



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TEXAS



Legislative Newsletter

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

May 22, 2015

84th Texas Legislature

Volume 23, No.9

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Scherel Carver, Editor



lwvtexas.org



Calls to Action!

This and future issues of the *Legislative Newsletter* will post a **Call to Action** at the top of the agenda, urging readers to contact specific legislative offices on timely critical bills.

This issue calls on members to contact two House committees:

Senators

- Contact your senator to urge opposition to SB 575, which would prohibit health benefit exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act from providing abortion coverage except when a life-threatening physical condition exists.
- Contact your senator urging him to oppose HB 1794, which passed the House and was placed on Senate Intent Calendar. This "bad bill" puts limits on what local jurisdictions can fine for exceeding environmental regulations.
- SB 11-- the "campus carry" bill--"Call your legislator on the Calendars Committee and encourage your rep NOT to let this bill out of committee. (Linda Camin)
- SB 931 (Blackburn) Removes all support for renewable energy. It's in the State Affairs Committee--contact their reps on State Affairs for a NO vote.

Representatives

- Contact your representative urging him to oppose HB 3994, This bill" imposes serious obstacles to young women seeking safe, legal abortions
- Let your state representative know you are against open carry of guns on college and university campuses.
- HB 1794 (Blackburn) Limits how much a local jurisdiction can fine for environmental damage. Encourage a NO by their legislators.

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From the Advocacy VP

By the time you receive this Legislative Newsletter, the time for new bills to be introduced will have passed. I invite you to go to the calendar for the 84th Legislative Session which can be found [here](http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/scanned/calendars/2015calendar.pdf).

<http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/scanned/calendars/2015calendar.pdf>

It is for the month of May, which tells you when certain bills may be considered by both the Senate and the House. For example, here is the calendar for May 26 – May 30.

134th day 26 last day for House to consider 2nd reading SBs/SJR on Daily or Supplemental Calendar	135th day 27 last day for House to consider local and consent SBs on 2nd & 3rd reading and ALL 3rd reading SBs/SJR on Supplemental Calendar <i>last day for Senate to consider ALL bills & JR on 2nd or 3rd reading (see Note 3)</i>	136th day 28 before midnight— Senate Amendments must be distributed in the House (24-hour layout)	137th day 29 last day for House to act on Senate Amendments <i>before midnight—Senate copies of Conference Committee Reports (CCRs) on tax, general appropriations, and reapportionment bills must be printed and distributed (48-hour layout) (see Note 4)</i>	138th day 30 before midnight— House copies of ALL CCRs must be distributed (24-hour layout) <i>before midnight—Senate copies of CCRs on bills other than tax, general appropriations, and reapportionment bills must be printed and distributed (24-hour layout)</i>
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I know this may be hard to read, but what it says for the 134th day (May 26) is that it is the last day for House to consider 2nd reading Senate Bills/SJR on Daily or Supplemental Calendar. On the 136th day before midnight—Senate Amendments must be distributed in the House (24-hour layout.) For those of you who are keeping up with certain bills, the deadlines started on in the House on May 15, which is the last day for the House to consider **consent** HBs on 2nd and 3rd reading and **ALL** 3rd reading HBs/HJR on the Supplemental Calendar.



Therefore, we will still be sending Action Alerts to you! Thank you for all of those calls and emails that you have made. They make such a difference!

As you can see below, the number of testimonies we have given in the past two weeks have dropped considerably. That's because we seldom have time to prepare testimony and therefore we are left with registering "on, support or oppose" a bill. During this same time we have registered "on, support or oppose" for 19 bills.

Laura Blackburn

LWV-Texas Advocacy Vice President

Testimonies Given Since May 7

Bill #	Date	Committee	Author	Issue	Issue Chair	Presenter
HB 188	5/5/2015	S-Criminal Justice	Thompson, S	Human trafficking taskforce	Scott-Johnson	B. Koegler
SB 935	5/5/2015	H-Public Education	Kolkhorst	K-3 excellence team pilot	Imhoff	B. Frandsen
SB 972	5/5/2015	H-Public Education	Kolkhorst	Reading Academies 4-5	Imhoff	B. Frandsen
SB 1	5/12/2015	House-Ways & Means	Nelson	Budget	Blackburn	C. Frandsen
SJR 1	5/12/2015	House-Ways & Means	Nelson	Const. Amend re: budget	Blackburn	C. Frandsen
SB 1984	5/13/2015	House-State Affairs	Taylor	Ethics	Andy	G. Chimene

The list of all contacts with legislators is at the end of this LNL.

Our next Legislative Newsletter will come after the close of the 84th regular Session . We will know a little more then whether or not there will be a special session. Meanwhile, many heartfelt thanks to Grace Chimene, our Legislative Director, Cinde Weatherby, our Issues Chair Coordinator and every single one of our Issue Chairs! And, of course, thanks to all of you for your response and communications with the Texas Legislators!! However, my kudos for this LNL go to Scherel Carver, our fantastic editor—who puts up with your late reports, inserts, etc. We owe her for the outstanding readability, attractiveness and informative of every single LNL!!! Thanks so much, Scherel.

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 Handy, Austin.**

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 – **Lynn Walshak, Houston Area**
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

The legislature has reached the period of deadlines and now bills that are not in the pipeline are dead. Monday, May 11, was the last day House committees could pass house bills or joint resolutions. Thursday, May 14, was the last day for the House to consider house bills on 2nd reading, and

Friday, May 15, was the last day for 3rd reading of house bills in the House.

Because of this, **HB 1759 (Aycock) SUPPORT is dead.** Public Education Committee Chair Jimmie Don Aycock's attempt to deal with the crisis in public school finance had been read for the 2nd time in the House, but he pulled the bill in order to avoid a long discussion that would have effectively killed dozens of other bills, and also because of lack of support in the Senate, which prefers to wait for the Supreme Court to rule later this year before dealing with the issue. This means that we are most certainly facing a special session on public school finance, probably next summer (2016).

