



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TEXAS



Legislative Newsletter

A "capitol" idea for keeping up with the latest news from Austin.

April 24, 2015

84th Texas Legislature

Volume 23, No.7

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Scherel Carver, Editor



lwvtexas.org



Calls to Action!

These **Calls to Action** at the top of the agenda, urge readers to contact specific legislative offices or committees on timely critical bills.

Senate Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs Committee

Please contact Sen. Charles Perry (512.463.0128) Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs, and request that he have a hearing on **SB 78**. See p. 15 for details.

House of Representatives – Calendars Committee

Call your representative to stop or tag **CSHB 1865** in the Calendar Committee so that it does not get out! It would open up avenues for landfills, refineries, manufacturing plants, and other polluting facilities to pollute property and health of residents. See p. 16 for details.

Senators & Local Officials

- ◆ Contact your state senators to tell them you oppose SB 1165
- ◆ Contact your local city and county officials, local volunteer fire departments and emergency personnel departments, to tell them to oppose the bill.

SB 1165 will undermine local control of heavy industry in city limits, obstruct home rule guaranteed in the Texas Constitution, reduce surface rights of property owners in cities, and preempt every law that has been carefully crafted to compromise with industry with hazardous wastes. See page 16 for details.

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From the Advocacy VP

Action alerts have been sent, and more are coming! Thank you for responding to them—it is essential for legislators to hear from the home folks! Our on-top-of-everything President Elaine Wiant has jumped in to help, most recently with Online Voter Registration. Follow our efforts on Facebook and Twitter!

Committees have been having hearings some starting at 8:00 in the morning and some starting at 2:00 in the afternoon and going into the next morning. Thanks so much to our Issue Chairs and Capitol Corps members, who are willing to be there whenever necessary.

We are constantly testifying—it's a pleasure to see and thrilling to be a part of. This past two weeks we presented 14 testimonies and registered “for” or “against” 49 bills. What an incredible impact we are having!

Budgets As you probably know, both the Senate and the House have passed their respective budgets. Now the Lt. Governor and the Speaker of the House will name members of the Conference Committee, which should happen sometime next week.

Both budgets have been analyzed by the Legislative Budget Board and, if you are interested, you can read about any interesting topic here:

http://www.lbb.state.tx.us/Documents/Publications/GEER/1880_Exec_Summ_2015.pdf Another excellent discussion of the differences between the two budgets was made by the *Texas Tribune* and can be found here:

<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/04/14/house-senate-budget-comparison/> We will be studying both of these documents in order to make comments to the Conference Committee.

We are now down to the wire with bills—soon it will be too late to go through both houses to get approval and do the process all over again if there are amendments. In the past, we have had a slowdown time, but with this legislature, who knows! Keep up with us!

Laura Blackburn

LWV-Texas Advocacy Vice President

Testimony Given Since April 3, 2015

HB 3322	4/13	H-Human Services/463-0786	Alvarado	E2.030	Child care licensing	Support	Lobberecht	C. Olewin
HB 2511	4/15	H-State Affairs/463-0814	Thompson, S	JHR 140	human trafficking	Support	Scott-Johnson	G. Chimene
HB 3183	4/15	H-State Affairs/463-0814	Naishtat	JHR 140	Pregnant patient ADs	Support	Lowenberg	G. Chimene
HB 3446	4/15	H-State Affairs/463-0814	Laubenberg	JHR 140	Abortion signs	Oppose	Lowenberg	G. Chimene
HB 3500	4/15	H-Criminal Jurisprudence	Thompson, S	E2.030	human trafficking	Support	Scott-Johnson	B. Koegler
HB 3766	4/15	H-State Affairs/463-0814	Laubenberg	JHR 140	minor abortion consent	Oppose	Lowenberg	G. Chimene
SB 321	4/15	S-Transportation	Hinojosa	E1.016	TERP	Oppose	Blackburn	L. Blackburn
HB 2078	4/20	H-Int'l Trade & Intergov't Aff.	Anchia	E1.014	Climate change commisn	Support	Blackburn	L. Blackburn
HB 1649	4/7	H-Homeland Sec & p. safety/463-0133	Turner, S.	E2.014	Guns in campus cars	Oppose	Chimene	G. Chimene
HB 2405	4/7	H-Homeland Sec & p. safety/463-0133	Nevarez	E2.014	CHL signage	Support	Chimene	G. Chimene
HB 3115	4/7	H-Public Health/463-0806	Coleman	E2.012	CHIP Post Partum	Support	Chimene	J. McFarland
HB 3130	4/8	H-State Affairs/463-0814	Farney	JHR 140	Ins abortion coverage	Oppose	Lowenberg	D. Block
HB 507	4/8	H-Criminal Jurisprudence	Moody, et al	E2.030	Medical marihuana	Support	Talarski	C. Olewin

Contacts Made Since April 3, 2015

Rep. Poncho Nevarez			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Dewayne Burns			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Tony Dale			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Eric Johnson			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Will Metcalf			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Joe Moody			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Molly White			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. John Wray			4/8/2015	G. Chimene			increased Gun injuries
Rep. Mark Keough	Voting/Elections	Weatherby	4/10/2015	C. Weatherby	Ruth.Mesta@house.state.tx.us	Comm. Dir	OVR
Rep. James White	Voting/Elections	Weatherby	4/10/2015	C. Weatherby	saul.mendoza@house.state.tx.us	Comm. Dir	OVR
Rep. Matt Shaheen	Hazardous Waste	Gosslee	4/10/2015	E. Erkel			HB 40
Sen. Van Taylor	Education/Public School Finance		4/16/2015	E, Erkel			SB 4

LWV-Texas Legislative Advocacy for the 84th Texas Legislature

Listed below are those issues on which we have a position, along with the issue chair who is following them.

GOVERNMENT

Constitutional Revision - Support the revision of the State Constitution to make it a framework of basic law.

Education:Public School Funding, Testing, and Accountability *Janet Imhoff, McKinney* Promote adequate state funding for public schools, and changes in the state's accountability rating system to make it more fair and less punitive.

Election Laws-Texas/Voting Rights *Cinde Weatherby, Austin* Support election laws that facilitate citizen participation and voter convenience as well as monitor all legislation relating to HAVA.

Ethics in Government – *Diann Andy, San Antonio* Support fair campaign finance laws and political processes that: promote equitable competition among candidates, protect citizens' right to know, combat corruption and undue influence

Open Government – *Linda Pavlik, Dallas* Promote transparency and public participation in government.

Political Campaign Process- Support fair campaign finance laws to promote equitable competition among candidates, protect citizens' right to know, and combat corruption and undue influence.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choice/Women's Health *Julie Lowenberg, Dallas* Promote and protect women's access to health care, including all aspects of reproductive health. **Redistricting**— Support measures to achieve an effective method for drawing boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts through legislative and constitutional revision

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Capital Punishment – *Susybel Gosslee, Dallas* Promote a moratorium on the death penalty while an official study is conducted. Support the option of life sentence without parole in capital cases.

Criminal Justice –Support a professional parole and probation staff and work to decrease their caseload. Provide a secure prison environment with maximum education opportunities.

Drug Laws and Policies - *Elaine Talariski, San Antonio* Support treatment programs for drug abuse and addiction as an alternative to incarceration.

Human Trafficking – *Meg Scott-Johnson, Kerrville* Support legislation to prevent the exploitation of humans, human trafficking; to prosecute traffickers; to protect victims and survivors of human trafficking.

Immigration – *Janet Monteros, El Paso* Support state services for undocumented immigrants, especially in the areas of education and healthcare. Monitor any attempt to curb civil rights of immigrants.

