



Legislative Newsletter

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

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84th Texas Legislature

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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:

House Elections Committee

Contact committee members listed on page 18
Ask for support of **HB 76 (Israel)**, a bipartisan effort to bring online voter registration to Texas.(see description page 5). Especially if you are a constituent of one of the committee members, mention that in your contact.

House State Affairs Committee

- ◆Contact members, listed on page 18. Urge them to support **HB 2254 (Turner)**, which relates to electricity providers charging *more* for lower consumer usage, a practice that clearly does not promote energy conservation.
- ◆Ask them to support **HB 468**, which relates to ability of certain minors to consent to examination or medical treatment related to contraception

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From the Advocacy VP

Hero of the Week: Grace Chimene, who testified on both “Open Carry” as well as “Campus Carry,” opposing them both. She was then interviewed by the *Texas Tribune* as well KVUE. The *Texas Tribune* article was then carried by KVIA in El Paso. *Thanks, Grace!*



You may see the Texas Tribune article here:

<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/03/17/house-committee-takes-open-campus-carry-bills/>

And the KVUE video can be seen here:

<http://www.kvue.com/story/news/state/2015/03/17/house-begins-gun-bill-debates/24904169/>.

Clearly, we are beginning with priority issues of Gov. Abbott...

Another priority is always the House and Senate budget. As the budget geek of the LWV-TX board, I follow both budgets. While the House budget is now complete, and the Senate budget has been accepted. However, it remains in committee, with **Chair Jane Nelson** indicating that she was going to send the tax cut proposals to the House Appropriations Committee so that they could see where they stood. **Senator Kevin Eltife of Tyler** is another of my heroes for continuously telling the committee that they should fund the important items first, such as education, transportation, infrastructure, etc. and then consider tax cuts. We support his approach! I have added a number of budget bills I am following under my Air Quality and Climate Change portfolio.

Laura Blackburn

LWV-Texas Advocacy Vice President

Testimonies Given Since March 6

Bill #	Topic	Committee	Author	Issue Chair	Date	Presenter
Various	Pre-K	H-Public Ed	Various	Lobberecht	3/10/2015	Lobberecht
HB 928	Water	H-N. Resources	Guillen	Vogelson	3/11/2015	C. Frandsen
HB 392	Trans. & Air Quaity	H-Transportation	McClendon	Blackburn	3/12/2015	C. Frandsen
HB 937	Campus Carry (Guns)	Homeland Security & Public Safety	Fletcher	Chimene	3/17/2015	Chimene
HB 910	Open Carry (Guns)	Homeland Security & Public Safety	Phillips	Chimene	3/17/2015	Chimene
HB 468	Contraception for Teen Moms	H-State Affairs	Gonzales	Lowenberg	3/18/2015	J. McFarland
HB 1647	Repeal Stand Your Ground	H-Criminal Jurisdic.	Coleman	Chimene	3/18/2015	G. Chimene

Legislators Visited Since March 6

Legislator	LWV Issue	Issue Chair	Date	LWV Contact
Rep. Elliott Naishtat	Child Health bills	Chimene	3/16/2015	Chimene
Sen. Rodney Ellis	Expanding medicaid	Chimene/Ender	3/16/2015	Chimene
Rep. Donna Howard	Women's Health	Lowenberg	3/18/2015	G. Chimene J. McFarland
Rep. Jessica Farrar	Women's Health	Lowenberg	3/18/2015	G. Chimene J. McFarland
Rep. Mary Gonzales	Women's Health	Lowenberg	3/18/2015	G. Chimene J. McFarland
Rep. Sarah Davis	Women's Health	Lowenberg	3/18/2015	G. Chimene J. McFarland

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 – *Susybelle 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 Talarski, 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- 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 – *Susybelle Gosslee, Dallas* Support safe transportation, handling, and disposal of radioactive materi-

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

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

Water - *Mary Vogelson, 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



Facts on Public School Finance

The National Education Association released a report on March 18 that shows that **Texas schools are spending an average of \$9,559 per student this year.** That is below the national average of \$12,040 and **ranks Texas 38th nationally.** Compared to the national average, Texas spends

\$54,582 less per elementary classroom.

We are now spending \$97 more per student than we did four years ago before the massive spending cuts of 2011. At that time \$5.4 billion was cut from education, and \$3.4 billion was restored in 2013. But considering inflation and rising costs, the \$97 is not significant. Also 49% of funding for schools comes from local property taxes, 40% is from the state, and the rest comes from the federal government. The state's share has been declining.

The House budget is proposing a \$2.2 billion funding increase on top of money for enrollment growth. The Senate has no similar provision in their proposed budget, according to the Equity Center.

Senate Agenda for Schools

The Senate agenda for schools has many ideas that we oppose including

- **SB 6 (Taylor) OPPOSE** Would give letter grades to public school campuses (A-F). They are now rated "met standard" or "improvement required," and next year will be rated unacceptable, acceptable, recognized, and exemplary. We feel this new bill would label schools unfairly.
- In 2013-14, 93% of districts and 86% of individual schools met standard. Those requiring improvement included 76 districts, and 636 campuses (enrolling 7% of public school students), according to the TEA.

Other ideas we oppose include a stronger parent empowerment or trigger law that would allow parents to petition for new management after two years of failing, rather than five **SB 14 (Taylor) OPPOSE**, and tying teacher compensation to performance (okay unless it uses test scores as a measurement).

Success

SB 149 (Seliger) SUPPORT Passed the Senate and was sent to the House on March 17. This bill will create individual graduation committees for high school students who have not

passed all five required end-of-course exams. They must have passed three of them, passed all their high school courses, and have good attendance. It would take effect this year so a potential 28,000 students who might not have graduated would be considered by their committees. The bill would automatically expire in 2017 so that lawmakers must revisit it to make sure it is working as intended.

Bills Considered in Committee

HB 279 (Simmons) WATCH Would extend public education grants to special education students to attend another public school in their district if their school has more than 50% of students who fail the state assessment. *Left pending in Public Education committee on 3/17/2015.*

HB 462 (Goldman) SUPPORT Would allow successful completion of dual-credit courses as an alternative to compliance with end-of-course assessments. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

HB 742 (Huberty) OPPOSE Would delete assessments in writing, Social Studies, and U.S. History. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

HB 743 (Huberty) SUPPORT Would require that state assessment tests 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. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

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. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

HB 1843 (Aycock) SUPPORT Would provide for training academies for public school teachers who provide reading instruction to student in kindergarten through grade three. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

HB 2349 (Aycock) WATCH Would provide for additional ways a student can earn a performance acknowledgement on his diploma. *Scheduled for public hearing on 3/24/2015.*

SB 1 (Nelson) WATCH Relates to restriction on ad valorem taxes and the duty of the state to reimburse certain political subdivisions for revenue loss. *Testimony taken in committee on 3/17/2015.*