Aycock's bill would have added additional funding and eliminated the cost of education index and made various adjustments to various weights in order to funnel \$3 billion of additional funding to public schools, primarily through the basic allotment. Aycock said it accomplishes two goals: it provides that no district would lose funding and it does the most good for the most students; specifically 94% of students would gain additional funding, and 98% of students would be placed on the funding formulas. (Analysis from the Texas Association of School Boards.)

The following bills are the ones floating to the top and may be passed. Others filed but not on this list are dying in committee or never even got a committee hearing. Many of these bills can be categorized in a few groups, but please see the bill list below for more information:

Finance and Accountability -- HB 2804 is Aycock's bill that would revamp school accountability. SB 1, SJR 1 would reduce ad valorem taxes.

School Performance --HB 1842-interventions and sanctions, SB 14-parent trigger, SB 1012 and HB 1798-Local Control, SB 669 and HB 1536-Opportunity School District, SB 1241 and SB 1771-High Performing Schools Consortium and Innovation Zones, and HB 1891, HB 1892, and SB 1483-Community Schools.

Testing --SB 149, HB 743, HB 1164

Teacher Support --SB 313, SB 893, SB 925, SB 934, SB 935, SB 972, and HB 1843, HB 2609

Vouchers and Charters --SB 4, SB 1897, SB 1900, HB 3347

FINAL VOTES

***SB 149 (Seliger) SUPPORT** This bill will create graduation committees for students who are unable to pass a required end-of-course-exam. The committee would evaluate the student,s overall performance to determine graduation. It was voted out unanimously by both Education Committees. *Signed by the governor on 5/11/2015. Effective immediately.*

***SB 925 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT** establishes teacher training academies for reading instruction K-3. *Passed both Houses. Sent to the governor on 5/11/2015.*

***CSHB 1798 (Deshotel) OPPOSE** would replace "home rule charter" with "local control school district" in statute. An independent school district could change to local control district after approval of a plan by voters in the district. Companion bill SB 1012 is pending in Senate Education committee. *House failed to pass to engrossment on 5/13/2015.*

BILLS THAT HAVE PASSED ONE HOUSE

HB 66 (M. Gonzalez) SUPPORT requires the commissioner of education not to lower a school's rating based on performance of limited English proficiency students on state assessments who have been enrolled in a US school less than two years. *Passed House. Senate received from the House on 5/4/2015.*

HB 114 (Flynn) WATCH would prohibit local government entities from issuing capital improvement bonds (CABs) that are secured by ad valorem taxes, except for certain transportation projects, and items with a useful life that exceeds the bond's maturity. CABs require no installment payments so interest keeps compounding until payment is due, and districts could end up owing 7 to 10 times the amount borrowed. Some districts say they need this type of bond because current law limits their taxing capability. (Other CAB bills include SB 103, SB 573, HB 1750- all still in pipeline). *Passed House. Senate received from the House on 5/14/15.*

HB 743 (Huberty) SUPPORT requires 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. *Passed House. Referred to Senate Education on 5/6/2015.*

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. *Passed House. Referred to Senate Education on 5/4/2015.*

HB 1706 (Van Deaver) SUPPORT will reduce paperwork and redundancy of reports. *Passed House. Referred to Senate Education on 5/5/2015.*

HB 1842 (Aycock) SUPPORT would amend several provisions pertaining to accreditation interventions and sanctions. A district must undergo a school turnaround plan after two years of unacceptable performance. After three more years as unacceptable, the school would be closed or placed under a board of managers. A campus intervention team would hold a public meeting to solicit input for the improvement plan. *Passed House. Senate received from the House on 5/14/2015.*

HB 1891 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT will allow any public elementary, middle, junior high, or high school to become a Texas Community School that would partner with one or more community-based organizations to coordinate academic, social and health services. This would reduce barriers to learning and improve the quality of education. *House passed on 5/15/15.*

HB 2349 (Aycock) SUPPORT makes some technical changes to HB 5 (2013), including requiring a high school student to take an end-of-course exam only for a course in which they were enrolled. The bill allows the TEA to defer releasing STAAR questions and answer keys as they are developing additional assessment instruments. *Passed House. Referred to Senate Education on 5/13/2015.*

HB 2804 (Aycock) SUPPORT This school accountability reform bill seeks to limit the use of state standardized tests in the accountability system and to expand the use of other indicators of student success and school performance. The TEA would have five weighted domains that would move away from basing ratings primarily on tests. The committee substitute rolls in SB 6, the A-F rating bill, as of Sept. 1, 2017. Each district and campus would get an overall rating, and a rating for each of the first four domains. *House passed as amended on 5/15/2015.*

SB 1 (Nelson) OPPOSE Relates to restriction on ad valorem taxes and the duty of the state to reimburse certain political subdivisions for revenue loss. *Passed Senate. Left pending in House Ways and Means on 5/12/2015.*

SB 4 (L. Taylor) OPPOSE establishes 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. *Passed Senate. Referred to House Ways and Means on 5/5/2015.*

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. *Passed Senate. Scheduled for public hearing in House Public Education on 5/19/2015.*

SB 161 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT would raise the bilingual allotment to schools from 0.1 to 2.5. *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 5/14/2015.*

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. (Identical to HB 1341 which was left pending in House Public Education committee on 5/5/15.) *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 5/5/2015.*

SB 471 (Rodriguez) WATCH would allow the TEA to conduct "monitoring reviews" (desk audits) rather than on-site visits for certain investigations. *Passed Senate. Scheduled for public hearing in House Public Education on 5/19/1015.*

SB 669 (West) OPPOSE will establish a state-run Opportunity School District for operation of schools after two years of unacceptable ratings. No requirement for certified teachers. The school could be turned over to a charter, a private entity that is not a charter, or an independent school district. (Similar to HB 1536). *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 5/11/2015.*

