

San Antonio League supports D.C. 51st state resolution

The board of the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area voted unanimously at its May 12 meeting to support a national convention resolution for the creation of the 51st state, New Columbia.

The District of Columbia league chapter submitted the resolution to the convention, which runs June 16-19 in Washington D.C., in hopes that Leaguers in all 50 states will advocate for the voting rights of D.C. citizens by supporting the resolution to make the "New Columbia Admis-

sion Act" a legislative priority.

A letter from the D.C. chapter to all other league chapters explains that residents of D.C. have limits other citizens do not share, yet they bear the same responsibilities, such as paying taxes, serving on federal juries and serving in the military.

It points out that there is a solution to this 200-year injustice that does not involve a Constitutional amendment, but merely a majority vote of Congress, the same way all the other states have been admitted except the original 13. The residen-

tial and commercial areas of D.C. would become New Columbia, while a smaller area containing the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, the Mall and other federal properties would remain a federal district as required by the Constitution.

The legislation is before both houses of Congress and has more support than in earlier years, the letter says, but it needs the support of people in all 50 states if Congress is going to respond to the demand for it to pass.

League participates in Mega Mixer

Through our partnership with SA2020, the league recently was invited to participate in its Mega Mixer for young professionals organized by Leadership Organization of Professionals (LOOP) San Antonio and held at the San Antonio Museum of Art. LOOP works to engage, lead and transform San Antonio into a premier

location for innovative and talented young professionals.

More than a dozen young professional organizations were represented, including The Witte Society, the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association, the Young Professionals in Energy, Ghost Light Society, Young Texans Against Cancer, the Hemisfair Coalition, the United Way Emerging Leaders Council, the Urban Land Institute Young Leaders, Zoomers, San Antonio Museum of Art Young Friends and Alamo Young Government Leaders.

The league registered voters, signed up people to commit to vote and shared information about the league and what we do. Karen Davis and Leslye Altemeier were great ambassadors that night. We look forward to more opportunities with LOOP.

Leslye Altemeier, right, and Karen Davis, center, discuss League goals with participants at SA2020's Mega Mixer.



Showers baptize spring luncheon

A light spring shower gave way to a semi-clear view of downtown San Antonio as the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area held our annual meeting and spring luncheon 20 stories up at the Omni Hotel at the Colonnade on May 21.

In our usual style, 29 members, hosting 11 guests, made quick and pleasant work of the meeting portion.

We heard a report from Diann Andy about her experience at the state LWV convention and its plan to focus on increasing voter registration rather than doing a study in 2016-2017. She urged everyone to attend a state convention at least once.

The budget, which all members had seen in advance, was approved, and the proposed new board of directors was introduced and approved.

The vice presidents reported on their goals and accomplishments in the past year, which was a productive one. Anyone who would like a copy of the reports can email me

for one at gwolin@gmail.com

After a delicious lunch of rosemary chicken followed by lemon chiffon cheesecake, Catherine Stone, retired Chief Justice of the 4th Court of Appeals, gave a talk about what she considers the top women's issues.

She started by saying she couldn't talk about women's issues or women's rights without first mentioning the tenor of the times.

As an example, she pointed out that just the week before, during a discussion of a bill in the Louisiana legislature to raise the minimum age of strippers to 21, a state representative proposed an amendment to also make the maximum age 28 and the top weight 160 pounds. He withdrew the amendment after a sharp rebuke from a female representative, but not before much laughter from fellow legislators.

Of all the women's issues, Stone said two stand out: the gender wage gap and women's health care.

Nationally, the wage gap is 21 percent, meaning women on average make 21 percent less than men in virtually all jobs in which statistics are available for both men and women to calculate the figures.

Texas is right on target, with men earning an average of \$46,200 while women earn an average of \$36,400.

There's even an Equal Pay Day, which this year was April 12. That's the day through which a woman must work this year to earn the same amount of money a man had to work in the same job to earn the same amount by the end of last year.



Retired Justice Catherine Stone

As for women's health care, Stone pointed out that though you never see stories urging men to have digital rectal exams for prostate cancer prevention, there are stories everywhere about women's medical care. A man's reproductive care is considered something between him and his doctor, but a woman's is fair game for television and politics.

She noted that Texas is in the forefront of limiting access to women's health care by closing facilities that perform abortions – because they also offer other services such as cancer screening and birth control.

Stone closed by charging the league members to “stay informed, listen to others even when you don't agree, and don't hesitate to advocate for what you believe.”

New board approved

The 2016-2017 Board of Directors of the LWV of the San Antonio Area, as approved by the membership on May 21, are:

President: vacant. **Treasurer:** Theresa Poenisch. **Vice President Organization:** Martha Lankford. **Vice President Program:** Madhu Sridhar. **Elected Directors — Membership:** Sybil Morgan, **Editor, The Voter:** Glenda Wolin, **At Large:** Olga Benavides, **At Large:** Evelyn Bonavita

Following are biographies of the new board members:

Madhu Sridhar, Vice President Program, was active in the League of Women Voters long before she moved to San Antonio. In Massachusetts, she served as the president of the state league for four years after serving as the vice president for two years. She was the president of the Andover, Mass., league for four years. She was also a board member of the ACLU and served on the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. She was appointed by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick as one of the 11 members of Commonwealth Corps, at its inception, with a mission to engage state residents in rebuilding communities. She was the first president and CEO of the Akshaya Patra Foundation USA, which provides midday meals to 1.3 million underprivileged children daily in schools across India for \$15 per child per year. She moved to San Antonio recently to be closer to family.