SB 6 (Taylor) OPPOSE Would give letter grades of A-F for public school campuses. *Considered in public hearing on 3/17/2015.*

SB 14 (Taylor) OPPOSE Would empower parents to petition for the reconstitution, repurposing, alternative management, or closure of low-performing public school campuses after two years rather than the current five. *Left pending in committee on 3/19/2015.*

SB 149 (Seliger) SUPPORT Would create graduation committees for high school students who have not passed three end-of-course assessments. *House received from the Senate on 3/18/2015.*

SB 893 (Seliger) SUPPORT Would provide for an annual teacher evaluation, minimum pay of \$2754, and better professional development. *Left pending in committee on 3/19/2015.*

SB 1200 (Taylor) WATCH Would provide for the creation of the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability to recommend new systems for student assessment and public school accountability. Report due to the governor by 12/1/2016. *Left pending in committee on 3/19/2015.*

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. *Testimony taken in Finance on 3/17/2015.*

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

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. Since the previous newsletter there has been no movement on the bills in Committee. However, Rep. Celia Israel has made significant progress in gaining support for **HB 76 (Israel) SUPPORT** with 4 joint authors (3 Republicans/1 Democrat), and 41 coauthors (11 Republicans, 30 Democrats). The major push now is getting **HB 76** heard in the **House Elections Committee**.



 Please call or email me if you are a constituent of Chair Jodie Laubenberg, Vice Chair Craig Goldman, or members Pat Fallon, Dade Phelan, or Mike Schofield.

512-560-1334 (c) cindeweatherby@gmail.com

Voter Registration

HB 1096 (Murphy) and SB 984 (Bettencourt) OPPOSE Since the previous newsletter, one bill HB 1096 (Murphy) OPPOSE, regarding voter registration was heard in the House Elections Committee and left pending. A committee substitute is expected. The bill would require a voter's registration address to be the same as her or his driver license address if they have one (or DPS ID). The companion to this bill, SB 984 (Bettencourt) OPPOSE, was referred to Senate State Affairs.

HB 3267 (Herrero) WATCH In the flurry of bills introduced at the deadline, **HB 3267 (Herrero) WATCH** was introduced to call for automatic voter registration as part of the driver license process, similar to a bill recently passed in Oregon. While I would have been inclined to support the bill though expect no action, the Brennan Center has suggested the process would not be a good fit for Texas.

Voter ID

SB 982 (Bettencourt) SUPPORT Two previously filed Voter ID bills were referred to committee: **SB 982 (Bettencourt) SUPPORT** to allow use of expired DLs by voters 70 or older;

SB 983 (Bettencourt) SUPPORT requiring free birth certificates for those trying to obtain a photo ID for voting. Both were referred to Senate State Affairs.

Vote by Mail

Previously-mentioned House vote by mail bills were also referred to House Elections: **HB 1659 (Miller, Rick) SUPPORT**, **HB 1540 (Thompson, Senfronia) SUPPORT**, and **HB 2098 (Miller, Rick) WATCH**.

Young Voter Engagement

SB 990 (Ellis) WATCH The only action on young voter engagement since the previous newsletter is referral of the wide-ranging omnibus voting rights bill **SB 990 (Ellis) WATCH** that lowers the voting age to 16. It was referred to Senate State Affairs.

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

Access to Safe, Legal Abortions

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

Action on previously reported bills:

- **SB 114 (Taylor, Van) WATCH** – Relates to the licensing and registration of abortion facilities—see LNL # 1—was reported favorably without amendments out of the Health and Human Services Committee.
- **HB 416 (Riddle) WATCH** – see LNL # 1—Would require abortion facility personnel to take education and training on human trafficking. Was heard in the House State Affairs Committee on March 12 and left pending.



Bills filed since last Newsletter:

- **SB 1564 (Burton) and companion HB 2531 (Krause) OPPOSE** Relate to young women's access and, among other burdensome requirements: 1. Requires physicians to obtain positive proof that a woman seeking an abortion is not a minor – physicians not providing such proof are subject to criminal penalties. 2. Requires a minor's judicial bypass petition in lieu of parental consent to be filed in the county where the minor resides. 3. Prohibits the minor's attorney in judicial bypass proceeding from also acting as guardian ad litem. 4. Removes potential emotional abuse as a reason for granting a judicial bypass. 5. Prohibits re-filing of a judicial bypass application after a denial and requires attorneys to ascertain if a petition is being re-filed. Noncompliance subjects attorneys to civil penalties.
- **SB 1869 (Lucio) OPPOSE** Would require women to complete a "resource awareness" session of 1- 3 hours before obtaining an abortion.
- **SB 1870 (Lucio) OPPOSE** Would require state agencies, in making strategic plans, to be "guided by the principle that life begins at conception, which is the moment of fertilization."
- **SB 1872 (Campbell) and HB 3130 (Farney)) OPPOSE** – These companion bills are substantially similar to SB 575 (Taylor) and HB 1435 (Smithee) – reported in LNL # 3 – Would prohibit health benefit exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act from providing abortion coverage except when a life-threatening physical condition exists or when there is a risk of irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function should the pregnancy continue.
- **SB 1873 (Campbell) WATCH** Companion to HB 416 (Riddle) – see above under *Action* and also reported in LNL # 1 – Would require abortion facility personnel to take education and training on human trafficking.
- **HB 3446 (Laubenberg) OPPOSE** Would require abortion clinics to post signs advising patients about forced abortions, fathers' obligation of child support, and adoption options and services. This bill has been sent to House State Affairs Committee.
- **HB 3447 (Laubenberg) WATCH** Concerns minimum standards for abortion facilities. The intent is unclear at this time; this bill could become a vehicle for harmful amendments. This bill has been sent to House State Affairs Committee.
- **HB 3765 (Laubenberg) OPPOSE** Would add to the parental consent requirement for a minor's abortion that the both a parent's (or guardian's) and the minor's written consent must be notarized.
- **HB 3994 (Morrison) OPPOSE** Relates to young women's access and among other burdensome requirements: 1. Would require a minor's judicial bypass petition in lieu of parental consent to be filed in the county where the minor resides. 2. Would require minor seeking the bypass to

appear before the court in person. 3. Would require judges in these cases to determine by "clear and convincing evidence" that granting the bypass is in the minor's best interest (current standard of proof is "preponderance of evidence"). 4. Would require clerk of court to submit detailed report for each bypass case filed in that court – and the Office of Court Administration of the Texas Judicial System to compile and publish these reports. Similar to HB 1564.

- **HJR 126 (Simpson) OPPOSE** Proposes a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to life of unborn children and prohibiting abortion to the extent authorized under federal constitutional law as interpreted by the US Supreme Court.

LWV-TX supports proposed legislation intended to ameliorate laws and practices that make it more difficult or present obstacles to obtain a safe, legal abortion.