Juvenile Justice- *Mary Overton, Dallas* Support and fund substance abuse treatment, mental health needs, and education for youth at risk and for those incarcerated.

SOCIAL POLICY/HUMAN RESOURCES

Child Abuse and Neglect - *Joyce Robinson, Austin Area* Support the development and implementation of adequate legislation, policies, services, and programs to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Child Health – *Grace Chimene, Austin* Ensure that state budget cuts do not undermine children's access to health care. Improve enrollment and retention for CHIP and Children's Medicaid, and maintain effective delivery systems for both. Preserve Texas' public health safety net.

Early Childhood - *Marlene Lobberecht, Houston* Support early childhood education professional development. Expand access to high quality pre-kindergarten. Improve safe care for infants and toddlers.

Health Care System for the Elderly—*Lynda Ender, Dallas* Support increased funding to provide adequate programs to serve the elderly

Health Care for Those of Lesser Means – *Lynda Ender, Dallas* Provide basic health care services for those who are unable to pay. Basic services include emergency care, primary care, preventive care, care for catastrophic illness, nutrition, substance abuse treatment, and health education.

Homeowner Associations – Support laws relating to mandatory homeowner associations which would protect against unreasonable foreclosure on homesteads, assure priority of payments, assure secret ballots and protect against fraudulent elections, and assure that homeowners have access to meetings and records.

Services for People with Behavioral Health Needs – *Linda Camin, Dallas* Maintain and increase funding for services to persons with serious mental illness, and include post-crisis and crisis prevention community care.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Air Quality & Climate Change - *Laura Blackburn, Houston Area* Support air quality and climate change legislation.

Energy - *Penny Miller, Wichita Falls* Promote incentives for renewable and clean energy sources and energy conservation. Monitor the building of coal-fired plants and nuclear power plants. Promote energy policy to reduce global warming.

Hazardous Waste – *Susybel Gosslee, Dallas* Support safe transportation, handling, and disposal of radioactive materials.

Support legislation promoting recycling efforts, in particular for electronic waste.

Transportation - *Edie Jones, Fort Worth* Increase funding for public roads, mass transit, and light rail.

Water - *Mary Vogelsson, Dallas* Support funding for safe and adequate water supplies, using sound ecological/economic strategies that emphasize conservation. Support enhanced protection for environmental flows; Texas rivers, bays, and estuaries

LWV-Texas Expert Background and Analyses and Bills Filed in the Texas House & Senate Priority Issues

EDUCATION/PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE & PUBLIC SCHOOL TESTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Janet Imhoff (McKinney) janet.imhoff@att.net



News on Public School Finance

CSHB 1, the combined Senate and House Budget Bill, will now go to a conference committee to try to reconcile the differences. Advocacy Vice-President Laura Blackburn sent a letter to all members of the House in support of the House version of the bill. For instance in education, the

House version adds \$2.2 billion for public education and \$2.3 billion for enrollment growth. The House also has an additional \$800 million in the bill if school finance reform passes. (See HB 1759 (Aycock, Otto) **SUPPORT**. By comparison, **the Senate version has \$1.2 billion for public education and \$2.3 billion for enrollment growth.** The Senate cuts both property and franchise taxes, and the House cuts only franchise taxes.

News on Vouchers

SB 4 (Taylor) OPPOSE Passed the Senate Education Committee and is being sent to the full Senate for a vote. An Action Alert was sent to all League members on April 15, thanks to the hard work of Peg Hill researching it. This bill would give scholarships to students from low-income families or students with disabilities. However the money for these scholarships would come from businesses which would pay part of their taxes due to the state instead to an educational assistance organization which would disburse the money to these students. This reduces the amount of money that would have gone to pay for our public schools.

The League of Women Voters of Texas is opposed to education vouchers unless they promote racial integration or equal access to a quality education.

The League of Women Voters of Texas is opposed to education vouchers unless they promote racial integration or equal access to a quality education. **We hope you have responded to the Action Alert.**

Recent Activity

In the past two weeks we have registered our support or opposition on 13 bills: eight being heard in House Public Education and five being heard in Senate Education. They include

House Public Education Committee

SB 149 (Seliger) SUPPORT Creates graduation committees for high school students who have not passed three end-of-course assessments. *Placed on General State Calendar on 4/21/15.*

HB 1536 (Dutton) OPPOSE Establishes an Opportunity School District for operation of schools after two years of unacceptable ratings. We prefer a similar bill, **SB 669 (West)** which has added protections for teachers and requires higher standards for charter operators. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

HB 1706 (Van Deaver) SUPPORT Reduces paperwork and redundancy of reports. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/15.*

HB 1759 (Aycock) (SUPPORT) Restructure public school finance. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

HB 1891 and 1892 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT Would allow the establishment of Community Schools and a grant program for them. Community schools would partner with community-based organizations to coordinate academic, social and health services. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

HB 2543 (Farney) SUPPORT Updates and clarifies multiple ways to appraise teachers. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/15.*

HB 2804 (Aycock) SUPPORT Would allow local assessment in science, writing, and Social Studies. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

Senate Education Committee

SB 945 (Taylor) SUPPORT Would allow some districts to receive the full basic allotment under the school finance system. *Committee report printed and distributed on 4/16/15.*

SB 1241 (Taylor) SUPPORT Would allow school districts to form innovation zones. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/15.*

SB 1483 (Garcia) SUPPORT Would allow establishment of Community Schools that partner with organizations to offer a variety of programs. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/15.*

SB 1897 (Taylor) OPPOSE Would expand the charter school system by granting additional charters to current charter holders, and would allow the reconstituting of a charter's governing body when the charter expires or is revoked. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

SB 1898 (Taylor) SUPPORT Would allow procedures for revocation of a charter and disposition of its property. *Left pending in committee on 4/14/15.*

Bills Out of Committee

HB 742 (Huberty) OPPOSE Would delete assessments in writing, Social Studies and U.S. History. *House reported favorably as substituted on 4/14/2015.*

HB 743 (Huberty) SUPPORT Would require the state assessment tests to be determined valid and reliable by an independent agency. Also requires a study of the number and scope of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. *House committee report sent to Calendars on 4/17/2015.*

HB 1164 (VanDeaver) SUPPORT Relates to the assessment of public school students in writing and English language arts. Writing sample cannot be used for accountability, promotion or graduation. *House committee report filed with committee coordinator on 4/17/2015.*

HB 1843 (Aycock) SUPPORT Would provide training academies for public school teachers who provide reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three. *House committee report sent to Calendars on 4/17/2015.*

HB 2349 (Aycock) WATCH Would provide for additional ways a student can earn a performance acknowledgement on their diploma. *House reported favorably as substituted on 4/14/2015.*

SB 4 (L. Taylor) OPPOSE Would establish an Education Tuition Grant Program to give low-income students vouchers worth 75% of the amount given to his/her school district. Also gives tuition tax credits to businesses that make contributions to education assistance organizations. *Placed on Senate Intent Calendar on 4/14/2015.*

SB 6 (Taylor) OPPOSE Would give letter grades of A-F for public school campuses. *House received from the Senate on 3/31/2015.*

SB 14 (Taylor) OPPOSE *This parent-trigger bill was passed by the Senate on April 15.* It would allow parents to request action to change a schools management after three years of low-performance. Amendments prohibit a charter operator from funding a parent petition campaign, and to require a charter manager have a demonstrated record of success. *House received from the Senate on 4/16/2015.*

SB 149 (Seliger) SUPPORT is on the House Calendar for Tuesday, April 21. This bill would create graduation committees for students who are unable to pass a required end-of-course-exam. The committee would evaluate the students overall performance to determine graduation. It was voted out unanimously by both Education Committees.

