

LWVSAA

President's Message

It is far from over

I am writing this column on the day that marks the 97th anniversary of the 19th constitutional amendment, which granted women the right to vote. The U.S. Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day" at the request of Rep. Bella Abzug of New York in



Madhu Sridhar

1971. The date was selected to commemorate the 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment. History tells us that this was no easy feat. The

movement that started in 1848 with the first women's rights convention

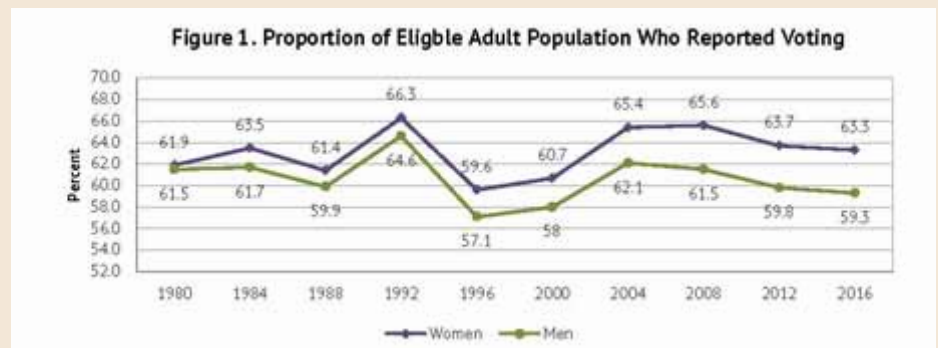
in Seneca Falls, New York, continued for several decades with massive grass roots, peaceful, civil rights efforts culminating in a 2 million strong political force in every state, city and town across the U.S.

The 19th Amendment celebrations serve as a powerful reminder for all of us of the enduring debt we owe the suffragists. Ninety seven years ago, women could not vote in federal elections. They could not hold public office. And they could not serve on juries. Women had no political voice. Clearly we have made a lot of progress over the past 97 years but we have a

long way to go.

According to the Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University, women outnumber men among registered voters. And, as you can see in Figure 1, in every presidential election since 1980, the proportion of eligible female adults who voted has exceeded the proportion of eligible male adults who voted. In all presidential elections prior to 1980, the voter turnout rate for women was lower than the rate for men.

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San Antonio League launches new unit

The League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area is excited to announce the launch of our first Unit - The Leaders for Democracy. The unit is being led by Jenni Blacklock and Kathryn Keeton.

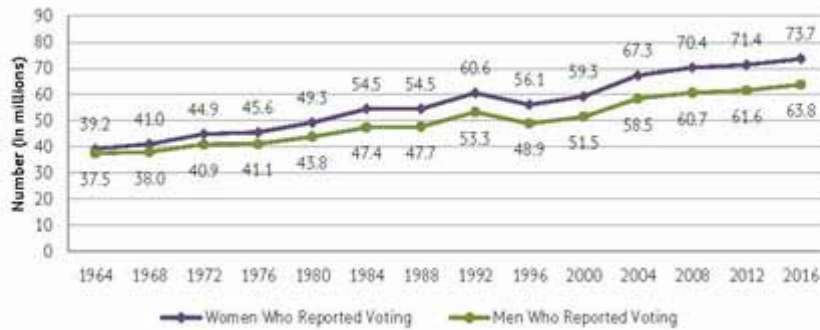
As new members of the League of Women Voters themselves, Jenni and Kathryn felt a strong desire to join the League for its non-partisan stance as they have felt an accountability to

do their part to help bridge the political polarity that seems so pervasive in present times. Their desire to start this Unit was to connect with like-minded working professionals and college students that have limited time to devote to political support but have a strong desire to contribute and engage in political topics to help drive positive change within their community.

Madhu Sridhar, president of the League of Women Voters of San Antonio, expressed excitement, saying, "Kathryn and Jenni are channeling their energy and enthusiasm to improve public discourse among their peers on important issues. We are excited at the formation of this unit and are confident that their leadership

see new unit on next page

Figure 2. Number Who Reported Voting



According to the same source, the number of female voters has exceeded the number of male voters in every presidential election since 1964 (see Figure 2).

Now when we look at the Texas General Election over 40 years span from 1972 to 2012, we know the work that is ahead of us. Source is the Texas Secretary of State.