Bills filed since last Newsletter:

- **SB 1395 (Whitmire) SUPPORT** Companion bill to HB 708 (Farrar) – reported in LNL # 1 – Would remove untruthful information from the "informed consent" to abortion materials that women seeking an abortion are required to read. Also would mandate that the words "embryo or fetus" be substituted for reference to "unborn child" in all these materials. This bill has been referred to Senate State Affairs Committee.
- **HB 3183 (Naishtat) SUPPORT** Would remove the current requirement that pregnant patients be kept on life-sustaining support, even when brain dead and despite such patients' advance directives to the contrary. This bill is essentially the opposite of HB 1901 (Krause) OPPOSE (see LNL # 4) that strengthens current law by requiring appointment of an attorney ad litem to represent the "unborn child" where a pregnant patient is brain dead. Both measures arise out of the horrific situation in Fort Worth in 2013 where a pregnant, brain dead woman was kept on life support against her family's wishes.
- **HB 3966 (Farrar) SUPPORT** Would establish reporting requirements for "limited service pregnancy centers" (such as crisis pregnancy centers) that provide pregnancy counseling or information but do not perform abortions or make referrals to abortion providers and are not licensed to provide medical or health care services. Also prohibits these centers from making false or misleading statements, including medically inaccurate information.

Women's Healthcare Safety Net

LWV-Texas supports proposed legislation that would expand girls' and women's access to comprehensive reproductive health services.

- **HB 466 (Howard) SUPPORT** – Would provide that the Texas Child Health Plan (CHIP) cover contraceptive services, with written parental consent.

- **HB 468 (Gonzalez, Mary) SUPPORT** On March 18, at hearing in the House State Affairs Committee, LWV-TX presented testimony in support of this measure that would amend the Family Code to provide that an unmarried girl 15 years or older who is the mother of a child may consent to examination or treatment related to contraception (see LNL # 1.) The testimony stated in part: "Texas has the highest rate of repeat births to teenagers in the nation, and HB 468 seeks to address this alarming statistic. LWV-TX believes that this measure, by giving already parenting minors greater access to contraception, would reduce the incidence of repeat births. In addition, parenting minors are already at increased risk of poverty and dependence; access to contraception will help protect them from repeat births and further vulnerability to such risks."

Planned Parenthood's participation in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening program. LWV-TX applauds House members on a budget subcommittee who have recommended to the full House Appropriations Committee that this provision be removed from the budget. **Kudos to Rep. Sarah Davis for proposing an alternative measure** that would eliminate the tiered allocation system supported by senators. Davis expressed concern that if the federal government does not approve of this system, Texas could lose \$8.8 million in federal funds that pay for these screening services: "I don't think it is appropriate to continue to fund the women's health program so that we can make some type of political statement...only to chip away at the safety net of providers. ...If we don't have the provider network, women cannot be served. And they will die."



WHAT YOU CAN DO: Please call or email members of the State Affairs Committee listed on page 17 to express your support for HB 468. If you are a constituent, be sure to include that info when making the contact.

LWV-Texas opposes proposed legislation that would make it more difficult for women to access vital health services:

- As reported in LNL # 3, LWV-TX **OPPOSES** the provision in the Senate budget bill that would reduce or eliminate

Previously reported bills that have been assigned to Committees:

House bills:

- **HB 1880** – Human Services
- **HB 1351** – Public Education

HB 708, HB 1435, HB 1648, HB 1901, HB 1942, HB 1976, HB 2531 – State Affairs

WATER Mary Vogelsson (Dallas) mmev@swbell.net



The bills are in! We already have one winner, but also a few losers. Remember, while water is one of our LWVTX priorities, water accessibility and common sense protections of our water resources are still NOT state priorities. Just a note: The State Climatologist has issued a recent report noting that while we do have more rain water falling across the state, climate change is happening

with the warmer trends continuing. With warmer temperatures, the slowly filling reservoirs will also evaporate faster.

Here are a few more "silver linings" and a "cloud"

SB 163 (Larson) SUPPORT This bill was left in committee after a public hearing on March 4, unfortunately, so maybe it will live on, maybe not. It would establish the Southwestern Water Commission to replace the current Multi-State Water Resources Planning Commission to advise the Gov. and Legislature on cross-boundary water issues and initiate discussions with neighboring states and Mexico on water needs, etc. This new cooperative initiative would more broadly address regional water issues.

SB 551 (Seliger) SUPPORT This bill went to a public hearing on March 16, has been reported out of committee favora-

bly without amendments, is recommended for local and uncontested calendar, and has been printed and distributed. Hey: that's step 1 & 2 of 7... It is but a small step in many ways, but it does add a requirement to the Water Conservation Advisory Council that it must make recommendations regarding water conservation to the state and not just make a report!

HB 1088 (Larson, Marquez, et al.) SUPPORT Another bill probably dying: left pending in committee upon public hearing March 18. It would establish the Texas Technical Center for Innovative Desalination.

SB 611 (Perry) OPPOSE This bill will be heard in a public hearing Mar. 23, before the Senate Agricultural, Water and Rural Affairs Committee. Perry is the chair of the committee so the bill may well have "legs"!

In a state where we are already struggling with water as a natural resource, a necessity for the common good and an essential for life and economic sustainability, this bill decreases the transparency of all those issues. As currently being heard, a private applicant who wants to drill a well and withdraw water where there is a GCD would require the GCD, upon request, to NOT have to publicly disclose the owner, amount of withdrawal or the well location in a way that would disclose any of this information to the public. (OUCH)!

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

A number of bills have been introduced that relate to campaign finance and political processes.

Among those, dozens address the need for equitable treatment, transparency, and the prevention of corruption or undue influence. Of those that have been assigned to the House General Investigating and Ethics or State Affairs committees and the Senate State Affairs committee, the following currently appear to have the potential for the greatest impact. *NOTE: This information was current as of 3/20/15.*

SB 10 (Huffman) OPPOSE *Status:* This bill was heard by State Affairs and is already on the Intent Calendar. It would in effect move the Public Integrity Unit from the Travis County District Attorney's office to the Attorney General's office, giving the AG power to determine which offenses to investigate (with State Trooper assistance) and which to refer to their home counties for prosecution, rather than prosecuting at the state level where the crime was actually committed. This violates long-standing legal practice to hold defendants accountable where the crime is committed. This bill effectively *creates a special legal system for politicians.*

Furthermore, according to the Legislative Budget Board: "As a result of this bill there will be a *restriction upon the open records law and the access to government information*" and it will cost nearly \$2 million to set up in 2016 and more than \$1.5 million each year thereafter. Finally, it's unnecessary. A review of public records shows that since its inception in 1978, more Democrats have been prosecuted by the Travis County DA's Public Integrity Unit than Republicans. Impartial treatment is manifest by the recent determination by Travis County DA Lehmborg to refer Attorney General Paxton's investigation to the Dallas and Collin county prosecutors as being the appropriate venues.