SB 893 (Seliger) SUPPORT provides for an annual teacher evaluation, minimum pay of \$2754, and better professional development. *Passed Senate. Referred to Public Education on 4/30/2015.*

SB 934 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT establishes teacher training academies for math instruction K-3. *House passed to 3rd reading as amended on 5/14/2015.*

SB 945 (L. Taylor) SUPPORT will 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. *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 4/30/2015.*

SB 1200 (L. Taylor) SUPPORT would establish the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability to study, develop and make recommendations for new systems of student assessment and public school accountability. Report due to the governor and legislature by Sept. 1, 2016. *Passed Senate. Scheduled for public hearing in House Public Education on 5/19/2015.*

SB 1241 (Taylor) SUPPORT will allow school districts to form innovation zones. *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 5/14/2015.*

SB 1771 (Taylor) SUPPORT would amend the education code relating to the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. It would allow 30 participating schools rather than 20, and would allow participation of an open-enrollment charter with exemplary designation. *Passed Senate. House left pending in committee on 5/12/2015.*

SB 1896 (Taylor) SUPPORT would require the TEA to develop online tutorials for comprehensive review of end-of-course assessment instruments. *Passed Senate. Scheduled for public hearing in House Public Education on 5/19/2015.*

SB 1897 (Taylor) OPPOSE will 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. *Passed Senate. Referred to House Public Education on 5/14/15.*

SJR 1 (Nelson) OPPOSE Proposes a constitutional amendment providing for an exemption from ad valorem taxation for public school purposes of a portion of the market value of a residence homestead based on the median market value of all residence homesteads in the state. *Passed Senate. Left pending in House Ways and Means on 5/12/2015.*

BILLS GETTING CLOSE

House votes

HB 1536 (Dutton) OPPOSE will establish an Opportunity School District for operation of schools after two years of unacceptable ratings. An amendment would limit the bill to apply only to districts with at least 24 elementary campuses. (Similar to SB 669.) *House Committee report sent to Calendars on 5/12/2015.*

HB 1759 (Aycock) SUPPORT will restructure the public school finance system. *House read for the second time on 5/14/2015. Withdrawn by author on 5/14/2015.*

HB 1843 (Aycock) SUPPORT provides for training academies for public school teachers who provide reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three. Identical to SB 925. *House laid on the table subject to call on 5/6/2015.*

HB 1892 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT will allow the establishment of Community Schools grant program. Community schools would partner with community-based organizations to coordinate academic, social, and health services. *House failed to pass to engrossment on 5/14/2015.*

HB 1935 (Ken King) WATCH amends the statute regarding additional state aid for tax reduction payments to school districts by allowing appropriations in the budget bill to determine if/when the program ends. *House placed on General State Calendar on 5/13/2015.*

HB 2609 (Farney) SUPPORT would provide mathematics achievement academies for K-3 teachers. *House laid on the table subject to call on 5/14/2015.*

HB 3347 (Aycock) SUPPORT outlines procedures for revocation of a charter (identical to SB 1898). *House committee report sent to Calendars on 5/8/2015.*

HB 3746 (Bohac) SUPPORT would create a Center for Performance Information for Public Education as an independent policy center to study and make recommendations on the elements of an effective and efficient public education system. *House committee report sent to Calendars on 5/12/2015.*

SB 935 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT provides reading excellence teams for schools rated academically unacceptable based on grade 3 reading assessments. *House committee report sent to Calendars on 5/12/2015.*

SB 972 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT establishes reading-to-learn academies for teaching reading comprehension and critical thinking for grades 4-5. *House committee report sent to Calendars on 5/12/2015.*

Senate Votes

SB 1012 (Hancock) OPPOSE 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 against: no locally elected school board. Argument for: opportunity for innovation and flexibility. Companion HB 1798 was voted down in the House on 5/13/2015. *Left pending in committee on 5/12/2015.*

SB 1483 (Garcia) SUPPORT will allow establishment of Community Schools that partner with organizations to offer a variety of programs. Identical to HB 1891. *Placed on Intent Calendar on 4/30/2015.*

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. *Not again placed on Senate Intent Calendar on 5/18/2015.*

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

Our top priority for the 84th Session was seeking passage of online or electronic voter registration.



Voter Registration

None of the several voter registration bills has moved beyond Committee consideration.

Voter ID

SB 983 (Bettencourt) SUPPORT

providing free birth records for individuals needing the record to acquire a DPS photo ID, was engrossed in the Senate after passage in the Senate State Affairs Committee. It was referred to the House Public Health Committee May 13th, where it was passed the same day and sent to House Calendars Committee the next day. Final passage is still remotely possible.

SB 982 (Bettencourt) SUPPORT was heard in public hearing May 4th in Senate State Affairs and allows those age 70 and older to use expired photo IDs for voting. Still pending in the Senate Committee, it appears dead.

CSHB 1096 (Murphy) OPPOSE will require a voter's Driver License or DPS ID residential address and voter registration address be the same. It continues to move forward, being engrossed in the House May 11th and set for public hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee May 18th.

Vote by Mail (VBM)

HB 913 (Israel) SUPPORT, clarifying the design of the VBM envelope to remind voters of the necessity for an envelope signature, was heard in House Elections April 20th and reported favorably as substituted April 30th. It was not reported out of Committee until May 8th when it was eventually set for the Local & Consent Calendar May 13th, two days shy of the possibility to be considered by the House.

HB 1198 (Israel) SUPPORT, extending the VBM application length of time, received a public hearing in House Elections May 4th, where it was left pending to die.

HB 1927 (Bonnen, G.) SUPPORT, continues to be viable. It allows VBM for all elections, not just those conducted by county government. It was amended by Rep. Rick Miller in House floor debate to also include VBM for run-off elections, as included in previously reported **HB 1659 (Miller) SUPPORT**. The House engrossed the bill May 4th; it was referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee May 6th; and is set for public hearing May 18th.