SB 669 (West) WATCH Would establish an Opportunity School District for operation of schools after two years of unacceptable ratings. We prefer this bill to **SB 895 (Taylor)** because it has added protections for teachers and requires proven charter operators. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/2015.*

SB 895 (Taylor) OPPOSE Similar Opportunity School District bill (see above). *Left pending in committee on 4/7/2015.*

SB 893 (Seliger) SUPPORT Would provide for an annual teacher evaluation, minimum pay of \$2754, and better professional development. *House received from the Senate on 4/8/2015.*

SB 925 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Would establish teacher training academies for reading instruction K-3. *Considered in public hearing on 4/14/2015.*

SB 934 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Would establish teacher training academies for math instruction K-3. *Committee report printed and distributed on 4/16/2015.*

SB 935 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Would provide reading excellence teams for schools rated academically unacceptable based on grade 3 reading assessments. *Considered in public hearing on 4/14/2015.*

SB 945 (L. Taylor) WATCH Would provide districts that were compressed to less than \$1 on 2005-06, and so receive less than the basic allotment, a path to receive the full basic allotment. *Committee report printed and distributed on 4/16/2015.*

SB 972 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Would establish reading-to-learn academies for teaching reading comprehension and critical thinking for grades 4-5. *Committee report printed and distributed on 4/16/2015.*

Bills Currently In Committee

HB 1599 (King, Ken) WATCH Would provide grants for districts for staff development on blended and individualized learning. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

HB 1600 (King, Ken) WATCH Would give grants to districts to develop or implement blended learning initiatives. Blended learning is self-paced online lessons as supplement to classroom lessons. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

HB 1796 (Van Deaver) SUPPORT Would expand choice within the public school system by requiring the education service center to maintain an internet page listing all public and open enrollment charters school campus information. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/2015.*

HB 1798 (Deshotel) WATCH A local control bill similar to SB 1012. *Left pending in committee on 4/7/2015.*

HB 1842 (Aycock) Would amend the education code relating to intervention of a public school that does not satisfy accreditation criteria. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

HB 2609 (Farney) SUPPORT Would provide mathematics achievement academies for K-3 teachers. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

HB 3347 (Aycock) SUPPORT Outlines procedures for revocation of a charter (identical to SB 1898). *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

HB 3746 (Bohac) SUPPORT would create a Center for Performance Information for Public Education as an independent policy center. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 313 (Seliger) SUPPORT Would require the State Board of Education to review the essential knowledge and skills with a goal to narrow the number and scope. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 1012 (Hancock) WATCH Would allow the conversion to a local control campus or district by voter petition and vote, as an alternative to home-rule. No charter commission would be required. **Argument for:** opportunity for innovation and flexibility. **Argument against:** no locally elected school board. *Left pending in committee on 4/16/2015.*

SB 1513 (Hancock) WATCH Would allow state funding for a kindergarten student to attend a private school (only in a county of more than 2.3 million with a student population of 27,000 to 31,000). *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 1771 (Taylor) WATCH Would amend the education code relating to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 1868 (Zaffirini) WATCH Would amend the education code relating to accountability for bilingual and ESL programs. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 1896 (Taylor) SUPPORT Would require the TEA to develop online tutorials for comprehensive review of end-of-course assessment instruments. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4/21/2015.*

SB 1900 (Campbell) OPPOSE Would allow charter schools to receive additional funding based on average daily attendance. We oppose because many public schools are inadequately funded. *Left pending in committee on 4/16/2015.*

ELECTION LAWS/TEXAS VOTING RIGHTS Cinde Weatherby (Austin) cindeweatherby@gmail.com



Voter Registration

Our top priority for the 84th Session is seeking passage of online or electronic voter registration. That priority is shared by many, if not all, of the statewide groups interested in elections. **The Elections Committee Chair has indicated that the bill will be heard April 27, 2015.** Thanks go to all LWV volunteers and friends who have been

making the request for a hearing. This is the first step in the long process.

While awaiting a hearing, Rep. Celia Israel continued to make progress in gaining support for **HB 76 (Israel) SUPPORT**. The bill has 4 joint authors (3 Republicans/1 Democrat), and coauthors now number 63 (19 Republicans, 44 Democrats).

We participated in additional personal calls and social media engagement in the past two weeks promoting a hearing on HB 76. Thanks go to those who helped.

We will be requesting additional contact with Elections Committee members from their district Leagues to advocate for

passage out of Committee. **This contact is extremely important!**

Voter ID

Only one voter ID bill being followed has been slated for a public hearing in the House Elections Committee. **HB 535 (Nevarez) SUPPORT** adds tribal photo IDs to the list of acceptable Voter IDs. *It will be heard April 20.*

Vote by Mail

Two of the VBM bills are also scheduled for hearing in the Elections Committee April 20: **HB 913 (Israel) SUPPORT**, clarifying the design of the VBM envelope to remind voters of the necessity of the envelope signature; and **HB 1540 (Thompson, Senfronia) SUPPORT** regarding renewal of VBM applications.

Young Voter Engagement

HB 428 (Howard et al.) SUPPORT Also on the April 20 Elections Committee, are HB 428 (Howard et al.) **SUPPORT** to allow 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the general election, to be able to vote in the preceding primary; and

HJR 50 (Howard et al.) SUPPORT, the proposed Texas constitutional amendment authorizing 17-year-olds to vote in the primary as described in HB 428. Also on Public Hearing April 20.

WOMEN'S HEALTH/REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE Julie Lowenberg (Dallas) jmlowenberg@sbcglobal.net

LWV-TX opposes proposed legislation that would further restrict women's and girls' constitutional right to choose an abortion.



Access to Safe, Legal Abortions

Bill movement:

• **HB 1880 (Laubenberg) CHANGE FROM WATCH TO SUPPORT** – see LNL # 4 – companion bill to SB 114 relating to the licensing and registration of abortion facilities – was heard in the Human Services

Committee on April 6. At the hearing, the author agreed to an amendment that makes its provisions applicable to all entities i.e., birthing centers, emergency care facilities,

drug treatment facilities, that the Health & Human Services Commission licenses, not just to abortion clinics. With this amendment, as with the floor amendment to SB 114, LWV-TX can now support this measure.

LWV-TX action on bills:

- At a hearing before the House State Affairs Committee on April 8, LWV-TX presented testimony against **HB 3130 (Farney) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5 – prohibits health benefit exchanges that might be established under the Affordable Care Act from providing abortion coverage except when a life-threatening physical condition exists. The testimony pointed out that enactment of this measure would be especially harmful to middle class working women who make up a large proportion of those who are expected to

purchase insurance through health exchanges. Without insurance coverage for abortion, many will turn to cheap and unsafe methods and providers, endangering their lives.

- At a hearing before the House Judiciary Committee on April 14, LWV-TX presented testimony against **HB 723 (King, Phil) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 1 – that makes it more difficult for minors who seek a judicial bypass in lieu of parental consent to an abortion. The testimony pointed out that “...the judicial bypass procedure was written into Texas law to protect minors whose lives might be endangered if they were required to obtain parental consent, whether from family abuse or from fear of such abuse which drives them to seek illegal or unsafe abortions. The bypass procedure is infrequently used but in these types of situations has been successful in protecting the lives of vulnerable young women.”
- At a hearing before the House State Affairs Committee on April 15, LWV-TX testified against another measure – **HB 3765 (Laubenberg) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5 - that would adversely affect young women by requiring notarization of parental consent to a minor’s abortion. LWV noted that this measure “negatively impacts young women of limited means and those who live in rural areas” and “compromises the need for confidentiality in situations involving pregnant minors.”

