

## Convention sparks discussion on voter registration, participation

Of course a political convention is all about firing up the party, but much of the Texas Democratic Convention, held in San Antonio June 16-18, also focused on the need to register Texans to vote and then to make sure they go to the polls. That's a worthy goal applicable to any party.

State Sen. José Rodríguez of El Paso pointed out during a workshop that barely 10 percent of registered voters statewide voted in November's election, and that between January and June, more than 268,000 new voters were registered.

"Each one of us can make a difference by encouraging people to vote," he said, suggesting that we all check with our relatives and neighbors to make sure they are registered and planning to vote.

At the workshop, delegates from several state Senate districts suggested ways to increase voter registration and participation, including online registration, same-day registration at polling sites, a focus on colleges for registration, and allowing student ID as an accept-



**Nic Gallego, 11, coolly introduces his father, former U.S. Rep. Pete Gallego, before an audience of thousands of delegates.**

able form of identification.

Two of the most popular ideas for getting out the vote were speaking to what matters to people rather than just making general appeals to the need to vote, and targeting people on social media.

Later, in a speech during the

general session, Rodríguez talked about "Vote El Paso Vote," a program led by that city's League of Women Voters and other civic organizations. A 40-day nonpartisan effort aimed at getting infrequent voters back

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***Bexar County delegates discuss voter turnout strategy with the help of Dwight Clark, State Sen. José Menéndez’s legislative director, at the Democratic State Convention.***

to the polls, it began on Flag Day, June 14, with a rally at El Paso’s Old Glory Memorial. It continues with outreach by knocking on the doors of non-participant voters. The league will also participate in Fourth of July parades and hold mock elections.

Former U.S. Rep. Pete Gallego, who is running to win back his 23rd District seat, gave a heartfelt speech detailing his father’s and his history of facing discrimination in the West Texas town of Alpine and how they fought it through winning the votes of the people and then being able to make changes.

Before he appeared, another Gallego came out on stage – 11-year-old Nic. Speaking with the confidence of a politician in the making, Nic explained in no uncertain terms why everyone should vote for his dad – including that he, Nic, wants to

meet Hillary Clinton.

Nic showed well that children follow their parents’ example. The elder Gallego continued that theme as he talked about the need to vote and to keep fighting for your beliefs.

“If we don’t vote, they don’t vote. If we give up, they give up,” he said.

“No one will steal my son’s American dream.”

Reaching young people even before they are eligible to vote is a strategy that seems to be working. Liana Wang, a high-school senior from the Houston area, wowed the audience with her poise as she spoke with eloquence of growing up as the U.S.-born daughter of Chinese immigrants. A member of a group called High School Democrats of America, she praised Americans who “build bridges, not tear others down; teachers who stay after school to help kids who don’t have resources; sexual assault

victims who speak out every day so people like me live in less fear.”

One of the more popular spots at the convention was the Women’s Room, an area not just for women but for anyone who wanted take a break, have some tea or coffee and a snack, and enjoy some entertainment or a serious program. It was hosted by the Bexar County Democratic Women, whose president is our own Diann Andy.

The Texas Republican Convention, held May 12-14 in Dallas, also had some sessions, called Abbott University, aimed at increasing voters and voter turnout. They focused on looking at tools used to organize and use data in the field to contact voters, and using social media platforms effectively. The party also had classes to deputize people to register voters.

# Strategic planning set for July 9

Now that the new board is in place and we have our annual project – increasing voter participation – it's time to do strategic planning for the upcoming year.

All members are invited. Those who attend will help determine our plan to increase voter participation, develop our calendar and programming for the year, consider a study on when and where we should meet to facilitate attendance by more members, and hear the results of the membership survey. If you haven't responded, please do so. If you need another copy, please email Kathy Hill, [kathy@khillpr.com](mailto:kathy@khillpr.com).

The facilitator for the meeting will be Peggy Hill, a member of the state league board of directors and the facilitator for last year's strategic planning session.

The meeting will be at the home of Phyllis and Steve Ingram on Saturday, July 9, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For the address, please call Martha Lankford, 340-5366.

## League to honor Amy Hardberger at Oct. 12 Bravo Luncheon

The League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area has announced that water-law expert Amy Hardberger will be honored at the league's annual Bravo Luncheon on Oct. 12 at Magnolia Gardens.

Hardberger, an attorney and geologist, is associate dean for academic and student affairs at St. Mary's School of Law. Before that, she worked for the Environmental Defense Fund.

Hardberger is known for her years of strong advocacy for water conservation. She has butted heads with Mayor Ivy Taylor on the San Antonio Water System's Capital Improvements Advisory Committee, most recently over the Vista Ridge Pipeline project, and Taylor removed her from the board in May.

More details about the luncheon will be forthcoming.

## Judge Parker joins League

Our newest member is Laura Parker, judge of the 386th district court, which handles criminal cases for juvenile offenders. She also presides over a juvenile drug court, a mental health court for girls and a court program for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking.

In addition to her judicial duties, Parker



serves on the board of directors of Communities in Schools, the ChildSafe Advisory Council, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and is active with Impact San Antonio.

She is married to pediatrician Fred Rhame. Their daughter Catherine will be starting 9th grade this fall.

## Upcoming Events

**Strategic Planning**, July 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Phyllis and Steve Ingram's house, potluck lunch provided. To attend, contact Phyllis at [pigram1@satx.rr](mailto:pigram1@satx.rr) or (210) 764-1557, or Martha Lankford at [mblankford@gmail.com](mailto:mblankford@gmail.com) or (210) 340-5366, for directions and gate code.

**Volunteer Deputy Registrars needed**, Voices for Children event, Aug. 6, 7:30-9 a.m., Northwest Vista College, 3535 N Ellison Dr, San Antonio. Contact Sybil Morgan at [sybilmorgan349@gmail.com](mailto:sybilmorgan349@gmail.com) or (210) 775-8600.

**Summer workshop on regional planning**, with four other area leagues, Aug. 6, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Bulverde Spring Branch Library, 131 Bulverde Crossing, Bulverde. Bring a bag lunch; drinks cookies provided. If anyone wants to carpool, contact Glenda Wolin at [gwolin@gmail.com](mailto:gwolin@gmail.com) or (210) 378-4614.

**Can We Talk? Women's Equality Day Event**, Aug. 24, SAWS Headquarters, 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North, networking 5:30-6:15 p.m., dinner 6:15 to 7 p.m., program 7 p.m. \$35 June 17-Aug. 12, \$45 after Aug. 12. For registration form, email Arlis Olson, [arlisolson@att.net](mailto:arlisolson@att.net).