March 4. Primary Election Day.**

**Sunday, March 9, 3 p.m. Board Meeting.**

*Membership in the League of Women Voters of Denton for the remainder of the League year (i.e., until August 31, 2008) is \$25 for an individual membership. Please send a check payable to LWV-Denton to the Treasurer, Ann MacMillan at LWV-Denton, P.O. Box 424945 TWU Station, Denton, TX 76204.*

## **GAS WELL DEVELOPMENT IN DENTON COUNTY**

Our speaker on February 21 will be Julie Smith. Julie has extensive experience as an environmental attorney with the National Wildlife Federation, the Texas General Land Office and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources. She has worked in private industry, and was the Environmental Compliance Manager for the City of Denton and Director of Development and Environmental Services for Flower Mound.

Julie will discuss how natural gas is developed and the impacts of drilling on the environment and the region. She will outline the national, state and local regulations that govern gas well development. This should be a highly informative and interesting presentation.

Peg LaPoint, Program VP

## **FINANCE DRIVE**

It is February and once again we will kick off the **LWV Finance Drive**. This is the time we ask you and other members of the community to help us raise funds to meet our yearly budget. (Continued on p. 2)

*(Finance Drive, continued)*

We have non-member supporters who are long-time donors to the LWV, but we need more friends of the League. You can **HELP US** with that by submitting the names and addresses of persons and/or businesses that you believe would support the work of the League. We will mail them letters explaining what we do to educate voters about issues, provide them with a copy of "Your Elected Officials" and a copy of our local "We Support" brochure. We will ask for their financial support to continue working to provide voter education materials to Denton County residents. Please e-mail me your list as soon as possible (see e-mail address below).

Each LWV-Denton member will also receive a letter asking for a donation. We need your financial support in addition to the amount you pay as dues. Donations toward our operating budget (checks made payable to LWV-Denton) are not tax deductible but are greatly appreciated and without them we could not continue to provide services to our community.

This is a **Presidential Election Year** and we look forward to distributing voters guides for both the Primary and the General Elections. You can support our voter education efforts and receive credit for a tax deductible contribution by writing your check to LWV-Texas Education Fund (but send it to LWV-Denton which will make the deposit).

I could also use help in preparing the Finance Drive mailing. If you have time to stuff a few envelopes please contact me by telephone at (940) 382-6930 or e-mail at [lmccadams@verizon.net](mailto:lmccadams@verizon.net)

Thank you for your continued strong support of the work of the Denton League of Women Voters.

Linnie McAdams, Organization VP

## **ELECTRONIC VOTING**

Our January meeting dealt with balloting using electronic voting machines that have raised concern in hundreds of jurisdictions across the nation. This is an issue that goes to the heart of the democratic system.

Ask nearly any independent computer security expert familiar with today's e-voting technology and you will hear a familiar refrain: The current approach – closed technology with minimal oversight and insufficient audit capabilities – is a bad idea. Open government advocates agree, because without transparency, voter-verifiability and the ability to conduct legitimate recounts, such election systems will continue to raise doubts and foster suspicion, whatever the benefits. In passing the Help America Vote Act, Congress could not have had this in mind.

In October of 2005, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a 107-page report on the security of Election Voting Machines in America. The report confirms many of the greatest concerns expressed by those calling for election reform. The report "analyzed 80 recent and relevant reports related to security and reliability of electronic voting systems." The results confirm a range of security vulnerabilities and violations in electronic voting machines in recent elections and the accompanying systems used to administer elections. The issues brought to the attention of the GAO by elected representatives, activists and other concerned citizens, "merit the focused

attention of federal, state and local authorities responsible for election administration.” It concludes, “[C]oncerns about electronic voting machines have been realized and have caused problems with recent elections, resulting in the loss and miscount of votes.”

Votes in several states in the recent primaries have been called into question. In many jurisdictions across the nation, electronic machines have proved so questionable that officials are returning to paper ballots.

Rush Holt (D-NJ) has authored the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act. The bill has split the verifiable voting community between those who see the bill as a step in the right direction (see Verified Voting Foundation), and those who think the bill will simply add another layer of complexity to the process and will lull the public into thinking the problem is solved (see Coalition for Visible Ballots).

LWVUS President Mary Wilson met with Rep. Rush Holt to discuss the provisions of H.R. 5036. He expressed appreciation for the League’s support for Section 2 of the bill which would provide federal funding to replace voting systems that do not use or produce a paper ballot that can be verified by the voter, or a paper ballot printout verifiable at the time of casting the vote. They discussed at length Section 3 of the bill, which would provide federal funding for those election jurisdictions that choose to conduct manual audits of the November 2008 results. It became clear to President Wilson that auditing elections is a complex subject that has different meanings to different people. Visit <http://lists.lwv.org/t/698294/2791353/437/0/> to see a more detailed report on some of the matters discussed at the meeting.