It should be noted that a number of bills appear to support SB 10. Among them are:

HJR 69 (Riddle) WATCH *Status:* filed. Proposes a constitutional amendment to permit the Attorney General to prosecute "offenses against public administration, including ethics offenses, offenses involving insurance fraud, or the imposition of the motor fuels tax." This copies the wording of SB 10.

HB 776 (Riddle) OPPOSE *Status:* referred to General Investigations and Ethics; **HB 940 (Fallon) OPPOSE** *Status:* referred to General Investigations and Ethics; and **HB 2222 (Murr and Larson) OPPOSE** *Status:* referred to General Investigations and Ethics with a hearing scheduled for 3/26/15. These bills appear to detail how "the investigation and prosecution of offenses against public administration, including ethics offenses, offenses involving insurance fraud, and offenses involving motor fuels tax" shall be investigated by the Attorney General and "local law enforcement agencies" and prosecuted "in the county in which the defendant resides."

HB 1354 (Howard) SUPPORT *Status:* Assigned to General Investigations and Ethics with a hearing scheduled for 3/26/15. HB 1354 would create a "select interim committee to undertake a comprehensive review of personal financial disclosures made to the Texas Ethics Commission and certain other authorities" for the purpose of determining:

- Whether current statutes achieve their purposes
- The effectiveness of the current disclosure scheme
- What changes should be made to improve effectiveness

The eleven-member committee would include two state senators and two state representatives, as well as two representatives of open government advocacy groups, two members of the professional media, and two members of the public and will be presided over by a member of the Texas Ethics Commission. **The committee would report their findings by January 15, 2017 and be abolished January 20, 2017.**

HB 1656 (Anchia) WATCH Relates to public financing of campaigns for appellate judicial offices.

HCR 49 (Thompson) and SCR (Ellis) WATCH Urging Congress to propose and submit to the states an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that overturns *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, establishing that the spending of money to influence elections shall not be construed as speech under the First Amendment, and clarifying that only natural persons are protected by constitutional rights.



The League promotes transparency and public participation in government. Open government is one of the tenets of democracy, and it is democracy—and the threats against it—that sustain and motivate the League of Women Voters in so many of our activities.

HB 1035 (Johnson); SB 521 (Estes) WATCH Protects those who film,

videotape, or photograph police officers performing their official duties.

HB 1735 (Miller, Rick) WATCH Would direct the early voting clerk to provide upon written request a list of voters who were provided a mail ballot—not earlier than the date of the final canvass of the general election or a runoff election.

HB 1803 (Goldman) SUPPORT Would create a high bar for closing court proceedings by requiring a written court motion, hearing and ruling to do so. Any party would have the right to appeal a closure order.

HB 1942 (Simmons) WATCH Relates to the judicial authority to issue orders allowing minors to consent to abortions and disclosure of that authority.

HB 2191 (Anchia) SUPPORT Would require the Texas Railroad Commission to post on its website comprehensive information about its enforcement actions.

HB 2240 (Turner, Chris) SUPPORT Would require the Department of State Health Services to make public on its website the findings of an inspection, survey, or investigation by the Department.

HB 2567 (Zedler) SUPPORT Relates to the authority of the county auditor to examine the records of special districts.

HB 2620 (Burkett); SB 939 (Kolkorst) WATCH Provides for the financial disclosure of financial studies and reports associated with a toll project, including financial forecasts and traffic and revenue reports.

HB 2716 (Keffer) OPPOSE Would except certain municipally-owned utility companies from disclosure under the Public Information Act.

HB 2518 (Coleman) WATCH Would not require a governmental body to conduct an open meeting when discussing the financials of a business prospect during economic development negotiations.

HB 3001 (Guillen) SUPPORT Would require additional disclosure of information relating to the information of a well on which a hydraulic fracturing treatment is performed.

HB 3087 (Fallon) SUPPORT Would require a special-purpose district to maintain an Internet website on financial transparency, with budgets and an electronic checking account transaction register.

HB 3997 (Elkins) SUPPORT Would give the Attorney General the ability to prosecute an alleged violation of the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Texas Public Information Act if the local prosecutor declines to do so.

HB 4046 (Elkins); SB 1856 WATCH Would protect confidentiality of student records that are held confidential by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 1974 if they are excepted in the state's open records statutes, if those records are maintained by an educational institution funded wholly or partly by state revenue. Records of students seeking admission or transfer to an educational institution could be exempted under these provisions. However, records could be made available on the request of educational personnel; the student's parent, legal guardian or spouse, or a person conducting a child abuse investigation.

SB 308 (Whitmire); HB 2060 (Coleman) SUPPORT Would make private campus police records accessible to citizens under the Texas Public Information Act.

SB 627 (Huffman); HB 1766 (Hunter) SUPPORT Would ensure that journalists have the ability to continue to accurately report on accusations that bring to light such problems as state contracting irregularities or the mistreatment of special education students, state hospital residents, or incarcerated youths.

REDISTRICTING

The League supports measures to achieve an effective method for drawing boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts through legislative and constitutional revision.

HJR 133 (Anchia) WATCH Proposes a constitutional amendment to establish certain principles and procedures for the

drawing of districts for the Texas Senate, the Texas House of Representatives, and the United States House of Representatives.

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.

There is no report on new progress on bills reported on previously.

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.

SB 285 (West) and HB 2821 (Clardy) SUPPORT Would make changes to Texas Truancy law, making it a civil offense instead of a criminal offense. The identical proposals—Senate Bill 285, authored by Sen. Royce West, D-Dallas, and House Bill 2821, authored by Travis Clardy, R-Nacogdoches—not only would decriminalize truancy but also would lay out reasonable truancy intervention protocols for schools. Both bills have been referred to Committee.

SB104 (Hinojosa) and HB 330 (WU) 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) and HB 1586 (1586) SUPPORT Relate 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.

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. 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.

HB 3785 (Marquez) New The provisions of the bill would authorize the possession of cannabis for medical use. The provisions of this bill describe in detail what is authorized for cultivating, distribution, transportation, and delivery of can-

nabis for medical purposes. The bill was filed March 13, 2015 and currently is not assigned to a committee

HB 892 (Klick/Zerwas/Zedler) SUPPORT No action. Referred to Public Health Committee. The bill contains provisions for authorizing the dispensing of low THC-cannabis when prescribed by a licensed physician.

HB. 507 (Moody) SUPPORT Bill is assigned to the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. No action. The bill relates to civil penalty for possession of certain amounts of marijuana. The bill states that the court may waive or reduce civil penalty if the person attends a program that provides education in substance abuse.

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.

Report as of March 20, 2015:

HB 536 (Whitmire) SUPPORT Would change the designation of certain prostitution prevention programs to “programs against commercially sexually-exploited persons.” On March 19 HB 536 was recommended by Criminal Justice Committee for local and uncontested calendar.



LWV-TX supports appropriate state services for undocumented immigrants, especially in the areas of education and healthcare. It will monitor any attempt to curb civil rights of immigrants.