Young Voter Engagement

None of the several bills permitting 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the general election to vote in primaries, or to establish young voter education programs is still viable this session.

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



Access to Safe, Legal Abortions

LWV-TX action on bills that are moving, as noted below:

- **SB 575 (Larry Taylor) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 3 and # 8 – prohibits health benefit exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act from providing abortion coverage except when a life-threatening physical condition exists - *LWV issued an Action Alert on 5/1 urging members and local League presidents to contact their state senators, expressing opposition to SB 575 and asking them to focus on the critical issues now before them instead of putting further restrictions on women's private medical options and decisions. Unfortunately, the bill has now passed the Senate by a vote of 21-10, following an unsuccessful attempt during floor debate to exclude cases of rape and incest from the abortion coverage ban. It has been sent to the House and assigned to State Affairs Committee.*
- **HB 3994 (Morrison) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5 and # 7 – imposes serious obstacles to young women seeking safe, legal abortions - *LWV issued an Action Alert on 5/12, urging members and local League presidents to contact their representatives expressing opposition to HB 3994 and asking them to focus on the critical issues now before them instead of putting further restrictions on women's private medical options and decisions. Unfortunately, the bill has now passed the House by a vote of 98-47 following about 4 hours of debate during which opponents unsuccessfully tried to kill it on points of order and to improve it with several amendments. It has been placed on the Senate Intent Calendar for May 22.*

ACTION ALERT:

Contact your state senator and state representative NOW with the message that you oppose more abortion restrictions, including HB 3994 AND SB 575. Ask them to focus on the critical issues now before them instead of putting further restrictions on women's private medical options and decisions.

Other bill movement:

- **HB 416 (Riddle) CHANGE FROM WATCH TO OPPOSE** - see LNL # 1, # 5 and # 6 – require abortion facility personnel to take education and training on human trafficking. At hearing in the State Affairs Committee, the author stated she would accept an amendment proposed by Rep. Giddings that would expand the bill to include other medical settings, such as emergency rooms, where health care staff is likely to encounter trafficking victims. *The bill passed the House and has been sent to the Senate, without being expanded to include other medical settings - therefore LWV position has changed from WATCH TO OPPOSE. It is in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee with hearing scheduled for 5/18. Meanwhile, the Senate identical companion bill, SB 1873 (Campbell) OPPOSE, has passed the Health and Human Services Committee and could be brought up for a Senate vote at any time.*
- **HB 3130 (Farney) OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5 and # 7 - 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. *After it passed the State Affairs Committee, the bill was placed on the General Intent Calendar but it now appears to be dead, not having been brought to a House vote before midnight on May 14, the deadline for the House to take initial vote on House bills. See report above on similar Senate bill – HB 575 (Larry Taylor).*

Call Your Senator TODAY and urge a 'NO' vote!

- **HB 3446 (Laubenberg) – OPPOSE** – see LNL # 5, # 7 and # 8 – requires abortion clinics to post signs advising patients about forced abortions and sex trafficking and resources for abuse and trafficking victims. *Was placed on the General State Calendar as substituted but now appears to be dead, not having been brought to a House vote before midnight on May 14.*

Note that many other House bills, good and bad, described in previous editions of this Newsletter, died at midnight on May 14.

Women's Healthcare Safety Net

Bill movement:

HB 786 (Walle) SUPPORT – see LNL # 8 – requires public employers to provide accommodations for mothers who need to pump breast milk while at work – has been received in the Senate and sent to the Business and Commerce Committee.

WATER Mary Vogelson (Dallas) mmev@swbell.net



If you are keeping up, you know lots of bills are moving fast due to the deadline May 14 in the House for bills on the general calendar. We will know a lot more next week, meanwhile, since the last report here are some of our favorites (good and bad!) moving along:

SB 551 (Seliger)

SUPPORT The bill has passed the Senate and will have a hearing in the House Natural Resources Committee Monday, May 18. This bill requires the Water Conservation Advisory Committee (WCAC) to submit recommendations in addition to just giving a report regarding conservation in the state.

HB 898 (Ashby) and SB 611 (Perry) OPPOSE

NOW DEAD-left pending in Natural Resources House Committee. This is the bill that would have allowed confidentiality for well drillers from having to disclose to the public the amounts, location, etc. of wells being drilled.

HB 928 (Guillen) SUPPORT Passed the House, now set for Senate committee hearing. This bill adds further duties to the WCAC to monitor, recommend strategies and new drought

response technologies to include in best management practices, etc.

HB1232 (Lucio III) SUPPORT Passed both chambers and on its way to the Governor! This bill requires the TWDB to

conduct a study of the hydrology and geology of confined and unconfined aquifers, especially water quality and quantity of groundwater, salinity, etc. At last, someone is beginning to understand the connections between groundwater and surface! Nice.

HB 3298 (Larson Frank, Lucio III, et al.) OPPOSE

Bill has passed the House and is set for Senate committee hearing. This bill would ask for a study by the TWDB regarding the development of a market and conveyance network for water in the state, the same sort of network that is now the bane of California!! Also, as the LWVT-TX study points out, encouraging the marketing of water moves it from the “natural resource” category (where it is totally under the local

jurisdiction of the state) to the “commodity” category where the state loses power to all the US international trade agreements. Why would we do this???

...encouraging the marketing of water moves it from the “natural resource” category (where it is totally under the local jurisdiction of the state) to the “commodity” category where the state loses power to all the US international trade agreements.

HB 1665 (Bonnen, et. al.) SUPPORT Bill has passed the House and is now in the Senate committee. It would require water level fluctuations to be revealed to purchasers of real property adjoining an impoundment of water.