- Also before the House State Affairs Committee on April 15, LWV-TX testified against **HB 3446 (Laubenberg) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5 – that requires abortion clinics to post signs advising patients about forced abortions, fathers’ obligations of child support, and adoption options and services:” This measure imposes burdensome, unnecessary and harassing obligations on clinics. The issues addressed in these signage requirements can be dealt with in better ways than restrictive legislation.”
- And at that same State Affairs Committee hearing on April 15, LWV-TX testified in support of **HB 3183 (Naishtat) SUPPORT** – see LNL # 5 – that would remove from current law the requirement that Advance Directives concerning cessation of life-sustaining medical treatments are of no effect when a patient who signed an Advance Directive is pregnant: “The League believes that Advance Directives express a person’s right to make life and death decisions, and pregnancy should not negate these rights.”

Comprehensive, Medically-Accurate Sexuality Education

Bill movement:

- **HB 467 (Howard) SUPPORT** – see LNL # 1 and # 4 – has been reported favorably out of the Health and Human Services Committee and sent to Calendars Committee.

WATER Mary Vogelson (Dallas) mmev@swbell.net



HB1232 (Lucio III) SUPPORT This bill requires the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to map groundwater in confined and unconfined aquifers. *The bill was reported out of committee favorably.*

HB 928 (Guillen) SUPPORT This bill relates to state and local planning for responses to drought. *The bill has been sent to Calendars Committee.*

CSHB 655 (Larson) WATCH Placed on General State Calendar for April 21, this bill would remove and repeal obstructions to current aquifer storage and recovery (ACR) regulations that may hinder this form of water storage.

HB 163 (Larson) SUPPORT This bill would amend the Water Code to change the name of the Multi-State Water Resources Planning Commission to the Southwestern States Water Commission. The bill specifies that the commission is created as an advisory commission to the governor and the

legislature and removes the specification that the commission is created as an agency of the state. *Bill has been passed by the house and has been engrossed and sent to the senate.*

SB 413 (Seliger) SUPPORT This bill would change one of the requirements for membership on the TWDB to require an appointment from a rural area of less than 355,000 population. *Bill has been passed, engrossed and sent to the House.*

SB 551 (Seliger) SUPPORT This bill requires the Water Conservation Advisory Council to not only submit a report BUT make recommendations regarding water conservation programs. (ED. COMMENT: IMAGINE THAT!!!) *Bill has been passed, engrossed and sent to the House.*

SB611 (Perry) OPPOSE, Perry, This bill would allow confidentiality for well drillers from having to let public know amounts, locations, etc. of wells. *Bill has been passed, engrossed and sent to the House.* With any luck, it may die there ...

Status of other issues the League lobbies on this legislative session

Government

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT- CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM and the POLITICAL PROCESS

Diann Andy (Austin) diannandylwv@gmail.com

The League supports fair campaign finance laws and political processes that:



- ◆ Promote equitable competition among candidates
- ◆ Protect citizens' right to know
- ◆ Combat corruption and undue influence

While a significant number of bills appear to address Governor Abbott's ethics reform priority, it is unclear whether any will pass that support the

League of Women Voters' concerns for promoting:

- Transparency in government
- Fair campaign finance laws
- Reduction of the influence of large contributions
- The appointment/retention of a nonpartisan judiciary.

Your emails, calls, and letters to legislators urging that they honor our positions are much needed. **Here are some bills worth your time.** Note: This information was current as of 4/20/15.

HB 2088 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT This bill would establish a bipartisan interim committee to study various methods for selecting district and appellate justices and judges and evaluating the fairness, effectiveness, and desirability of these methods. *Status: Scheduled for a public hearing 4/21/15 in the Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence committee.*

HB 1690 (King, Phil) OPPOSE Like SB 10, this bill will effectively remove the Public Integrity Unit, which currently investigates alleged offenses by those holding state-wide offices, from the Travis County D.A.'s office. However, unlike SB 10, the Public Integrity Unit would not be placed under the Attorney General; it would simply cease to exist. Instead, HB 1690 would change the Government Code to require that an officer of the Texas Rangers investigate such complaints. If reasonable suspicion is found, the officer would then refer the complaint to the prosecutor of the alleged offender's home county, even when that person was elected statewide. Furthermore, the bill requires that information collected during investigation is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under state public information law. *Status: Engrossed.*

HB 464 (Springer) WATCH Candidates nominated by a convention would be required to pay a filing fee or submit a filing petition in the same amount as required for a general primary election in order to appear on the ballot for a general election to state or county office. The concern is that candidates of smaller parties and independents would have difficulty getting

on the ballot. *Status: Committee report sent to Calendars 4/15/15.*

Updates on key legislation

SB 19 (Taylor, Van) WATCH. This key anticorruption bill was altered significantly before being voted out of committee. Changes reported in the *Texas Tribune* include:

- Dropping the portion that would have prevented public officials convicted of public corruption from receiving publicly-funded benefits, including lucrative pensions
- Exempting every current legislator from a required wait after leaving office before becoming lobbyists
- Removing a prohibition that would have prevented legislators who are lawyers from profiting from public debt deals they broker.

An amendment that would require that legislators recuse themselves from any bills from which they would profit failed. An amendment that would have required that legislators provide their tax returns to the Texas Ethics Commission also failed.

However, the following remained in the bill:

- The requirement that lawmakers report contracts they have with government entities
- A prohibition on lawmakers becoming paid special-interest lobbyists within two years of leaving office
- A ban on referral fees for lawyer-legislators.

Status: Considered in Public Hearing 4/20/15.

Status of previously reported bills:

SB 10 (Huffman) OPPOSE *Status: Received by the House from the Senate 4/10/15.*

SB 20 (Nelson) WATCH *Status: Referred to the House State Affairs Committee 4/15/15.*

SB 306 (Zaffirini) SUPPORT *Status: Received by the House from the Senate 3/24.*

HB 1354 (Howard) SUPPORT *Status: Committee Report Sent to Calendars 4/6/15.*

HB 2222 (Murr & Larson) OPPOSE *Status: No action since 3/26/15.*

HB 314 (Fallon) SUPPORT *Status: No action since 3/4/15.*

HB 776 and HB 940 OPPOSE *No action since 2/26/15.*

HJR 69 WATCH *No action since 1/16/15.*

Administration of Justice

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT Susybelle Gosslee (Dallas) sgosslee@airmail.net



The League will promote a moratorium on the death penalty while an official study is conducted and support the option of life sentence without parole in capital cases.

No bills seem to be moving through the legislative process regarding the death penalty.

Bills regarding capital punishment were referred to and stayed in their respective committees. Some bills had a hearing. Many issues regarding the death penalty are in the courts in other states, but the Texas Legislature has not

taken action on those issues. Debates regarding the death penalty focus on religious, ethical, political, legal, and utilitarian issues. Most importantly, the discussion continues on the constitutionality of the death penalty, specifically the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments; i.e., is capital punishment cruel and unusual punishment. The trend in the U.S. recently has been to abolish the death penalty, with 6 states in 6 years abolishing the death penalty. Other states, such as Delaware and Nebraska, have abolition legislation that has passed either the house or the senate chambers.

JUVENILE JUSTICE Mary Overton (Dallas) mover100@aol.com

The League supports funding of substance abuse treatment, mental health needs, and education for youth at risk and for those incarcerated. Support and fund substance abuse treatment, mental health needs, and education for youth at risk and for those incarcerated.