"There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers," said Susan B. Anthony. To that end, in the 115th United States Congress:

- Women hold 83 (19.1%) of the

435 seats in the House

- Women hold 21 (21%) of the 100 seats in the Senate

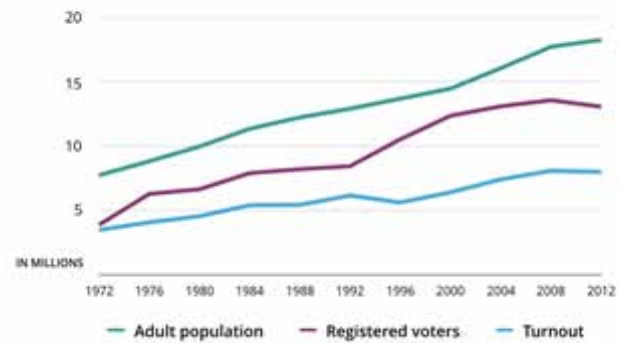
Of course, one can argue, if women constitute more than half the population, we have a long way to go.

As we commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment, let us rededicate ourselves to the challenge

of breaking through voter apathy and encourage women to run for elected offices.

In spite of this historic opening, many Americans still believe that their votes don't matter and choose not to participate in the democratic process. The energy, optimism, and trust of the suffragists mark a stark contrast to the voters' mood today. Let us pay tribute to the great and glorious achievement of those who came before us by picking up where they left off and by believing, as they believed, that we can make the system work for all Americans.

Texas adult, registered and actual voters



SOURCE: Texas Secretary of State

new unit

will encourage others to get involved and help strengthen democracy."

Jenni and Kathryn plan to host a few events each year, carefully selecting a diverse range of topics that are important within the local community.

These events will incorporate plenty of time for networking and socializing in a happy hour-type atmosphere at the front-end, followed by a learning and engagement session with key experts and political representatives for each topic at the back-end.



Jenni Blacklock

"It is our hope that these events will start the kinds of conversations that will help mend some of these polar perspectives and motivate those who attend to create change in their community," said

Jenni Blacklock, unit co-lead.

Jenni, a systems engineer, owns Solutions LinQ, an IT company. Kathryn, an organizational psychologist, works as a partner in Minerva, a consulting practice she owns and serves as a professor of practice at

UTSA's College of Business.

"We feel privileged to be a part of this well-known, well-respected organization that seeks to help others navigate the troubled political waters that we face now and in the future," said Kathryn.

They look forward to hosting their first event this fall on human trafficking. If you're

interested in contacting Kathryn or Jenni to join this Unit, feel free to email or connect with them on Facebook.

kathrynekeeton@gmail.com
jenni.blacklock@gmail.com



Kathryn Keeton

Voters to consider Texas constitutional amendments

Any changes to the Texas Constitution must be approved by a majority of Texas voters. The following amendments are the proposed constitutional amendments as submitted by the 85th Legislature to appear on the constitutional amendment ballot for the special election to be held in the state of Texas on November 7, 2017.

PROPOSITION 1 “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of part of the market value of the residence homestead of a partially disabled veteran or the surviving spouse of a partially disabled veteran if the residence homestead was donated to the disabled veteran by a charitable organization for less than the market value of the residence homestead and harmonizing certain related provisions of the Texas Constitution.”

PROPOSITION 2 “The constitutional amendment to establish

a lower amount for expenses that can be charged to a borrower and removing certain financing expense limitations for a home equity loan, establishing certain authorized lenders to make a home equity loan, changing certain options for the refinancing of home equity loans, changing the threshold for an advance of a home equity line of credit, and allowing home equity loans on agricultural homesteads.”

PROPOSITION 3 “The constitutional amendment limiting the service of certain officeholders appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate after the expiration of the person’s term of office.”

PROPOSITION 4 “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to require a court to provide notice to the attorney general of a challenge to the constitutionality of a state statute and authorizing the leg-

islature to prescribe a waiting period before the court may enter a judgment holding the statute unconstitutional.”

PROPOSITION 5 “The constitutional amendment on professional sports team charitable foundations conducting charitable raffles.”

PROPOSITION 6 “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a first responder who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.”

PROPOSITION 7 “The constitutional amendment relating to legislative authority to permit credit unions and other financial institutions to award prizes by lot to promote savings.”

The ballot will include state constitutional amendments, San Antonio charter amendments, judicial races and, depending on where you live, various school board and possibly municipal races.