Status of other issues the League lobbies on this legislative session

Government

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT- CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM and the POLITICAL PROCESS

Diann Andy (San Antonio) diannandy@lww@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

Wednesday, May 13, the Capitol Corps testified before the House State Affairs Committee on SB 19 – which we followed in both the April 5th and

April 21st LNL. Below is the gist of the testimony. *Note:* This information was current as of 5/13/15.

Because trust is essential to effective government, the League of Women Voters of Texas promotes transparency and public participation in government and supports fair campaign finance laws that reduce the influence of large contributions. While SB 19 takes some much-needed steps to address our concerns, it can and should be improved.

First, we applauded the requirement that financial statements be filed electronically and posted online in a searchable format. However, we suggested that all consulting contracts, reportable gifts, future employment agreements, and entitlements to public benefits from state or federal programs be disclosed in a timely manner, say within five working days.

We also asked that the bill be altered to strengthen conflict-of-interest provisions as follows.

- Prohibit state agencies from hiring former employees of state vendors to perform similar duties for two years after leaving the vendor.
- Prohibit legislators from working for state agencies for two years after leaving the Legislature.
- Prohibit government officials from working for any entity that was awarded a contract, permit, or was regulated by the official's agency for two years after the official leaves the agency.
- Require that any legislator who has a personal interest in a measure or bill before the Legislature disclose that fact and be recused.

- Prohibit the governor from appointing to public office anyone who has directly or indirectly contributed more than \$20,000 to the campaign.

Finally, we advised that the Ethics Commission be strengthened to enable it to investigate and enforce provisions in this and all ethics bills adopted by the Legislature.

These previously-reported bills appear to have traction:

SB 19 (Taylor, Van) WATCH. *Status:* Scheduled for a House public hearing in the State Affairs Committee on 5/13/15.

SB 20 (Nelson) WATCH. *Status:* Second Reading in the House State Affairs Committee 5/13/15.

SB 306 (Zaffirini) SUPPORT. *Status:* Scheduled for a House public hearing in the Judiciary and Civil Jurisprudence Committee on 5/12/15 – Meeting Cancelled.

SB 585 (Watson, et al.) SUPPORT. *Status:* Referred to House General Investigating and Ethics Committee 5/11/15.

SB 586 (Watson, et al.) SUPPORT. *Status:* Referred to House General Investigating and Ethics Committee 5/11/15.

SB 1862 (Burton) WATCH *Status:* Left pending in State Affairs Committee 5/4/15.

SB 1969 (Huffman) SUPPORT. *Status:* Public Hearing held 4/27/15. No action taken yet in committee.

HB 464 (Springer) WATCH. *Status:* Considered in House Calendars 5/7/15.

HB 487 (Howard, et al.) SUPPORT. *Status:* Considered in Calendars 5/7/15.

HB 1354 (Howard) SUPPORT. *Status:* Considered in Calendars 4/28/15 (No change).

HB 1690 (King, Phil) OPPOSE. *Status:* Referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee 5/6/15.

HB 2088 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT. *Status:* Placed on House General State Calendar 5/11/15.

Administration of Justice

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.

HB1240 (Walle) SUPPORT Would raise the age of Criminal responsibility from 17 years old to 18 years old. Currently all 17-year olds are considered adults under the penal code. This bill raises the age to 18.

SB1630 (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 lockups that more resemble prisons than rehabilitation centers. *March 31 considered in public hearing. Testimony taken in Committee.*

HB431 (White, James | Miles) RELATES to the creation of an advisory committee to examine the retention of juvenile justice records. *March 25 testimony recorded in committee. April 1 considered in public hearing. Recommended to be sent to Local & Consent Calendar.*

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



The LWV-TX supports education and drug treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration. The following prefilled bills contain provisions for reducing penalties related to drug conviction offenses. The bills include education and drug treatment in lieu of incarceration for certain drug-related offenses under community

supervision.

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

HB3785 (Marquez) SUPPORT Still pending in Public Health Committee.

HB 892 (Klick/Zerwas/Zedler) SUPPORT Placed on state general calendar 5/13/2015.

HB 837 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Testimony delivered by LWV-TX April 28, 2015 to Public Health Committee. Left pending in committee.

SB 1839 (Menendez) SUPPORT Still pending in committee.

SB 339 (Eltife) SUPPORT Passes Senate. Sent to House .

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

HB 507 Moody SUPPORT Ready for floor vote.

SB 1417 (Ellis) SUPPORT No action.

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.

Testimony given:

HB 188 (Thompson) RELATES to the continuation and duties of the human trafficking prevention task force.

Passed by the House:

HB 2511 (Thompson) SUPPORT Relating to the creation of the human trafficking prevention business partnership.

Passed by Senate:

HB 188 (Thompson) RELATES to the continuation and duties of the human trafficking prevention task force.

Updates:

HB 3500 (Thompson) SUPPORT Relating to judicial proceedings on a petition to set aside a conviction or an order of expunction of criminal history record information for certain victims of trafficking of persons convicted of prostitution.

Awaiting Vote in House

HB 10 (Thompson) SUPPORT Relating to certain criminal and civil consequences of trafficking of persons, compelling prostitution, and certain other related criminal offenses; to the prevention, prosecution, and punishment of those offenses, and to compensation paid to victims of those offenses.

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. Scheduled for public hearing on **May 18**.

HB 781 (BURKETT) SUPPORT Gives substitute caregivers for children in DFPS more screening and training. Scheduled for public hearing on **May 18**.

HB 1143 (DUKES) WATCHING Relates to services for foster children who are pregnant or minor parents. Sent to Senate Health and Human Services on **May 7**.

HB 1180 (BURKETT/ THOMPSON, SENFRONIA/PRICE) SUPPORT Would establish a child-care facility database on DFPS website. Passed the Senate on **May 15**.

HB 1217 (THOMPSON, SENFRONIA) SUPPORT Relates to reporting information for certain foster children who are missing or who are sex trafficking victims. Voted out of Senate committee on **May 15**.