SB 1630 (Whitmire) SUPPORT Relates to keeping children adjudicated as delinquent closer to home, funding for juvenile probation departments, powers of the independent ombudsman, and indeterminate commitment of children adjudicated as delinquent. Youths serving time for so-called indeterminate

sentences—most held for less-serious crimes and who remain in the program until they successfully complete it—would be sent to regional facilities, many of them operated by counties, instead of the state's five high-security lock-ups that more resemble prisons than rehabilitation centers. 4-15-2015 *Passed by the Senate, sent to the House.*

HB 431 (White, James/Miles) SUPPORT Relates to the creation of an advisory committee to examine the retention of juvenile justice records. 4-16-2015 *Reported engrossed*

Out of committee

HB 1205 (Dutton) SUPPORT Relates to the age of criminal responsibility. 4-8-2015 *Reported favorably as substituted.*

DRUG LAWS AND POLICIES Elaine Talarski (San Antonio) bookdoll99@gmail.com



The LWV-TX supports education and drug treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration.

Bills relating to possession of cannabis (marihuana) for medical use.

There have no hearings to allow testimony in support of these bills.

HB3785 (Marquez) SUPPORT *No action in Public Health Committee*

HB 892 (Klick/Zerwas/Zedler) SUPPORT *No action in Public Health committee*

HB 837 (Naishtat) SUPPORT New Would authorize a licensed physician to legally prescribe marihuana for medical purposes. *No action on this bill since referral to Public Health Committee.*

SB 1839 (Menendez) SUPPORT New Relates to possession, cultivation, distribution, transportation, and use of cannabis for medical purposes. In Health and Human Services Committee. *No action since referral to Health and Human Services.*

SB 339 (Elitfe) SUPPORT New Relates to regulation and authorized use of low THC cannabis for medical use. *No action since being assigned to Health and Human Services Committee.*

Bills relating to reducing civil penalties for possession of small amounts of cannabis (marihuana):

HB 507 (Moody) SUPPORT Testimony was presented by LWV-TX on April 8, 2015. *Left pending in committee.*

SB 1417 (Ellis) SUPPORT Companion bill to HB 507 *No action in the Criminal Justice Committee*

HUMAN TRAFFICKING Meg Scott-Johnson (Kerrville) megdscott@earthlink.com



The League supports legislation to prevent the exploitation of humans, human trafficking; to prosecute traffickers; to protect victims and survivors of human trafficking. **Recent Testimony:**

HB 3500 (Thompson) SUPPORT On April 15 LWV-TX testimony given in support of HB 3500 (Thompson) relating to judicial proceedings on a petition to set aside a conviction or an order of expunction of criminal history record in

formation for certain victims of trafficking of persons convicted of prostitution.

HB 2511 (Thompson) SUPPORT April 15 we also testified in support of HB 2511 (Thompson) to create a Human Trafficking Prevention Business Partnerships with the Secretary of State for corporations or private entities participating in efforts of human trafficking public awareness and education campaigns.

Social Policy/Human Resources

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT Joyce Robinson (Austin Area) jbrobinson@suddenlink.net



The League supports the development and implementation of adequate legislation, policies, services, and programs to protect children from abuse and neglect.

Progress On Previously Reported Bills

HB 418 (WU/ALLEN/HARLESS/THOMPSON, SENFRONIA/BURKETT) SUPPORT Relates to victims of child trafficking being placed in the care of

DFPS. *Voted out of House and sent to Senate on April 13.*

HB 781 (BURKETT) SUPPORT Would give substitute caregivers for children in DFPS more screening and training. *Passed the House on April 16*

HB 1143 (DUKES) WATCHING Relates to services for foster children who are pregnant or minor parents. *Reported favorably out of committee on April 15*

HB 1180 (BURKETT/ THOMPSON, SENFRONIA/PRICE) SUPPORT Would establish a child-care facility database on DFPS website. *Passed the House on April 16.*

HB 1217 (THOMPSON, SENFRONIA) SUPPORT Relates to reporting information for certain foster children who are missing or who are sex trafficking victims. *Passed the House April 16.*

HB 1309 (TURNER, SYLVESTER) SUPPORT Relates to notification of certain legislators of the death of a child in foster care. *Sent to local and consent calendar on April 1.*

HB 4111(NAISHTAT) AND SB 949 (URESTI) SUPPORT Relates to release of certain child fatality and near fatality information for abused/neglected children. *Public hearing set for April 22.*

HB 4119 (HUGHES) WATCHING Would Provide procedural protections for those accused of child abuse and neglect . *Public hearing scheduled for April 20*

SB 206 (SCHWERTNER/BIRDWELL/CAMPBELL/HINOJOSA/ NELSON) WATCHING Relates to functions of DFPS and procedures applicable to suits affecting parent-child relationships, investigation of child abuse and neglect, and conservatorship of a child. *Voted out of Senate to House HHS committee on April 15.*

SB 950 (URESTI) SUPPORT Relates to procedural measures to protect a child from any resident of the parents' house who has unsupervised care of the child. *Voted out of committee and placed on Intent Calendar on April 16*

SB 1406 (SCHWERTNER/URESTI) SUPPORT Relates to protection of certain children through operation of the child safety check alert list. *Voted out of committee on April 7 and placed on Intent Calendar on April 16.*

SB 1496 (URESTI) SUPPORT Would require DFPS to do background checks for certain childcare providers. *Voted out of committee on April 16.*

CHILD HEALTH CARE Grace Chimene (Austin) gchimene1wv@gmail.com



Bills Recently In Committee:

HB 3035 (Martinez, "Mando") SUPPORT Relates to a study on the savings to the state achieved by the expansion of Medicaid managed care in regard to the provision of prescription drugs and other pharmacy benefits. *4/8/2015 House Committee report sent to Calendars.*

HB 1649 (Turner, Scott) OPPOSE Relates to the transportation and storage of firearms and ammunition in private vehicles on the campuses of institutions of higher education. In effect, would allow guns in cars on campus without a concealed

handgun license. *4/17/2015 House Committee report sent to Calendars.*

HB 839 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to presumptive eligibility for the Medicaid and child health plan programs for certain children; that is, eligibility for children getting out of facilities. *4/17/2015 Reported favorably as substituted.*

HB 3036 (Martinez, "Mando") WATCH Relates to a study on the savings to the state achieved by the expansion of Medicaid managed care in regard to the number of persons served and the scope of services provided. Unfortunately, no bill to expand Medicaid has come up in Committee. *Hearing on 4/20/15 in House Committee on Human Services.*

EARLY CHILDHOOD Marlene Lobberecht (Houston Area) marlene@lobberecht.com



Bills progressing:

HB 4 (Huberty, et al) SUPPORT as amended and **WATCH** companion **SB 801 (Zaffirini, Campbell)** Relating to a high quality prekindergarten program provided by public school districts. **HB 4** committee substitute *passed with*

amendments April 9, 2015 and Senate received it April 13, 2015. Rep. Huberty laid out HB 4 by explaining that his bill would create a higher-quality prekindergarten program for which districts could apply without imposing a class size limit. He explained that, to qualify for the additional \$1,500, districts would have to provide an enhanced curriculum, employ certified prekindergarten teachers, develop a parental engagement

plan, and collect data to measure effectiveness of their programs. Formula funding would be pushed to the second year of the biennium to give schools time to apply for the program.

The 5-hour floor debate was in strong contrast to committee testimony. At the hearing, advocates hoped the bill could be strengthened—noting it stops short of major reforms viewed as crucial to high-quality programs like expanding state funding to make half-day programs full-day, limiting class size or setting student-teacher ratios. House floor amendments include:

Advocates hoped that HB 4 could be strengthened—noting it stops short of major reforms viewed as crucial to high-quality programs like expanding state funding to make half-day programs full-day, limiting class size or setting student-teacher ratios.