There is no report on bills this issue.

Social Policy/Human Resources



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

Status of previously reported bills:

HB 1180 (BURKETT) WATCHING Relates to establishing a child-care facility database on DFPS website. Referred to Government Transparency and Operations March 3. Referred to

Human Services March 19.

HB 1217 (THOMPSON, SENFRONIA) SUPPORT Relates to reporting information for certain foster children who are missing or are sex-trafficking victims. Referred to Juvenile Justice and Family Issues on March 3. Scheduled for public hearing on March 25.

HB 1309 (TURNER, SYLVESTER) SUPPORT Relates to notification of certain legislators of the death of a child in foster care. Referred to Juvenile Justice and Family Issues on March 5. Left pending in committee March 9 after testimony.

HB 1395 (BURKETT) SUPPORT Relates to protection of certain children through operation of a child safety check alert list.



I am still impressed legislators aren't trying to prevent kids from obtaining Medicaid or CHIP. That left me with some extra time and energy on my hands. So since healthy parents make healthy children, I expanded my health care issue to advocate for expanding Medicaid and bringing in the Federal dollars to Texas. One in four Texans do not have health insurance. LWV TX joined with [Cover](#)

[Texas Now](#) to coordinate efforts at the capitol to advocate for Medicaid expansion

I also presented testimony against Campus Carry ([HB 937](#)) and Open Carry ([HB 910](#)). The League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. We believe government and social institutions should play an active role in preventing violent behavior.

Because I am a nurse, my testimony concerning guns always includes information about the cost and prevalence of firearm injuries. *Cheers to good health. Grace Chimene*

Children's Health Insurance Plan CHIP

SB 847 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT Would establish no waiting period for CHIP In Health and Human Services Committee

Expanding Medicaid and closing the Coverage Gap

HB 2270 (Munoz) WATCH An attempt to expand Medicaid in certain counties in Texas.

HB 977 (Collier) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid. Referred to Appropriations.

SB 423 (West) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid in the ACA. Referred to Health and Human services

HB 1138 (Israel) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid under the ACA. Referred to Appropriations

SB 89 (Ellis) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid. Referred to Health and Human Services.

HB 3035 (Martinez "Mando) WATCH Study on the saving to the state by expanding Medicaid.

HB 116 (Martinez Fischer) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid under the ACA. Referred to Appropriations

HB 1071 (Zerwas) WATCH Establishes an advisory council on palliative care and quality of life. Referred to Human Services.

HB 1093 (Guillen) WATCH Relates to transparency in the STAR Medicaid rate setting.

SB 89 (Ellis) SUPPORT Expands Medicaid. Referred to Health and Human Services.

HB 3366 (Sheffield) and SB 1612 (Kolkhorst) WATCH Relates to reimbursement of prescription drugs under Medicaid. Referred to Public Health

SB 1612 (Kolkhorst) WATCH Reimbursement of prescription drugs under Medicaid

HB 3445 (Laubenberg) WATCH Sets fines for Medicaid and CHIP patients for use of emergency rooms.

HB 3445 (Coleman) SUPPORT

Continues Medicaid eligibility for women for 6 months after a birth. Referred to Public Health.

Bills Already reported on:

HB 839 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Referred to Public Health. Calls for presumptive eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP for children less than 19 leaving a correctional facility.

HB 1339 (Gutierrez) SUPPORT Decreases waiting period for CHIP. Referred to Insurance.

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



Too many of our state policies and practices do not reflect what is known about child development—particularly, what has been learned about brain development and the critical role that systematic exposure to high-quality learning opportunities plays in academic abilities and a child's future development. Key elements of high-quality prekindergarten include:

- full-day instruction
- small classes and low student to staff ratio, and
- teachers and educational aides with specific training in early childhood education.

Bills that recently have been filed or moved through the process:

HB 4 (Huberty, Deshotel, K. King, Giddings) and companion SB 801 (Zaffirini, Campbell) WATCH Relate to a high quality prekindergarten program provided by public school districts. Would replenish withdrawn funds and expire in 2018. *House hearing March 10, 2015 with testimony provided and left pending in committee. HB 4 committee substitute is expected.*

HB 173 (Alvarado) SUPPORT Would require information be reported in Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) by a public school district regarding prekindergarten classes. *House hearing March 10, 2015 with testimony provided and left pending in committee.*

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 referred to Public Education and was set for public hearing on Feb. 24. Testimony taken, substitute considered and left pending. House reported favorably as substituted in committee March 3 *with report filed March 9, and sent to Calendar Committee March 10.*

HB 296 (Wu) SUPPORT Would regulate class size of certain prekindergarten programs offered by a school district. *House hearing March 10, 2015 with testimony provided and left pending in committee.*

HB 391 (Muñoz, Jr.) and HB 424 (Dutton) SUPPORT Would provide free full-day prekindergarten for certain children. *House referred to HB 391 and HB 424 Public Education. HB424 Hearing March 10, with testimony and left pending in committee.*

HB 532 (McClendon) & companion SB 1085 (Garcia) SUPPORT Would enable a nonexempt employee to participate in certain academic, extracurricular, and developmental activities of the employee's child. House referred to Business & Industry Feb. 18, 2015. *SB 1085 filed March 9 and referred to Natural Resources & Economic Development March 16. House hearing scheduled for March 17, with signature support provided.*

HB 537 (Anchia, Israel, Coleman, Naishtat, M. González, Alonzo, Farrar, C. Turner, Howard, Wu) & companion SB 250 (Garcia, Rodriguez) SUPPORT Would provide information on the supplementary birth certificate of an adopted child. Senate and House referred to State Affairs Jan. 28 and Feb. 19, 2015 respectively and *authors/coauthors added March 18, 2015. House scheduled for public hearing March 18, 2015 with signature support provided.*

HB 617 (Deshotel), HB 3887 (Dutton) and companion SB 1123 (West) SUPPORT Would establish the office of early learning within the Texas Education Agency, collecting early childhood data from other agencies. *SB 1123 filed March 10. HB 3887 filed March 13. SB 1123 referred to Education March 17.*

HB 788 (Miller, Rick) SUPPORT Relates to the regulation of certain child-care facilities and increasing a fee. House referred to Human Services Feb. 23, 2015 with a public hearing scheduled March 9, 2015 *and left pending in committee.*

HB 1100 (Johnson, Farney Thompson, Senfronia, Zerwas, González, Mary) SUPPORT Relates to a gold standard full-day prekindergarten program provided by public school districts. *Twenty-eight co-authors added through March 18, 2015. House hearing March 10, 2015 with testimony provided and left pending in committee.*

HB 1180 (Burkett) & companion SB 1814 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Relates to establishing a child-care facility database on the Department of Family and Protective Services. Internet website. **HB 1180** referred to Government Transpar-

ency & Operation March 3, 2015 with *referral correction to Human Services March 19, 2015*. **SB 1814** filed March 13, 2015.