HB 1309 (TURNER, SYLVESTER) SUPPORT Relates to notification of certain legislators of the death of a child in foster care. Voted out of Senate committee on **May 15**.

HB 4111(NAISHTAT/WALLE) AND SB 949 (URESTI) SUPPORT Relates to release of certain child fatality and near fatality information for abused/neglected children. Public hearing held on **May 6**, sent to Local & Consent Calendar.

HB 4119 (HUGHES/KING, SUSAN) WATCHING Provides procedural protections for those accused of child abuse and neglect. Voted out of committee on **May 4**.

SB 206 (SCHWERTNER/BIRDWELL/CAMPBELL/HINOJOSA/NELSON) WATCHING Relates to functions of DFPS and procedures applicable to suits affecting parent-child relationship, investigation of child abuse and neglect, and conservatorship of a child. Postponed in the House.

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, meeting cancelled on **May 13**.

SB 1406 (SCHWERTNER/URESTI) SUPPORT Relates to protection of certain children through operation of the child safety check alert list. Placed on Intent Calendar on April 16, meeting cancelled on **May 13**.

SB 1496 (URESTI) SUPPORT Would require DFPS to do background checks for certain childcare providers. Referred to Human Services Committee on May 1.

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



Child Health

No Medicaid Expansion bill was heard in committee.

SB 1243 (Burton) and companion HB 2952 (Klick) SUPPORT Allowing unused medication to be donated to charitable organizations. LWV-TX

Registered Support. Bill is now **Engrossed**.

SB 28 (Zaffirini) SUPPORT Relates to immunity from liability for public and open-enrollment charter school campuses that maintain a supply of anaphylaxis medicine for emergency use. LWV-TX Registered Support. It is now **Engrossed**, no companion.

Gun Bills

SB 17 (Estes) OPPOSE Engrossed Bill would allow open carry of firearms. LWV-TX [Testimony concerning open carry](http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB910-Phillips(03-17-2015).pdf) [http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB910-Phillips\(03-17-2015\).pdf](http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB910-Phillips(03-17-2015).pdf) **Companions OPPOSE all.**

- **HB 910 (Phillips) SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING** 5/18/15 | et al., Identical, 05/18/2015.
- **HB 944 (Kacal)** Similar, 03/02/2015 H Referred to Homeland Security & Public Safety.
- **SB 346 (Estes et al.** Duplicate, 02/02/2015 S Referred to State Affairs.

SB 11 (Birdwell) and companion HB 937 (Fletcher) OPPOSE Engrossed Bills would permit open carry of firearms on college campuses. Considered in Calendars LWV-TX. Testimony here: [http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB937-Fletcher\(03-17-2015\).pdf](http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB937-Fletcher(03-17-2015).pdf)

HB 308 (Springer) OPPOSE no companion in the Senate. The "guns everywhere bill" Sent to **Calendars**. See LWV-TX testimony here: [http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB308-Springer\(03-24-2015\).pdf](http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Guns-HB308-Springer(03-24-2015).pdf)



Last week, the annually released rankings of state-supported Pre-K programs by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) once again show that Texas ranks last in quality standards measures compared to all other

states with a public supported Pre-K program. Of the ten quality standards benchmarks identified by NIEER, Texas meets two—comprehensive early learning standards and at least 15 hours per year of in-service training for Pre-K teachers. In contrast, Mississippi's newly created state-sponsored Pre-K program meets all ten benchmarks. Though HB 4 is designed to improve Pre-K quality, it will not improve our NIEER ranking, because it makes no changes to the current Pre-K program, as opposed to requiring all Pre-K programs to meet higher standards, and providing the funds to do so. Instead, HB 4 creates an optional program that provides grant funding for only some districts choosing to implement limited quality improvements. Texas progress remains slow.

Bills moving recently:

HB 4 (Huberty, et al) SUPPORT as amended. Relates to a high quality pre-kindergarten program provided by public school districts. *Senate placed on intent calendar May 6 and passed as amended May 7, 2015. Senate amendment analysis distributed May 11 to House members.*

HB 256 (Howard) SUPPORT Relates to use of compensatory education allotment funding to provide assistance with child care to students at risk of dropping out of school. *House passed as amended May 4, 2015. Senate received May 5 and*

Texas ranks last in quality standards measures compared to all other states with a public supported Pre-K program.

referred to Education Committee May 7 with a hearing May 12, 2015. LWV-TX position was registered as it was left pending in the Senate Education Committee.

HB 537 (Anchia, et al) SUPPORT Provides information on the supplementary birth certificate of an adopted child. *It reported favorably as substituted May 4 with coordinator report filed May 6 and placed on House calendar May 13, 2015.*

HB 1180 (Burkett) SUPPORT Relates to establishing a child-care facility database on the Department of Family and Protective Services' Internet website.

HB 1180 was on the uncontested Senate calendar May 15 and passed. Senate amendment analysis distributed to House members May 15, 2015.