1. Would provide that funding under this program flow through school funding formulas and not through grants.
2. Would allow programs to opt-in and expand to full-day programs by choice.
3. Would prohibit a high-quality program from using Common Core standards.
4. Would set out flexibilities in the certifications and qualifications that will qualify a teacher under this legislation.
5. Would allow a program to use an assessment instrument selected from a list provided by the Commissioner of Education.
6. Would require data collected on high-quality programs to include information on student demographics, identify funding sources for Pre-K programs, and curricula used.
7. Would prohibit use of a state standardized assessment instrument in Pre-K.
8. Would set forth certification requirements for private providers (nationally accredited, Texas Rising Star Level 3 or higher, Texas School Ready certified or a currently existing partnership) with which schools may partner.
9. Would establish that a school may not receive more than \$1,500 per student and that the total amount of funding for the 2016-17 biennium may not exceed \$130 million or whatever is appropriated for this program this session.
10. Would set forth guidelines for the family engagement portion of a program.
11. Requests written agreement setting forth responsibilities of parent, student and classroom teacher.
12. Would allow community groups and faith-based institutions to submit to the agency recommendations for family engagement strategies.

HB 537 (Anchia, Israel, Coleman, Naishtat, M. González, Alonzo, Farrar, C. Turner, Howard, Wu) and companion **SB 250 (Garcia, Rodríguez)** **SUPPORT** Would provide information on the supplementary birth certificate of an adopted child. Senate and House referred to State Affairs. **HB 537** public hearing was March 18, 2015 with signature support provided and it is currently *left pending in committee*. *Personal privilege taken*

by Rep. Anchia and Rep. Cook requesting consideration of HB 537 April 16.

HB 1180 (Burkett) and companion **SB 1814 (Kolkhorst)** **SUPPORT** Relate to establishing a child-care facility database on the Department of Family and Protective Services' Internet website. **HB 1180** public hearing was March 30, 2015 where it reported favorably as substituted, *and passed the House April 16, 2015*. **SB 1814** was heard in Health & Human Services Committee on April 15, 2015 with signature support filed and it is *left pending in committee*.

HB 2886 (Deshotel) and companion **SB 1632 (Kolkhorst)** **SUPPORT** Relate to providing a training course for public school prekindergarten teachers. *House referred to Public Education with a hearing April 21, 2015 with League position registered.*

HB 3658 (King, Susan) **SUPPORT** Relates to the development and administration of a parent orientation and education pilot program for recipients of subsidized child-care services. *Human Services hearing was April 20, 2015 with League position registered.*

SB 54 (Nelson, Campbell, Huffines, Nichols) and companion **HB 352 (King, Ken et al)** **OPPOSE** Would require drug testing of certain persons seeking benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Senate referred to the Health & Human Services. **HB 352** is *pending in committee following the Human Services hearing April 13, 2015*.

SB 886 (Garcia) and companion **HB 2903 (Davis)** **SUPPORT** Would require 60 hours training—specifying half the training hours must come from professional sources—for certain child-care workers without previous training. Senate referred to Health & Human Services March 4, 2015. **HB 2903** heard in *Human Services April 6, 2015 with League position registered; it reported favorably as substituted with April 20, 2015 placement on the House calendar*. **CSHB 2903** would require 48 hours of training for new child care workers with 32 training hours within the first 90 days.

SB 1269 (West) and companion **HB 3322 (Alvarado)** **SUPPORT** Relate to committee on child care licensing standards reviewing child/staff ratios. **SB 1269** referred to Health & Human Services March 17, 2015. **HB 3322** left pending in Human Services committee following April 13, 2015 hearing with League oral testimony provided.

SB 1496 (Uresti) **SUPPORT** Relates to background checks conducted by the Department of Family and Protective Services for certain listed family home child-care providers. *It reported favorably as substituted April 16, 2015 with reports distributed.*



Provide basic health care services for those who are unable to pay. Basic services include emergency care, primary care, preventive care, care for catastrophic illness, nutrition, substance abuse treatment, and health education.

State Senate Bills:

Action on Senate Bills Reported in Past

Newsletters:

SB 277 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Develop a volunteer advocate program for the elderly receiving services from or under the direction of the commission or a health and human services agency. *House received from Senate 4-10-15.*

SB 760 (Schwertner, et al) SUPPORT Relates to provider access and assignment requirements for a Medicaid managed care organization. *House received from Senate 4-8-15.*

SB 914 (Kolkhorst) STUDYING Relates to a council on long-term care facility surveys and informal dispute resolution. *Placed on Intent Calendar 4-20-15.*

SB 1243 (Burton) SUPPORT Relates to donation of unused prescription drugs. *Committee report printed and distributed 4-16-15.*

SB 1475 (Garcia) SUPPORT Relates to establishing an enhanced Medicaid managed care consumer support system. *Left pending in committee 4-15-15.*

SJR 61 (West)

STUDYING Proposes a constitutional amendment authorizing a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county of a portion of the value of the residence home- instead of a physician who provides health care services for which the physician agrees not to seek payment from any source, including the Medicaid program or otherwise from this state or the federal government, to indigent residents of the county. **Scheduled for public hearing April 22.**

A Texas Medical Association survey showed that 31 percent of doctors accepted new Medicaid patients in 2012, compared to 67 percent in 2000. A 2014 survey of 15 large cities found that only 23 percent of DFW-area doctors accepted new Medicaid patients, compared to the national average of 46 percent. To encourage the provision of medical services to low-income persons. SJR 61 would be submitted to voters as an amendment to the Texas Constitution.

State House Bills:

Newly Filed Bills:

HB 3565 (Bonnen of Galveston) SUPPORT Relates to prohibition of notification forms from health benefit plan issuers in-

tended to intimidate patients; adding a provision subject to a criminal penalty. *Referred to Insurance 3-20-15.*

HB 3755 (Herrero) SUPPORT Relates to administration of medication to residents of certain assisted living and boarding home facilities. *Referred to Human Services 3-23-15.*

HB 3781 (Crownover) STUDYING Relates to creation of the Texas Health Improvement Network. *Referred to Public Health and Scheduled for a public hearing on 4-21-15.*

HB 3820 (Allen) SUPPORT Relates to safe patient handling practices at hospitals and nursing homes; providing an administrative penalty. *Referred to Public Health 3-23-15.*

HB 3823 (Price, Keough) STUDYING Relates to rate-setting and data collection processes under the program of all-inclusive care for the elderly (PACE). *Referred to Human Services, had a hearing and placed on General State Calendar.*

HB 3845 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to a "Texas Way" to reforming and addressing issues related to the Medicaid program, including the creation of an alternative program designed to ensure health benefit plan coverage to certain low-income individuals through the private marketplace; authorizing a fee. *Referred to Appropriations on 3-24-15.*

HB 3847 (Burns) OPPOSE Relates to seeking federal authorization to fund the Medicaid program through a block grant funding system. *Referred to Appropriations 3-24-15.*

HB 3903 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relates to a requirement that a hospital allow a patient to designate a caregiver to receive aftercare instruction regarding the patient. *Referred to Public Health and Scheduled for a public hearing on 4-21-15.*

HB 3919 (Klick) SUPPORT Relates to prior authorization from a health benefit plan issuer to obtain health care services under the health benefit plan. *Referred to Insurance on 3-23-15.*

HB 3921 (Klick) SUPPORT Relates to reimbursement for certain emergency eye health care services provided to persons enrolled in the Medicaid managed care program. *Referred to Public Health on 3-23-15.*