HB 1188 (Deshotel) SUPPORT

Creates a joint interim committee to study and make recommendations regarding early childhood education. *House hearing March 10, 2015 with testimony provided and left pending in committee.*

HB 1521 (Farrar) WATCH Relates to state agency authority to establish child-care subsidy programs. *House referred to State Affairs March 16, 2015 with scheduled public hearing March 25, 2015.*

HB 1765 (Lozano) SUPPORT Relates to the Texas Education Agency developing a strategic plan to increase enrollment in state prekindergarten programs. *House referred to Public Education March 12, 2015.*

HB 2233 (S. Thompson) SUPPORT Would establish a parent education pilot program by the Department of Family and Protective Services. *Filed March 3, 2015 and referred to Juvenile Justice & Family Issues March 17, 2015.*

HB 2415 (Burkett) WATCH Relates to open-enrollment charter schools that provide only prekindergarten programs. *Filed March 5, 2015 and referred to Public Education March 13, 2015.*

HB 2417 (Deshotel) SUPPORT Would implement measures to ensure quality criteria in prekindergarten programs offered by school districts with private entity eligible to contract. *Filed March 5, 2015 and referred to Public Education March 13, 2015.*

HB 2421 (Deshotel) SUPPORT Relates to a TX study and report on early childhood education in all agencies. *Filed March 5, 2015 and referred to Public Education March 13, 2015.*

HB 2843 (Lucio III) SUPPORT Would require certain school districts to offer district-funded or tuition-supported prekindergarten for half and full-day Pre-K. *Filed March 10, 2015 and referred to Public Education on March 16, 2015.*

HB 2886 (Deshotel) & companion SB 1632 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Would provide a training course for public school prekindergarten teachers. *Filed March 10 and 13 respectively. House referred to Public Education March 16, 2015.*

HB 3502 (Deshotel) SUPPORT Relates to the selection of entities to perform functions required of the State Center for

Early Childhood Development. *Filed March 12 and referred to Public Education on March 18, 2015.*

HB 3574 (Alonzo) SUPPORT Relates to a study on early detection and early intervention in cases of children with autism spectrum disorders. *Filed March 12 and referred to Public Health on March 20, 2015.*

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. *Filed March 13 and referred to Human Services March 19, 2015.*

HB 4107 (Walle) SUPPORT Relates to the appropriation of money from the economic stabilization fund to finance universal, high quality, prekindergarten education programs. *Filed March 13, 2015.*

SB 23 (Zaffirini) & companion HB 2217 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to the availability of free prekindergarten programs for qualified 3 and 4-year olds in public schools. Senate referred to the Education Committee Jan. 26, 2015. **HB 2217** filed March 5 and *referred to Public Education March 13, 2015.*

SB 886 (Garcia) & companion HB 2903 (Davis) SUPPORT Would require 60 hours training for certain child-care workers without previous training. Senate referred to Health & Human Services March 4, 2015. **HB 2903** filed March 10 and *referred to Human Services March 16, 2015.*

SB 1269 (West) & companion HB 3322 (Alvarado) SUPPORT Relates to committee on standards for child care licensing, adding two child advocacy members to appointed council, regulation of and federal funding for certain child-care providers reviewing child/staff ratios and reimbursement rates. **SB 1269** and **HB 3322** filed March 11 and 12 respectively. **SB 1269** referred to Health & Human Services March 17, 2015. **HB 3322** referred to Human Services March 17, 2015.

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. *Filed on March 12 and referred to Health & Human Services March 19, 2015.*

SB 1752 (West) SUPPORT Relates to half & full-day prekindergarten programs in public schools with teachers or aides receiving 30 hours of training with private entity contracts allowed. *Filed on March 13, 2015.*

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:

Newly Filed Bills:

SB 553 (Schwertner) STUDYING Relates to the informal dispute resolution process for certain disputes between the Department of Aging and Disability Services and certain long-term care facilities.

SB 760 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Relates to provider access requirements for a Medicaid-managed care organization.

SB 914 (Kolkhorst) STUDYING Relates to a council on long-term care facility surveys and informal dispute resolution.

SJR 16 (Campbell) OPPOSE Proposes a constitutional amendment relating to the rights of individuals to choose or decline to choose to purchase health insurance coverage.

SB 1039 (Rodriguez) SUPPORT Relates to seeking federal authorization to provide health benefit plan coverage to certain low-income individuals through the private marketplace who are not covered by Medicaid expansion.

SB 1112 (Burton) OPPOSE Would prohibit use of state resources to implement or enforce the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

SB 1177 (Eltife) SUPPORT Relates to the provision of telemedicine medical services by a physician.

SB 1243 (Burton) SUPPORT Relates to donation of unused prescription drugs.

SB 1397 (Campbell) SUPPORT Relates to the establishment of a rural resident physician grant program.

SB 1471 (Watson) SUPPORT Relates to the use of home telemonitoring services under the Medicaid program.

SB 1475 (Garcia) SUPPORT Relates to establishing an enhanced Medicaid managed care consumer support system.

SB 1493 (Uresti) SUPPORT Relates to emergency medical air transportation funding.

SB 1520 (Seliger) SUPPORT Relates to transparency of certain information related to certain health benefit plan coverage including formularies on website.

SB 1546 (Perry, Hall) STUDYING Relates to advance directives, including do-not-resuscitate orders; creating a criminal offense.

SB 1558 (Campbell) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage for certain equipment and supplies associated with diabetes treatment.

SB 1562 (Taylor of Galveston) SUPPORT Relates to non-preferred provider claims under a preferred provider benefit plan related to emergency care.

SB 1602 (Kolkhorst) SUPPORT Relates to the delivery of Medicaid managed-care benefits in nursing homes and reimbursement rates for certain of those services being the same as for Medicare.

SB 1612 (Kolkhorst) STUDYING Relates to the reimbursement of prescription drugs under the Medicaid managed care and child health plan programs.

Action on Senate Bills Reported in Past Newsletters:

SB 304 (Schwertner) SUPPORT Relates to the abuse and neglect of residents of rehabilitation and nursing facilities and loss of license. **Considered in public hearing March 18.**

SB 373 (West) SUPPORT Relates to increased oversight by the Department of State Health Services of hospitals that commit certain violations. **Placed on intent calendar**

SB 914 (Kolkhorst) STUDYING Relates to a council on long-term care facility surveys and informal dispute resolution. **Referred to Health & Human Services 3-9-15**

Bills Referred to Health & Human Services Committee:

SB 304 Left pending in committee

SB 373 (oversight of hospitals), 3-4-15 Considered in public hearing

Bills Referred to Business & Commerce Committee:

SJR 16

State House Bills:

Newly Filed Bills:

HB 1770 (Hunter) STUDYING Relates to access to pharmacists, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical care under certain health benefit plans. Referred to Insurance.

HB 1878 (Laubenberg) SUPPORT Relates to the reimbursement of providers under the Medicaid program for the provision of telemedicine medical services in a school-based setting. Referred to Public Health.