HB 2233 (S. Thompson) SUPPORT Relates to the establishment of a parent education pilot program by the Department of Family and Protective Services. It was referred to Juvenile Justice & Family Issues and *scheduled for public hearing May 6, 2015. It reported favorably w/o amendment May 6, 2015 and placed on House General State calendar for May 13.*

HB 2903 (Davis) SUPPORT as amended. Changes the initial training requirements for child care teachers from 24 hours to 48 hours within the first 90 days of employment; amended with an exception going to nationally-certified center and Texas Rising Star 4-star providers. *Senate receive it April 29; assigned to Health & Human Services May 12 with hearing May 20, 2015 and LWV-TX testimony provided.*

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. It passed May 8, 2015. *Senate received from the House May 11 and referred May 15, 2015 to Natural Resources & Economic Development.*

HEALTH CARE for THOSE OF LESSER MEANS and for OLDER TEXANS Lynda Ender (Dallas)

LEnder@theseniorsource.org



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 reported favorably as substituted 5-13-2015.*

SB 304 (Schwertner) SUPPORT - Relating to the abuse and neglect of residents of rehabilitation and nursing facilities and loss of license. House reported favorably as substituted 5-14-2015

SB 373 (West) SUPPORT Relating to increased oversight by the Department of State Health Services of hospitals that commit certain violations. *House passage as amended reported 5-13-2015.*

SB 760 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Relating to provider access requirements for a Medicaid managed care organization. *House committee report sent to Calendars 5-14-2015.*

SB 914 (Kolkhorst) STUDYING Relating to a council on long-term care facility surveys and informal dispute resolution. *House committee report sent to Local & Consent Calendar 5-14-2015.*

SB 1243 (Burton) SUPPORT Relating to donation of unused prescription drugs. *House referred to Public Health 5-04-2015.*

State House Bills:

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. *Senate left pending in committee 5-12-2015.*

HB 764 (King of Taylor) SUPPORT Relating to the use, collection, and security of health care data collected by the Department of State Health Services. **Senate Scheduled for a public hearing 5-18-2015.**

HB 1337 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relating to requiring institutions and assisted living facilities to maintain guardianship orders of residents. *Senate referred to Health & Human Services 5-07-2015.*

HB 1878 (Laubenberg, et al) SUPPORT Relating to the reimbursement of providers under the Medicaid program for the provision of telemedicine services in a school based setting. *Senate left pending in committee 5-14-2015.*

HB 1945 (Bonnen of Galveston) STUDYING Relating to the provision of direct primary care. *Senate Amendments Analysis distributed 5-12-2015.*

HB 2004 (Darby) SUPPORT Relating to a pilot project to provide emergency telemedicine medical services in rural areas. *Senate referred to Health & Human Services 5-12-2015.*

HB 2084 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relating to transparency in the STAR Medicaid managed care rate-setting process. **Senate scheduled for public hearing on 5-18-2015.**

HB 2133 (Raymond) SUPPORT Relating to health benefit plan coverage for certain equipment and supplies associated with diabetes treatment. *Failed to receive an affirmative vote in the Senate Business & Commerce committee 5-12-2015.*

HB 2219 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relating to health benefit plan should cover injuries related to suicide attempts. *Senate received from the House 5-12-2015.*

HB 2271 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relating to the prescription drug donation program; authorizing fees. **Senate received from the House 5-15-2015.**

HB 2351 (Harless) STUDYING Relating to conflicts of interest and discrimination policies for an ethics or medical committee review of an advance directive. **House postponed 5-14-2015.**

HB 2523 (Collier) SUPPORT Relating to the continuation of certain public benefits, including medical assistance, for individuals after release from confinement in a county jail. *Placed on General State Calendar 5-13-2015.*

HB 2541 (Zerwas) SUPPORT Relating to health benefit plan coverage of certain treatments for enrollees diagnosed with a terminal illness; authorizing administrative and civil penalties. *Senate referred to Business & Commerce 5-06-2015.*

HB 2584 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relating to the authority of the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission to adopt rules defining Alzheimer's and related medical conditions. *Senate Referred to Health & Human Services 5-05-2015.*

HB 2809 (Anderson of McLennan) STUDYING Relating to the creation and operations of health care provider participation programs in certain counties. *Senate Passed 5-15-2015.*

HB 2908 (Parker) SUPPORT Relating to authorizing patients with certain terminal illnesses or severe chronic diseases to access certain investigational drugs, biological products, and devices that are in clinical trials. *Placed on General State Calendar 5-12-2015.*

HB 3024 (Guerra) policies. Senate referred to Business & Commerce 5-13-2015 SUPPORT Relating to coordination of dental benefits under certain insurance.

HB 3025 (Farney) SUPPORT Relating to health benefit coverage for prescription drug synchronization. *Placed on General State Calendar 5-13-2015.*

HB 3036 (Martinez) SUPPORT Relating 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. *Senate received from the House 5-06-2015.*

HB 3074 (Springer) STUDYING Relating to the provision of artificially-administered nutrition and hydration and life-sustaining treatment. *House passed to engrossment 5-14-2015*

HB 3077 (Zerwas) SUPPORT Relating to emergency medical air transportation funding. *Senate referred to Finance 5-13-2015*

HB 3476 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relating to the provision and reimbursement of home telemonitoring services, telemedicine medical services, and telehealth services under the Medicaid program. *Senate referred to Health & Human Services 5-14-2015.*

HB 3519 (Guerra) STUDYING Relating to the use of home telemonitoring services under the Medicaid program. *Senate referred to Health & Human Services 5-13-2015.*

HB 3523 (Raymond) SUPPORT Relating to improving the delivery and quality of Medicaid acute care services and long-term care services and supports. *Senate referred to Health & Human Services 5-06-2015.*

HB 3781 (Crownover) STUDYING Relating to creation of the Texas Health Improvement Network. *House passed to engrossment as amended 5-14-2015.*

HB 3823 (Price, Keough) STUDYING Relating to rate-setting and data collection processes under the program of all-

inclusive care for the elderly (PACE). **Senate considered in a public hearing 5-14-2015.**

HB 3903 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relating to a requirement that a hospital allow a patient to designate a caregiver to receive aftercare instruction regarding the patient. **Committee report sent to Calendars 5-13-2015.**

HB 4056 (White of Tyler) STUDYING Relating to inspection procedures in certain long-term care facilities and the creation of a long-term care legislative oversight committee; providing penalties. **Left pending in committee 5-11-2015.**

SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS Linda Camin (Dallas) lrcamin@hotmail.com



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) Would extend the rights of those with concealed handgun licenses to **open carry into school buildings on college and university campuses** and **passed the Senate.** **HB 937 (Fletcher) OPPOSE** is the companion bill in the House and 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. **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.**