HB 3922 (Klick) SUPPORT Relates to reimbursement for certain eye health care services provided to persons enrolled in the Medicaid managed care program. *Referred to Public Health on 3-23-15.*

HB 3924 (Klick) STUDYING Relates to allowing certain providers of eye health care services to enroll as Medicaid providers. *Referred to Public Health on 3-23-15.*

HB 3930 (Hughes) SUPPORT Relates to the provision of care and treatment to certain incapacitated persons. *Referred to Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence on 3-23-15.*

HB 4000 (Blanco) SUPPORT Relates to the expansion of eligibility for Medicaid by counties under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. *Referred to Appropriations on 3-24-15.*

HB 4056 (White of Tyler) STUDYING Relates to inspection procedures in certain long-term care facilities and the creation of a long-term care legislative oversight committee; providing penalties. *Referred to Human Services on 3-23-15*

Action on House Bills Reported in Past Newsletters:

HB 574 (Bonnen of Galveston) SUPPORT A health maintenance organization may not terminate participation of a physician or provider solely because the physician or provider informs an enrollee of the full range of physicians and providers available to the enrollee, including out-of-network providers. *Reported favorably as substituted 4-15-15.*

HB 616 (Bonnen of Galveston) STUDYING Relates to payment of disclosures related to certain out-of-network provider charges; authorizing a fee; providing a penalty. *Considered in Public Hearing on 4-8-15.*

HB 764 (King of Taylor) SUPPORT Relates to the use, collection, and security of health care data collected by the Department of State Health Services. *Left pending in committee 4-7-15.*

HB 1105 (Thompson of Harris) SUPPORT Relates to reimbursement under preferred provider benefit plans for services provided by licensed podiatrists at same rate as physicians. *Left pending in committee 4-8-15.*

HB 1337 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to requiring institutions and assisted living facilities to maintain guardianship orders of residents. *Scheduled for public hearing on 4-2-15.*

HB 1945 (Bonnen of Galveston) STUDYING Relates to the provision of direct primary care. *Senate Received from House 4-16-15.*

HB 2004 (Darby) SUPPORT Relates to a pilot project to provide emergency telemedicine medical services in rural areas. *Left pending in committee 4-14-15.*

HB 2084 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relates to transparency in the STAR Medicaid managed care rate-setting process. *Committee report sent to Calendars 4-15-15.*

HB 2133 (Raymond) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage for certain equipment and supplies associated with diabetes treatment. *Committee Report distributed 4-17-15.*

HB 2172 (Smithee) SUPPORT Relates to coverage of telehealth services or telemedicine medical services under health benefit plans. *Left pending in committee 4-8-15.*

HB 2219 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage for injuries related to suicide attempts. *Left pending in committee 4-15-15.*

HB 2271 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relates to the prescription drug donation program; authorizing fees. *Left pending in committee 4-14-15.*

HB 2351 (Harless) STUDYING Relates to conflicts of interest and discrimination policies for an ethics or medical committee review of an advance directive. *Left pending in committee 4-8-15.*

HB 2541 (Zerwas) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage of certain treatments for enrollees diagnosed with a terminal illness; authorizing administrative and civil penalties. *Reported favorably as substituted 4-15-15.*

HB 2584 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to the authority of the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission to adopt rules defining Alzheimer's and related medical conditions. *Left pending in committee 4-14-15.*

HB 2809 (Anderson of McLennan) STUDYING Relates to the creation and operations of health care provider participation programs in certain counties. *Committee report sent to Local & Consent Calendar 4-13-15.*

HB 2954 (Klick) STUDYING Relates to donation of unused prescription drugs. *No action taken in committee 4-8-15.*



LWV-TX supports additional funding for treatment of serious mental illnesses and substance use.

Texas ranks near the bottom of all the states in per-capita spending on public mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Lack of access to treatment drives up the cost of health care, law enforcement, and criminal justice, in addition to preventable losses in functionality, productivity, and employability. Economist Ray Perryman estimates that every dollar spent on mental health services yields a return on investment of \$23.

Status on bills filed

SB 11 (Birdwell) OPPOSE Would extend the rights of those with concealed handgun licenses to open carry into school buildings on college and university campuses. *Passed the Senate.*

HB 937 (Fletcher) OPPOSE The companion bill in the House to SB 11 *has been reported favorably as substituted by the Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee and sent to the Calendars Committee.*

The mental health community, campus officials, and faculty generally oppose guns on college and university campuses. The combination of guns and alcohol at parties will inevitably lead to lethal shootings. Vulnerable students contemplating suicide should not have easy access to death by firearms. In the event of a shooting altercation among individuals, campus police could shoot at all the students since they would not know who is an aggressor and who is a defendant. Faculty are also extremely vulnerable to disgruntled students.

The mental health community, campus officials, and faculty generally oppose guns on college and university campuses.

Let your state representative know you are against open carry of guns on college and university campuses.

SB 55 (Nelson) SUPPORT Would establish a grant program to support community mental health programs for veterans with mental illness. *Passed unanimously. HB 1249 (King) is pending in the Economic and Small Business Development Committee.*

SB 56 (Nelson) SUPPORT Would expand the physician grant program in Texas. *Referred to the Higher Education Committee.*

SB 133 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Would extend Mental Aid First Aid Training to include principals, assistant principals, educa-

tors, teacher's aids, counselors, nurses, school bus drivers, and school resource officers. *Passed the Senate. HB 2220 (Coleman) has been referred to the Public Education Committee.*

SB 518 (Uresti) SUPPORT Recommends putting mental health professionals on existing school health advisory councils. *Referred to the Education Committee. HB 3289 (Farney) Referred to the Public Education Committee.*

SB 388 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT Proposes the creation of a Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee to the Health and Human Services Commission. *Referred to Health and Human Services Committee. Passed the Senate.*

HB 679 (Turner) SUPPPORT Proposes the study of mental health and other needs of homeless youth. *Passed the Senate. The companion bill SB 1892 (Garcia) has been referred to the Health and Human Services Committee.*

SB 1507 (Garcia, Rodriquez) SUPPORT Would establish a forensic medical director responsible for statewide coordination and oversight of forensic mental health services provided by the Department of State Health Services. *Passed the Senate. HB 2023 (Naishtat) pending in the Public Health Committee.*

HB 838 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to the addition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to group insurance plans. *Left pending in the Insurance Committee. SB 1774 (Menendez) is pending in the Insurance Committee.*

HB 1241(Lozano) and HB 2434 (Coleman) SUPPORT Would pro-rate the forgiveness of student loan debt relative to the time the graduate works in mental health. *Both referred to the Public Health Committee. SB 239 (Schwertner) is pending in the Higher Education Committee.*

HB 1541 (BURKETT) SUPPORT Would direct the Health and Human Services Commission to establish rules regarding peer-to-peer specialist certification for people with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders. *Pending in the House Human Services Committee.*

HB 3115 (Coleman) SUPPORT Would require Medicaid and the CHIP Perinatal programs to provide 12 months of coverage after a woman gives birth for screening and treatment of postpartum depression. *Pending in the Public Health Committee.*

SB 1698 (Huffman) *has been referred to the Health and Human Services Committee.*

HB 3726 (Farias) SUPPORT Would establish a veterans re-entry program for veterans incarcerated in state jails. *Reported favorably as substituted from the Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee.*

Natural Resources

AIR QUALITY & CLIMATE CHANGE Laura Blackburn (Houston Area) laura2blackburn@yahoo.com



Action on Previously Reviewed Bills:

HB 392 (McClendon) SUPPORT Would authorize an optional county fee for vehicle registration to fund certain transportation projects. *Reported favorably without amendments April 13.*