HB 1945 (Bonnen of Galveston) STUDYING Relates to the provision of direct primary care. Referred to Public Health; **scheduled for public hearing March 24.**

HB 2004 (Darby) SUPPORT Relates to a pilot project to provide emergency telemedicine medical services in rural areas.

HB 2084 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relates to transparency in the STAR Medicaid managed care rate-setting process. Referred to Human Services.

HB 2133 (Raymond) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage for certain equipment and supplies associated with diabetes treatment. Referred to Insurance.

HB 2157 (Miller of Fort Bend) 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.

HB 2172 (Smithee) SUPPORT Relates to coverage of telehealth services or telemedicine medical services under health benefit plans. Referred to Insurance.

HB 2219 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan should cover injuries related to suicide attempts. Referred to Insurance.

HB 2250 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to the delivery of telemedicine medical services and telehealth services in a person's residence. Referred to Public Health.

HB 2270 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relates to the expansion of eligibility for Medicaid in certain counties under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Referred to Appropriations.

HB 2271 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relates to the prescription drug donation program; authorizing fees. Referred to Public Health March 13.

HB 2351 (Harless) STUDYING Relates to conflicts of interest and discrimination policies for an ethics or medical committee review of an advance directive. Referred to State Affairs.

HB 2523 (Collier) SUPPORT Relates to the continuation of certain public benefits, including medical assistance, for individuals after release from confinement in a county jail. Referred to Public Health.

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. Referred to Insurance.

Action on House Bills Reported in Past Newsletters:

HB 550 (Price) STUDYING Relates to the provision of health and human services in this state, including the powers and duties of the Health and Human Services Commission and other state agencies, and the licensing of certain health professionals; clarifying certain statutory provisions; authorizing the imposition of fees. **Placed on Major State Calendar 3-26-15**

HB 1770 (Hunter) STUDYING Relates to access to pharmacists, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical care under certain health benefit plans. **Referred to Insurance 3-12-15**

HB 1878 (Laubenberg) SUPPORT Relates to the reimbursement of providers under the Medicaid program for the provision of telemedicine medical services in a school-based setting. **Referred to Public Health 3-11-15**

HB 1945 (Bonnen of Galveston) STUDYING Relates to the provision of direct primary care. **Scheduled for public hearing on 3-24-15**

HB 2004 (Darby) SUPPORT Relates to a pilot project to provide emergency telemedicine medical services in rural areas. **Referred to Public Health 3-11-15**

HB 2084 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relates to transparency in the STAR Medicaid managed care rate-setting process. **Referred to Human Services 3-13-15**

HB 2133 (Raymond) SUPPORT Relates to health benefit plan coverage for certain equipment and supplies associated with diabetes treatment. **Referred to Insurance 3-13-15**

HB 2157 (Miller of Fort Bend) 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 3-12-15**

HB 2172 (Smithee) SUPPORT Relates to coverage of telehealth services or telemedicine medical services under health benefit plans. **Referred to Insurance 3-12-15**

HB 2219 (Coleman) SUPPORT States that health benefit plans should cover injuries related to suicide attempts. **Referred to Insurance 3-13-15**

HB 2250 (Coleman) SUPPORT Relates to the delivery of telemedicine medical services and telehealth services in a person's residence. **Referred to Public Health 3-13-15**

HB 2270 (Munoz, Jr.) SUPPORT Relates to the expansion of eligibility for Medicaid in certain counties under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. **Referred to Appropriations 3-17-15**

HB 2271 (Sheffield) SUPPORT Relates to the prescription drug donation program; authorizing fees. **Referred to Public Health 3-13-15**

HB 2523 (Collier) SUPPORT Relates to the continuation of certain public benefits, including medical assistance, for individuals after release from confinement in a county jail. **Referred to Public Health 3-16-15**

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. **Referred to Insurance 3-16-15.**

Bill Referred to Appropriations:

HB 373, 2-18-15

HB 977, 3-4-15

HB 1138, 3-3-15

Bills Referred to Insurance:

HB 185, Scheduled for a public hearing on 3-11-15

HB 761, 2-23-15

HB 778, Scheduled for a public hearing on 3-11-15

HB 817, 2-26-15

HB 818, 2-26-15

HB 1105, 3-2-15

Bill Referred to Criminal Jurisprudence:

Bill Referred to Human Services:

HB 550, 3-2-15 Reported favorably as amended

HB 1093, 3-5-15

HB 1337, 3-5-15

Bill Referred to Public Health:

HB 698, 2-23-15

HB 762, 2-23-15

HB 764, 2-26-15

HB 1071, 3-5-15

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 17 (Estes) OPPOSE This bill would allow those with concealed handgun licenses to **open carry** their handguns in shoulder or belt holsters has **passed the Senate**. **HB 910 (Phillips)** is the companion bill in the House.

SB 11 (Birdwell) and companion bill HB 937 (Fletcher) OPPOSE Would extend the rights of those with concealed handgun licenses to **open carry into school buildings on college and university campuses**. SB 11 **passed the Senate**.

HB 937 is the in the House. 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 158 (Uresti) SUPPORT Recommends putting mental health professionals on existing school health advisory councils.

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

HB 679 (Turner) SUPPPORT Proposes the study of mental health and other needs of homeless youth.

HB 838 (Naishtat) SUPPORT Relates to the addition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to group insurance plans.

HB 1241(Lozano) SUPPORT Would pro-rate the forgiveness of student loan debt relative to the time the graduate works in mental health.

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS Lynn Walshak (Houston Area) lynnwalshak@gmail.com



LWV-TX supports laws relating to mandatory homeowner associations, which would protect against unreasonable foreclosure on homesteads, assure priority of payments, assure secret ballots or protect against fraudulent elections, and assure that homeowners have access to meetings and records.

HB 1335 (Roland Gutierrez) WATCH

Would set limits on attorney fees and other costs that may be claimed against a homeowner in a foreclosure proceeding. **Referred to Business and Industry March 9.**

There is no explanation of computation of fees and costs claimed, whether resulting from 209. 0064 Third Party Col-

lections, 209.0062, Alternative Payment Schedule for Certain Assessments, or, 209.0063 Priority of Payments.

These proceedings are exceedingly different in potential results. No homeowner is **required** to sign a payment plan, which usually is the first action toward a foreclosure. The homeowner can claim the right of computation of assessments payments via Priority of Payments proceedings from which there should be much less risk of claim to foreclose.

Homeowners need to have extensive educational information provided to them, to reflect the benefits for a homeowner to insist their assessment payments be processed under Sec. 209.0063 of the Property Code. With revised and additional wording in the bill, perhaps SUPPORT could be offered.

Natural Resources

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



HB 392 (McClendon) SUPPORT Would authorize an optional county fee for vehicle registration to fund certain transportation projects. We presented testimony supporting this bill, and it is

pending in the Transportation Committee.