For other information on voting, voter ID requirements, etc., go to <http://www.votetexas.gov>

Dates to remember

Oct 10

Last day to register to vote

Oct 23

First day of early voting

Nov 3

Last day of early voting

Nov 7

Election Day

**League
vision,
beliefs,
intentions**

The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.

The League of Women Voters of the United States is a nonpartisan political membership organization, which:

- acts after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all government levels.
- builds citizen participation in the democratic process.
- engages communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.



Annalisa Peace visits a Low Impact Development project in Kigali, Rwanda, with government officials.

San Antonio League board member promotes water quality in Rwanda

*By Annalisa Peace
(Chair, Water Committee, League of Women Voters of San Antonio)*

As Executive Director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA), I spent three weeks in Kigali to work with the Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (REMA) as part of the U.S. Department of State's Community Solutions Program.

This trip was an outgrowth of the collaboration between GEAA and REMA begun in 2015, when Jacques Nsengiyumva, Officer of Environmental Standards and Regulations at REMA came to San Antonio for four months to work with GEAA on research and projects that employ Low Impact Development techniques to

mitigate the impacts of sewage on water quality. GEAA has been exploring the use of Low Impact Development techniques to mitigate the impacts of both source and non-source water pollution since 2009, completing several research projects in collaboration with the University of Texas at San Antonio colleges of Architecture and Civil and Environmental Engineering, the San Antonio River Authority, and the Edwards Aquifer Authority. GEAA's Community Rain Gardens program also works with homeowners' associations within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone to create gardens in public spaces that improve water quality.

During my time in Rwanda, I met with high level government

officials, presented at local universities, and visited several sites where Jacques has created artificial wetlands based on the techniques he studied while working with GEAA. It was a wonderful opportunity to see first-hand how Low Impact Development (LID) techniques have been successfully employed in Rwanda to address problems that are far more challenging than those we face in the United States.

I also meet with the Rwanda Housing Authority and the Department of Urban Planning in the Ministry of Infrastructure to share information related to my experience in planning for growth and the impacts of rapid urbanization. Kigali, at 1.1 million people, seems

to be growing as fast as San Antonio. Construction is everywhere!

What I learned about Rwanda during my visit greatly enhanced my ability to recommend appropriate LID technologies to address specific issues in Kigali and in the rural areas. Of particular interest is the implementation of rain water harvesting – a technique not widely used in Rwanda though particularly well suited to conditions and needs of that country.

I was amazed at how much progress has been made in Rwanda since the genocide in 1994. I was particularly impressed with how clean Kigali and the entire country is. I saw no trash on the streets nor floatables in the rivers. It really brought home the efficacy of simple regulation, such as banning plastic bags and smoking in public areas.

Conversely, the level of security enforced everywhere in Kigali is daunting at first. You have to go through a metal detector and search to get into most buildings, even the grocery store. Armed guards can be seen everywhere in the cities and rural areas. The central government exercises a great deal more control than we are accustomed to in the U.S. Still, people seemed happy, there is growing prosperity, young people are optimistic, and the country seemed very well managed as compared to its neighbors.

I was especially impressed by observing Umuganda, a time when Rwandans do public service work, which takes place from 8:00 am until noon on the last Saturday of each month. All businesses are closed during that time while citizens work on various projects designated by the government. I witnessed work on restoring part of the wetland that runs through Kigali. A lot gets accomplished at no cost to the government.

During time off I visited Rwanda's spectacular Akagera and Volcano game preserves. I had ample opportunity to learn from my guides what is being done in terms of range and game management and reforestation. Both preserves are managed primarily as tourist destinations, much like many of the ranches here in South Texas, though on a much larger scale. I really like that, unlike ranches in Texas, they are not relying primarily on hunting and are making a sincere effort to reintroduce predators to maintain a natural ecosystem.

I attended a lovely July 4th celebration at the U.S. Embassy in Kigali. I was surprised to see that they were serving tacos alongside the burgers and beer in the buffet. July 4th is also Liberations Day for the Rwandans. It is the day that commemorates the end of the genocide. Rather than a solemn occasion, people all over the country take to the streets and nightclubs for a real celebration.

Jacques was a wonderful host who provided opportunities to see the country through jaunts to visit the various project sites. He also provided plenty of opportunities to socialize with his friends and relatives. Kigali's nightlife is very vibrant, with great restaurants and nightclubs featuring excellent live music.