HJR 89 (Shaheen) STUDYING Proposing a constitutional amendment authorizing a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county of a portion of the value of the residence homestead 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. **Committee report sent to Calendars 5-11-2015.**

SB 133 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Extends Mental Aid First Aid Training to include principals, assistant principals, educators, teacher's aides, counselors, nurses, school bus drivers and school resource officers. **Passed the Senate.** **HB 2220 (Coleman)** **Passed the Public Education Committee and sent to Calendars.**

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.** Companion **HB 2023 (Naishtat)** **Reported favorably as substituted in the Public Health Committee and sent to Calendars. Laid on the table subject to call.**

HB 838 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to the addition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to group insurance plans. **Passed the House.** **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)** **Sent to Calendars.**

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. **Passed. Referred to Senate Health and 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 veteran re-entry program for veterans incarcerated in state jails. *Reported favorably as substituted from the Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee. Placed on General State Calendar.*

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 to fund transportation programs. The House Committee Report was sent to Calendars March 19.

HB 457 (McClendon) SUPPORT

Representative McClendon changed this bill that relates to using some TERP funds for rail projects (under the projects overseen by TERP) so that we could support it. It was sent to Calendars on May 12. **If you have a legislator on the Calendars Committee, please contact him/her to set this bill for consideration by the House soon so that it can be considered by the Senate.**

HB 1794 (Geren) OPPOSE This is that “bad bill” which puts limits on what local jurisdictions can fine for exceeding environmental regulations. It has passed the House and Senate, but with amendments. The amendments were distributed to the House on May 21. **Please urge your legislators to vote AGAINST this bill.**

SB 321 (Hinojosa) SUPPORT We changed our position from OPPOSE to SUPPORT after Senator Hinojosa explained how much money was to be transferred from the state highway fund to the Texas Emissions Reduction Fund. He made up for it by greatly increasing funding to LIRAP (the Low Income Vehicle Repair Assistance, Retrofit, and Accelerated Vehicle Retirement Program.) It passed the Senate on April 22 and was referred to the Transportation Committee of the House on April 30. It was sent to Calendars May 19.

SB 603 (Hinojosa) SUPPORT Extends the life of The Texas Emissions Reduction Plan for two years. It passed the Senate on April 9 and referred to the House Environmental Regulation Committee on April 30.

SB 931 (Fraser) OPPOSE This is another “bad bill” that removes all incentives to develop renewable energy. It requires the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to establish a renewable energy credits trading program. The basis for this bill is that the wind energy of Texas leads all other states. It passed the Senate on May 4 and was sent to

the House State Affairs Committee on May 5.

Please contact your representative on the State Affairs Committee and encourage a NO vote on this bill.

Budget Bills of Interest:

I’m sure you know that both HB 1 and SB 2 have gone to Conference Committee. We have hand-delivered letters to the members of the Conference Committee, giving them our positions on several of our issues. You can read that letter here:

http://www.lwvtexas.org/Testimony/2015/Budget_Letter_Nelson_Budget_Analysis_May_12_2015.pdf.

While we support no tax relief at this time of overwhelming needs in education, transportation, health care, and infrastructure, if there were to be a tax cut, the best cut would be a sales tax reduction rather than cutting back on property taxes. A sales tax is much more progressive and affects everyone, including businesses.

SB 1 and SJR 1 (Nelson) OPPOSE passed the Senate on March 25 and it was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee on May 5. It was left pending in committee on May 12. The committee substitute to SB 1 reduces the property tax burden on homeowners by increasing the homestead exemption for school district taxes from \$15,000 to 25 percent of Texas home median market value, while holding harmless the school districts. HJR 1 is a constitutional amendment to put this in place.

SB 8 (Schwertner) OPPOSE provides for the total revenue exemption for the franchise tax. It passed the Senate on March 25, and it was referred to the House Ways & Means Committee on May 5.

SB 9 (Hancock) OPPOSE provides a constitutional limit on the rate of growth of appropriations. Reduces the spending limit by calculating the average rate of population growth times the rate of inflation of the previous biennium and the upcoming biennium. It would be impossible for us to keep up with growing needs with this formula. It passed the Senate on April 9 and was referred to the House Appropriations Committee on May 5. This is one of many bills that reduce the cap on appropriations. An excellent review on spending “caps” was written by former Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby and can be found here: <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/articleHobby-Lawmakers-should-reject-spending-cap-6217284.php#article-signing>

It would be impossible for us to keep up with growing needs with this formula (in SB 9).



The League supports safe transportation, handling, and disposal of radioactive materials, legislation promoting recycling efforts, in particular for electronic waste.

Efforts were made during this session to take the decisions away from cities to determine local laws regarding recycling, best practices, and to meet community health and safety needs regarding hazardous materials within a city.

Calendars Committee

Hunter	512-463-0672
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Cook, Byron	512-463-0730
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Geren	512-463-0610
Harless	512-463-0496
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Johnson	(512) 463-0586
King, Ken	(512) 463-0736
Price, Four	(512) 463-0736
Riddle	512-463-0572
Rodriguez, Eddie	512-463-0674

State Affairs Committee

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Craddick	512-463-0500
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Harless	512-463-0496
Huberty	512-463-0496
Kuempel	(512) 463-0602
Minjarez	(512) 463-0634
Oliveira	512-463-0640
Smithee	512-463-0702
Turner	512-463-0554

Contacts with Legislators Since May 3

<u>Legislator</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Issue Chair</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>LWV Contact</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Action</u>
Rep. Todd Hunter	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted
Rep. Sarah Davis	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted
Rep. Harless	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted
Rep. Larson	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted
Rep. Riddle	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted
Rep. Zerwas	Guns	Chimene	5/8/2015	G. Chimene	Oppose Campus Carry	Tweeted