HB 2078 (Anchia) SUPPORT Would create a Global Climate Change Commission. I spent some time with Rep. Anchia, who was very informed about climate change. He

wants us to definitely give testimony to the Committee. His bill was assigned to the International Trade & Inter-governmental Affairs Committee, which he chairs. We will certainly be there!

New Bills:

HB 1794 (Geren) WATCH Places maximum penalties on certain environmental regulations. It was left pending in committee on March 17.

HB 2254 (Turner) SUPPORT Would provide that a retail electric provider may not bill a customer for a charge or fee, or award a customer a bill credit based on whether the customer has used at least a certain amount of electricity in a particular period. A number of electricity providers charge more if you use less than a certain amount. It is scheduled for a public hearing on March 25 in the **State Affairs Committee**.

 **The members of the State Affairs Committee are listed below on page 17. If one of your legislators is on the committee, please call or email your support!**

SB 603 (Hinojosa) SUPPORT Extends the life of (TERP) by two years by extending the years the fees are to paid to TERP. It was left pending in the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee on March 12. It is identical to HB 652 by Isaac, which was referred to Environmental Regulation and read for the first time on February 19.

SB 741 (Watson) WATCH Relates to the demand response in Electricity Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) requiring that ERCOT use both supply side and demand side resources to contribute to the adequacy of the electric system. It was referred to the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee on March 18.

SB 1685 (Huffines) OPPOSE Repeals (TERP) and the low-income vehicle repair assistance, retrofit, and accelerated vehicle retirement program. It was filed on March 13 and has not been assigned to a committee. We have supported TERP since its inception. Even industry considers it cost effective in reducing nitrogen gases, which form ozone. **It is one of those "really bad bills!"**

SB 1741 (Hinojosa) WATCH Lowers the amount of many TERP programs so that 50% can go to the diesel emissions

reduction incentive program. It was filed on March 13 but not assigned to a committee.

SB 1849 (Nichols) OPPOSE Would reduce title fees that would have gone to TERP by up to \$20.00 and directs them to the Texas Mobility Fund, plus another \$5.00 which would have gone to TERP will remain in the Texas Mobility Fund. Many legislators are looking to TERP to fund transportation and other projects. TERP has millions of dollars that have been left over from other years and not used. TERP funding is directly related to public health and was established for that reason. It would be unfortunate if these funds were directed elsewhere.

SB 1949 (Hinojosa) WATCH This bill is exactly the same as SB 1741 (above) except that it would reduce from \$500,000 to \$200,000 funds for clean air planning activities in affected counties, thus sending more to the diesel emissions reduction program. It was filed on March 13 but not assigned to a committee.

Texas Budget Bills of Interest:

SB 9 (Hancock, CoAuthors Birdwell & Creighton) WATCH This is the enabling legislation for SJR 2, below, Relates to a constitutional limit on the rate of growth of appropriations. It adds the rate of growth of the state's population during the current biennium to the rate of inflation or deflation in the state during the current fiscal year. It was heard in the Senate Finance Committee on March 17 and left pending in committee.

SJR 2 (Hancock, Co-Authors Birdwell and Creighton) OPPOSE Proposes a constitutional amendment concerning the limitation on the rate of growth in appropriations. It is based on SB 9 and was also heard in the Finance Committee on March 17 and left pending in committee.

Listed below are those supporting and those opposing:
FOR: Talmadge Heflin, director of Center for Fiscal Responsibility at Texas Public Policy Foundation, Austin (also providing written testimony) and Peggy Venable, Policy Director for Americans for Prosperity, Austin
AGAINST: Eva DeLuna-Castro, Budget Analyst for Center for Public Policy Priorities, Austin (also providing written testimony), Patty Quinzi, TX Legislative Counsel for Texas-American Federation of Teachers, Austin, (also providing written testimony).

ENERGY Penny Miller (Wichita Falls) pmiller737@aol.com

The League promotes 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.

HB 1823 (Guillen) WATCH Relates to the name and governance of the Texas Railroad Commission. **Referred to Energy Resources.**

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

Two bills previously reported are set for public hearings March 24

HB 87 (Gonzalez) WATCH This bill relates to the collection and recycling of computer and television equipment by certain large retailers with sales over \$5 million and 75,000 square feet and provides for the imposition of administrative penalties. **Scheduled for public hearing on March 24.**

HB 1058 (Farias) WATCH This bill relates to notice and information provided by a municipal solid waste facility and a commercial transporter of solid waste regarding recycling programs for certain electronic waste. **Scheduled for public hearing on March 24.**

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



No additional action taken on bills from last LNL. Hearings are still to be held on bills referred to House from Senate. Decisions will be made on future of bills when the Legislature decides on the amount of funds that can be utilized from projected "Rainy Day Fund" income.

Hearings 3/24/2015 in House Transportation Committee

HB 20 (Simmons et al) WATCH Relates to the operations of and transportation planning and expenditures by the Texas Department of Transportation and local transportation entities.

HB 1350 (Burkett) WATCH Relates to a limitation on the amount of tolls and other charges that may be imposed by toll project entities for the use of toll projects.

HB 1835 (Sanfiord) WATCH Relates to a prohibition on converting certain segments or lanes of a state highway to toll projects or managed lanes.

HB 80 (Craddick/Cook/Lucio III/Harless/Wu and companion Bill SB 25 (Zaffirini) SUPPORT Relates to the use of a portable wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle,. Bill makes driving while texting a misdemeanor, punishable with a fine of up to \$99 on first offense and up to \$200 for additional infractions. **HB 80 placed on General State Calendar March 25.**

 **Calls to Action!**

Texas House Elections Committee—Call or Email them in support of HB 76

Chair	Rep. Jodie Laubenberg	(512) 463-0186	
Vice-Chair	Rep. Craig Goldman	(512) 463-0608	
Members	Rep. Pat Fallon	(512) 463-0694	
	Rep. Celia Israel	(512) 463-0821	
	Rep. Dade Phelan	(512) 463-0706	
	Rep. Ron Reynolds	(512) 463-0494	
	Rep. Mike Schofield	(512) 463-0528	

Texas House State Affairs Committee—Call or Email them in support of HB 468 & HB 2254

Chair	Rep. Byron Cook	(800) 643-7026	
Vice-Chair	Rep. Helen Giddings	(512) 463-0953	
Members	Rep. Tom Craddick	(512) 463-0500	
	Rep. Marsha Farney	(512) 463-0309	
	Rep. Jessica Farrar	(512) 463-0620	
	Rep. Charlie Geren	(512) 463-0610	
	Rep. Patricia Harless	(512) 463-0496	
	Rep. Dan Huberty	(512) 463-0520	
	Rep. John Kuempel	(512) 463-0602	
	Rep. René Oliveira	(512) 463-0640	
	Rep. John T. Smithee	(512) 463-0702	
	Rep. Sylvester Turner	(512) 463-0554	