Sybil Morgan, Membership Director, is a retired family physician. Two of her passions are her family and registering new voters. She has two grandchildren in California so she travels a lot! When in San Antonio, she spends the majority of her time working with various groups registering voters. She works with the Educators Voter Registration Initiative (EVRI), which trains, equips and schedules former

teachers and other professionals who are deputy voter registrars to speak to high school government and economics classes around

Bexar County about registering to vote. These volunteers then assist age-eligible students with completing voter registration cards. She has also registered voters at numerous other institutions and events, including at St. Philip's and other colleges.

Glenda Wolin, Editor of The Voter, is a recovering journalist who plied her trade at the Fort Lauderdale News, the Miami Herald and the San Antonio Express-News. She now spends her time editing the League of Women Voters' monthly newsletter, The Voter; registering voters with several organizations; working as an election judge; and volunteering at the Animal Defense League. She shares her home with her husband of four years and three rescue dogs, including one who is a spokedog for spay/neuter programs. She has one daughter and a 5-year-old granddaughter.

Olga Benavides, Board Member at Large, is a highly engaged native of San Antonio. Married 54 years to Henry W. Benavides, they have three sons, one grandson and two granddaughters. Olga worked 12 years as a federal employee for the Air Force at Headquarters Air Training Command and with the Internal Revenue Service, Intelligence Division. She has been a managing partner since 1972 of Alamo Granite and Marble, LLC and Alamo Properties Investments. She has been an officer of two PTAs, served numerous years on the board of the San Antonio Conservation Society, and has been the assistant treasurer and finance chairman for NIOSA. Olga has also worked in numerous political campaigns as a volunteer for local, state, county and federal office holders. She even traveled to Seattle with a San Antonio city delegation where San Antonio won the All-America City award.



LEAGUE MEMBERS ATTEND ANNUAL MEETING AT OMNI HOTEL

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Women's pay equity topic for Can We Talk

Why is women's pay in the red? That's the topic of Can We Talk's observance of Women's Equality Day, commemorated each Aug. 26, the anniversary of the 1920 passage of the 19th amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote.

Can We Talk's program will be Aug. 24 and will feature a talk by Malinda A. Gaul, a San Antonio attorney specializing in employment law representing employees. She is very familiar with the discrimination faced by women, including unequal pay. She also serves as a director on the na-

tional board of the American Association of University Women, which fights for legislation that will close the gender pay gap.

It is at SAWS Headquarters at 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North, and will feature Shop 'til You Drop displays from 5-8:30 p.m., networking from 5:30-6:15 p.m., dinner from 6:15 to 7 p.m., and the program at 7 p.m. Registration and meal are \$25 before June 17, \$35 between June 17 and Aug. 12, and \$45 after Aug. 12. For a registration form, please email Arlis Olson, arlisolson@att.net.

League website gets update

If you've gone to our local league website lately and been frustrated because everything on it was old, relax. It's all fixed now. It's a long story having to do with possible new changes in the background that didn't happen.

Thanks to Diann Andy, everything's up to date in and you can use www.lwvsanantonio.org to find whatever you want about future events, present positions or past stands on issues, information on voting, who to contact and more.

Upcoming Events

LWV National Convention, June 16-19, Washington D.C. Early Bird registration through May 31, \$395 plus \$80 fee for Lobby Day activities. For information, go to <http://www.lwvsanantonio.org/> and click on LVWUS Convention 2016.

Strategic Planning, July 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Phyllis and Steve Ingram's house, potluck lunch provided. To attend, contact Phyllis at pingram1@satx.rr or (210) 764-1557 for directions and gate code.

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 and cookies provided.

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. \$25 before June 17, \$35 June 17-Aug. 12, \$45 after Aug. 12. For registration form, email Arlis Olson, arlisolson@att.net.

Strategic planning set for July 9

This year's strategic planning meeting, which sets the agenda for the coming board year, will be Saturday, July 9, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Board and member participation is very important so we can hear as many voices as possible as we plan our programs, voter ser-

vice and activities.

Our facilitator will be Peg Hill from the Houston league. Peg was with us last year and did an outstanding job of leading us through how our league would look using the management team model in lieu of a president.

The meeting will be at the home of Phyllis and Steve Ingram. There will be a potluck lunch around noon.

If you are able to attend, please contact Phyllis at pingram1@satx.rr.com or (210) 764-1557 for directions and gate code.



Big Give nets \$483 for Education Fund

This year's Big Give SA, held May 3, helped raise \$483 for the League's Education Fund.

A programming glitch caused the Big Give website to crash, and it's impossible to know how many additional people might have donated who couldn't, and didn't try again. Organizers extended the giving period to include May 4.

Organizers have offered in-kind training and workshops for participating nonprofits as recompense for the website crash, which we will check into. Overall, organizers helped make the best of a bad situation, and we appreciate their efforts to make the day a success for the thousands of charities that participated not only in Bexar County and South Texas, but nationwide.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.