Because President Wilson believes that the auditing of elections is an area in which Leagues can play a vital role, she will form a Task Force to provide the LWVUS Board information and advice about election auditing that we can all use as this subject develops nationwide. With regard to the LWVUS position on Section 3 of H.R. 5036, because the bill, if enacted, may have the effect of giving voters in audited jurisdictions some additional level of confidence in the final results of the election, supporting Section 3 of the bill would be consistent with the position adopted at LWVUS Convention 2006. Likewise, even though the bill’s provisions do not themselves require the application of uniform auditing practices, the audits which would be funded under the bill could yield useful information that could lead to the development and use of uniform standards.

There are a number of web sites devoted to this subject. You are urged to visit them and become familiar with this issue.

#### **Verified Voting Foundation.org**

An advocacy group that lobbies for paper verification. I strongly recommend you read the January 6<sup>th</sup> article, “Can You Count on Voting Machines” by Clive Thompson, NY Times Magazine. This is an excellent overview of the history and impacts of the electronic voting machine industry. The article “Quick Fix for electronic Voting” is in support of Rep. Rush Holt’s reform bill.

#### **Blackboxvoting.org**

This site was created to monitor under-reported voting problems and educate the public. It has links to many other sites and a wealth of information. The entire text of Bev Harris’s book “Black Box Voting” is posted to the site.

#### **Election Defense Alliance.org**

An action button, analysis, and offer of the book “Was the 2004 Election Stolen?” by Steven

Freeman and Joel Bleifuss. A good article by Jonathan Simon, JD, and Bruce O'Dell, "Landslide Denied: Exit Polls vs. Vote Count 2006. Demographic Validity of the National Exit Poll and the Corruption of the Official Vote Count".

#### **Coalition for Visible Ballots.org**

View a video of the co-authors of "Hacked" as they explain why they are opposed to Rep. Holt's HR5036 (formerly HR811). Read the text of an interview with Harvey Wasserman on the new Ohio Voting Report: "The 2004 Election Was Stolen... Finally We Have Irrefutable Confirmation: Ohio's top election official, Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, announced that the voting systems that decided the 2004 election in Ohio were rife with "critical security failures." Harvey Wasserman is author of "What Happened in Ohio: A Documentary Record of Theft and Fraud in the 2004 Election."

#### **Voterescue.org**

An Austin-based organization working for reform in Texas.

Peg LaPoint, Program VP

#### **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TO CELEBRATE 88<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**

The League of Women Voters will celebrate its 88<sup>th</sup> birthday on February 14, with a renewed commitment to help Americans get involved in their democracy in 2008.

"Today we stand on the shoulders of generations of incredible volunteers who have proudly served the League and made a measurable impact in their communities," said national League president Mary G. Wilson. "I am bursting with pride as I wish our nearly 150,000 members and supporters a 'Happy Birthday!'"

"We take seriously our legacy of providing trustworthy and balanced resources to citizens and lawmakers. The League of

Women Voters truly has left its footprint on American history, and I believe our democracy is stronger because of it."

"As I speak, our incredible members are living out that legacy in every state in our union, making sure voters are registered, educated, and confident in the political process. 2008 will be a pivotal year...We encourage all Americans to get involved in this historic election."

#### **PRESIDENT'S PODIUM**



There are times when we need to hear depressing news in order to correct problems. We heard a lot of that at our January meeting on voting machines. When a candidate gets minus 1600 votes, you get the idea that there is definitely a problem that needs to be corrected. For those of you who missed the meeting, you may contact Peg LaPoint and she will share the documentary with you. Again, it's something you may not want to see and hear, but it is important that you do.

If you have heard Julie Smith in the past I know you won't miss our February 21 meeting on gas wells. She is not only knowledgeable about the subject but enthusiastic as well.

February is our traditional Finance Drive month. Watch for your letter in the mail soon. It is also Nominating Committee month. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, please contact Kay Branum. Of course it is a bit of work but also a lot of pleasure. We actually enjoy board meetings.

Sue Smith

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**ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES FOR FEBRUARY**

Reducing consumption is essential to creating a sustainable environment. For Everyone to enjoy the ecological excess of the United States and Canada, four additional planets would be necessary.

Electronic waste is the fastest-growing segment of municipal solid waste. 350 million computers and 130 million cell phones will be discarded by the end of the year. TVs and computers can contain four pounds of lead, as well as chromium, cadmium, mercury, beryllium, nickel, zinc, and brominated flame retardants. Consumer electronics account for 40% of the lead and 70% of the overall toxic content of landfills.