Many buildings and walls in Kigali are decorated with well executed murals, flowering plants are everywhere, and the people wear wonderfully picturesque clothing, especially the women on their colorful kitenge. (And, yes, they really do carry a wide variety of things on their heads!) The breathtaking views from the hillsides and skyscrapers reveal a strikingly beautiful city.

I highly recommend a visit to this beautiful country and the city of Kigali. People are very friendly and I felt absolutely safe being out on

my own. Although most Rwandans speak Kinyarwanda and French, the government has mandated conversion to English as the primary language. I suspect that it is going to take a few years to achieve fluency, but there are plenty of Rwandans who speak English and many more who are willing to give it a try.

The commitment to restoring the environment and preparing for climate change by the people and the government, the entrepreneurial spirit of the people in embracing and using new technology, and how well informed Rwandans are about American politics were among the pleasant surprises that I found there. All in all, I felt really lucky to have been able to spend three weeks in this beautiful country. I am very grateful to the U.S. Department of State and IREX for making these connections between two cities a world apart that are dealing with many of the same issues.



Peace met with Rwanda Environmental Management Authority Director General Coletha Ruhamya.

Special Legislative Session ends on several positive notes

The “must-pass” sunset bills passed the special session of the Legislature, held July 18-Aug. 15, and were signed by the governor. And we celebrate that neither a bathroom bill nor vouchers became law – thanks to you and to the members of the House! You can read details on all League issues on the LWV-TX Advocacy web page.

The highlights of the session:

Equal Opportunity – Amber Briggie (Denton)

“They said it couldn’t be done, but they didn’t know they were messing with the League of Women Voters! Thanks to you, we defeated 5 attempts in the special session that would have explicitly discriminated against LGBTQ Texans.”

Women’s Health – Julie Lowenberg (Dallas)

“While we rejoice that vouchers for private schools and the “bathroom bill” did not pass in the Special Session, abortion access took several big “hits” – apparently an easier target for extremist legislators (as well as the Governor and Lt. Governor). On the other hand, the crisis in maternal deaths in Texas re-

ceived long overdue attention that resulted in a comprehensive bill addressing the situation. Hooray!”

Land Use – Jensie Madden (Comal Area)

“Working with other organizations in an umbrella group, Defend Texas Trees, LWV-TX helped mobilize citizens to contact legislators in opposition to SB 14 and HB 70 which would have preempted city authority for tree ordinances entirely.”

Public Education – Marlene Lobberecht (Cy-Fair)

“Overall, a modest increase in state aid for school districts and charter schools ... accomplished through shifting of funds from HHSC. Proposed voucher legislation did not survive the Special Session.”

Voting Rights & Election Laws – Cinde Weatherby (Austin Area)

“While the 85th Legislature did no major additional harm to voting rights, it kept the balls on Voter ID and redistricting in the Courts, where they will likely stay until a SCOTUS ruling which could possibly happen soon.”

Reach out to League members, others in Harvey’s path

In this difficult time, our hearts go out to our League of Women Voters members along the Gulf Coast in the Corpus Christi, Bay Area, Houston Area and Victoria leagues as well as the millions of other residents in

those areas who are struggling with flooding and destruction.

Please consider reaching out to those you know, contributing to charities assisting in the area and volunteering your time to help those in need.

2017-18 Leadership Team

President: Madhu Sridhar
210-668-1250
madhusridhar2012@gmail.com

Secretary: Sue Robertson-Dodd
830-481-3030
jsuerobertsondodd@gmail.com

Treasurer: Theresa Poenisch
210-732-3789
theresa.poenisch@gmail.com

VP Organization: Martha Lankford
210-340-5366
mblankford1@gmail.com

VP Community Engagement:
Kathryn Hill 210-313-7484
kathy@khillpr.com

VP Program: Elaine Talarski
210-521-5496
bookdoll99@gmail.com

Finance Chair: Nancy Price
210-223-8986
nanknox@sbcglobal.net

Membership: Sybil Morgan
210-349-7012
sybilmorgan349@gmail.com

Voter Service: Chris Forbrich
210-843-5766
chris@forbrichassociates.com

Editor, “The Voter” Glenda Wolin
210-378-4614 gwolin@gmail.com

Directors at Large

Annalisa Peace
210-275-9336
annalisa@aquiferalliance.org

Evelyn Bonavita 210-828-1368
ebonavita@satx.rr.com

Linda Arronge 210-342-7349
rarronge@gmail.com