HB 457 (McClendon) SUPPORT Committee Substitute. Would allocate revenue from TERP to the Texas rail relocation and improvement fund. There was a Committee Substitute for this bill that did not take funds from TERP but allowed rail projects to be a project under TERP. We could support the Committee Substitute, but the chair of the Transportation Committee did not present it. We have hand-delivered a letter to him encouraging him to allow the committee to consider the Substitute. *The bill is currently pending in the committee.*

HB 1031 (Leach) WATCH Authorizes funding for certain roadway projects intended to improve or maintain air quality. *It was withdrawn from a scheduled hearing April 20.*

HHB 1794 (Geren) OPPOSE Limits the ability of certain local governments to bring suit under violations of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The committee passed the bill without amendment and *the House Committee Report was sent to Calendars.*

HB 1839 (Israel) SUPPORT Would authorize certain state employees to work flexible hours and to work from home or other authorized work sites. *This bill was reported favorably from committee without amendments on April 9.*

HB 2078 (Anchia) SUPPORT Would establish a Global Climate Change Commission. *A hearing has been scheduled for April 20. We will be testifying strongly in favor of this bill.*

SB 78 (Ellis) SUPPORT Would require that the Texas Water Development Board consider the latest science in projecting water supplies for the future. This bill has languished in committee, and we have written a letter to Chairman Charles Perry encouraging him to schedule a hearing. We also encouraged other environmental groups to write Chairman Perry.

Please contact Sen. Charles Perry (512.463.0128), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water & Rural Affairs, and request that he have a hearing on SB 78.

SB 321 (Hinojosa) WATCH This bill would divert money from TERP to the Texas Highway Fund. We originally were going to oppose this bill, however, there was an amendment offered that was not available to the public. Other environmental groups urged full funding for TERP but felt this approach was probably the best compromise they could get. We did submit testimony ON the bill. Senator Hinojosa is very determined to keep as much money as possible in the TERP account. Senator Ellis brought a TCEQ representative who offered excellent testimony. *While the committee vote was 5-2, it is shown as remaining in the committee.* Most of the committee members were totally confused, and it was the first committee hearing I have been to that was totally hilarious.

SB 603 (Hinojosa) SUPPORT Would extend TERP two more years before expiration—from 2019 to 2021. *This bill has passed the Senate and was received by the House April 10.*

SB 931 (Fraser) OPPOSE Would remove financial support for renewable energy. *This bill passed the Senate on April 15 and was sent to the House.*

Texas Budget Bills of Interest:

SB 9 (Hancock) OPPOSE Relates to the constitutional limit on the rate of growth of appropriations. Reducing the rate of growth of appropriations is illogical when we cannot cover current pressing needs. *The bill was engrossed by the Senate on April 9 and was received by the House on April 10.*

Reducing the rate of growth of appropriations is illogical when we cannot cover current pressing needs.

SJR 2 (Hancock) OPPOSE Proposes a constitutional amendment concerning the limitation on the rate of growth. *The bill passed the committee on April 7, was placed on the Intent Calendar on April 8, and on April 14 was not again placed on the Intent Calendar.*

HAZARDOUS WASTE Susybelle Gosslee (Dallas) sgosslee@airmail.net



The League supports safe transportation, handling, and disposal of radioactive materials, legislation promoting recycling efforts, in particular for electronic waste. Efforts are being made during this session to take the decisions away from cities to determine lo-

cal laws regarding recycling, best practices, and to meet community health and safety needs regarding hazardous materials within a city.

SB 1165 (Fraser) OPPOSE SB 1165 is the companion bill for **HB 40**, which has passed the House. **These companion bills undermine local control in regulating materials hazardous to**

public health and property, specifically for regulating the oil and gas industry. State agencies do not know the local conditions to make the best decisions to protect cities. City council members and citizens do know their communities and make the best decisions.

Contact your state senators to tell them you oppose SB 1165

Contact your local city and county officials, local volunteer fire departments and emergency personnel departments, to tell them to oppose the bill.

Ask them what they are doing to ensure that your municipality is doing everything possible to protect your local government's ability to pass laws to protect public health and the environment. Ask them to protect local control.

MESSAGE re: SB 1165:

- **Undermines local control of a heavy industrial industry within city limits.** Many cities have zoning ordinances that will be undermined if this bill passes. This action takes citizens vote away.
- **Will preempt every law that has been carefully crafted to compromise with the oil and gas industry** to allow drilling within cities with some local regulation that meets the needs and protects the community, public health, the environment, and aesthetic considerations. Every city is different and has different priorities and considerations that the state cannot know. Drilling is a highly risky industrial process that should not be next to homes, hospitals, schools, senior living centers, and other sensitive populations. In addition, preferential treatment of the oil and gas industry could set a precedence that could lead to other industries asking for exemptions from local regulations.
- **Undermine home rule that was established in the Texas constitution in 1836.** Government is best closest to the people. In the U.S., politics is local. In communism, politics is done at the central government. This law removes "local" from governance. Home rule means local control in decision-making. Removing local control and home rule on drilling by the oil and gas industry takes government away from the people. All government should be local in determining where drilling should take place.
- **Reduces surface rights of private ownership of property in cities.** Regulation will be shifted away from local municipalities and will be placed under the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas Railroad Commission. Both agencies are already underfunded and understaffed. Each regulator is assigned to oversee and inspect 2700 wells annually. Inspections in West, Texas and Athens, Texas were lax at fertilizer plants and fires and explosions broke out at each. Clearly the inspections are not made. Some cities have already hired additional professional staff and developed processes with special and expensive monitoring systems to protect their communities, because the

regulatory agencies are not doing it. Other cities do not have the capability to hire the additional staff and purchase the equipment to inspect drilling sites and transportation within their jurisdiction.

MESSAGE re: HB 40 (Darby) Thank you for your calls to your state representatives to oppose HB 40. The bill passed, but we did all that could be done to inform our legislators about the dangers and the unconstitutionality of the loss of home rule by municipalities. The representatives voted to restrict rights of citizens and cities to protect themselves against pollution and hazardous activity with oil and gas wells close to homes, schools, businesses, and hospitals by a final vote of 122-18.

Check how your representative voted!

CSHB 1865 (Morrison) OPPOSE The bill relates to the procedures in certain air, water quality, and waste permit application processes filed with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Call your representative to stop or tag **CSHB 1865** in the Calendar Committee so that it does not get out!

Explanation: The bill relates to the procedures in certain air, water quality, and waste permit application processes filed with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Neighbors of landfills, refineries, manufacturing plants and other polluting facilities need more rights to protect their property and health. The law requires each issue be referred to the State Office of Administrative Hearings regarding a certain permit applications filed with the TCEQ in a comment submitted by that affected person in response to the permit application in a timely manner. The existing law demands that the industry's permit prove that they are not creating and emitting contaminants. CSHB 1865 shifts the burden of proof from the industry submitting the permit that it is in compliance with existing environmental laws to the neighboring community or the affected property owner to prove the release of contamination and hazardous materials into the air, land, and water by the industry. The bill requires the administrative law judge to complete a proceeding regarding a referred matter and provide a proposal for decision to the TCEQ not later than the earlier of the 180th day after the date of the preliminary hearing, or the date specified by TCEQ or the administrative judge, if applicable. This time period and the process are unreasonable for a property owner to build their case and, therefore, basically restricts public participation.

Neighbors of landfills, refineries, manufacturing plants, and other polluting facilities need more rights to protect their property and health.



TRANSPORTATION Edie Jones (Tarrant County) edithsjones@hotmail.com

The League supports increased funding for public roads, mass transit, and light rail.

All bills currently in committee have not been acted upon.