

Inside the New York City League

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

45 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016 - Tel. (212) 725-3541 -Fax (212) 725-3443

Fall 2002

LWVNYC Chair Robin Bahr's Comments

The Advisory Board met in July to review action plans for the coming year. This was a luxury of sorts and a barometer of just how far we have come. Last July the board was fighting for survival. This year we were planning the year's program. It was a good feeling.

If you attended the annual meeting, you know how hard the board worked to make that

happen. From the financial point of view, we netted approximately \$28,000 out of incoming revenues of \$111,000. The Education Fund was increased by \$20,000. We have approximately \$40,000 in the checking account. We enlisted new volunteers. We revived the newsletter, the Speakers Bureau, our membership meetings and a variety of outings. A new

web site has been created. The office has been cleaned up. Beth Stark has become our part-time Executive Director. In short, the organization has been revitalized. We are at last in a position to take charge of our future

The board has continued to meet the challenge. The following is a summary of committee plans. Most of the directions

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LWVUS Recognizes NYC & Robin Bahr



Reproduced courtesy of New York State LWV—Summer 2002 Voter

Robin Bahr (at left with LWVUS Board member Joan Paik), LWV of the City of New York, stepped into the spotlight at the LWVUS convention in Miami when she was honored for her work in revitalizing that League. Robin, who was new to the League, accepted the challenge of leading the NYC League, which was deep in debt with a shaky, declining leadership. Robin with a typical can-do New Yorker attitude stepped in and turned that League around.

Equal Rights Amendment Revisited

The ERA Campaign Network is a network of people all around the United States, supporting and/or working to achieve the addition of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to our United States Constitution.

The Equal Rights Amendment is a matter of simple justice for all the citizens of the United States. It reads:

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

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**League of Women Voters
of the City of New York
2002-2003**

Advisory Board

Officers

Chair	Robin Bahr
Vice-Chairs	
Communications	Valerie Warner
Development	Pamela Roderick
Membership	Fannie Conner
Program	Elma Smolen
Tel Info Svc (TIS)	Donna Landay
Secretary	Barbara Barr
Treasurer	Eileen McEvoy

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Miriam Adelman	Nicky Heller
Laura Altschuler	Adrienne Kivelson
Marian Bott	Lillian Seidman
Katherine Flaherty	Arlene Solomon
	Rose Yalan
LWV/NYS Liaison	Mary Lou Urban
<i>Inside</i> Editor	Patricia Young
Executive Director	Beth Stark

In Memoriam

Amy Beissel

November 18, 1944—April 12, 2002

A dedicated inspirational colleague and friend, her memory will be cherished forever by all of us at the League of Women Voters. Amy's sudden death came just a few short months after she took over, for the second time around, the awesome task of keeping our office running.

First as Office Administrator and later as Executive Director, Amy modernized our office in the 1980s—buying our first computer, updating our membership, fundraising and publications systems. She worked with three League presidents before going to Europe with her husband Denis, the Director of Operations for the Human Resources Office of the United Nations.

After five years abroad she returned to our current, smaller headquarters as a volunteer and then as a part-time Executive Director in December 2001. Between that time and her tragic death, she coordinated the launch of our web site, meetings with public officials, publications distribution, the creation of new databases and monthly Advisory Council meetings. Amy was the linchpin that made our office and our organization run well.

She is survived by her husband, parents, brother, sister, three daughters and a granddaughter.

The 2003 issue of *They Represent You* will be dedicated to Amy Beissel.

All contributions to the League of Women Voters of the City of New York made in her memory are greatly appreciated.

Tribute Fund

In Memory of

Mary Kobuke Atagi
by Rose and Harvey Yalan

Amy Goell
by Paula Miller

Vincent Leardi
by LWV Midwood Branch

Adele Trobe
by Jane and David Soyler

Contributions in Memory of Amy Beissel

Laura Altschuler	Dorothy Kreiselman
Robin Bahr	Donna Landay
Barbara Barr	Cynthia Loewy
Beatrix Dinitz	Sarah Sacknoff
Marjorie Ferrigno	Lillian Seidman
Helen Heller	Elizabeth Shwal
Adrienne Kivelson	Mary Lou Urban
Gladys Krasner	Rose & Harvey Yalan
	Patricia Young

Robin Bahr's Comments

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given at the annual meeting have been incorporated into these activities. The only areas not covered are specific advocacy issues for which we still need program chairs.

Your help is needed on every front. Programs have been expanded, primarily in connec-

tion with the upcoming elections, and the more activities undertaken, the more volunteers are needed. The same is true of fundraising. The budget has expanded to support the revitalization of programs, the office and our per member payment (PMP) obligations to the state

and national Leagues, but we need to raise \$50,000 in the coming year. The end goal is restoration of our independence as a League. We have fought hard to make that happen and are 90 percent there. Join the fight. It is our cause and one worth fighting for.

Voter Service Committee Efforts: League Priority This Fall

by Adrienne Kivelson

With the full complement of state and congressional elections set for this fall, voter service is our primary focus for the months ahead. And our role in promoting informed voter participation is even more crucial this year because all of the congressional and state legislative elections take place in newly drawn districts, guaranteeing increased voter confusion and uncertainty.

In addition to relying on our excellent Telephone Information Service to answer voters' questions, we will keep our website (lwnvnc.org) updated with the latest election information. We will also produce and disseminate literature explaining the election process, conduct voter registration drives and provide speakers and mod-

erators for candidate forums and debates. We will hold speakers' training sessions and we will also attempt to organize training for representatives of organizations that want to run their own candidate forums. For these efforts to succeed and for the League to have a real impact on voter participation, we need your help.

Our newly reconstituted Voter Service Committee will meet at the League office on Tuesday, September 17, at 10:30 a.m. Please join us. If you have any time to volunteer or questions about committee activities, call Adrienne Kivelson or Fannie Conner at the League office (212/ 725-3541).

Membership Committee

by Fannie Conner

Our first priority is to recruit new members. To do this, we need your help. We urge each and every one of you to search among your friends, neighbors, and even like-minded acquaintances to find at least one person to bring to the October 15 general meeting (see pg.7). Or, give us a name and telephone number to contact.

We are also planning a Q&A session for new and prospective members in the near future. Refreshments will be served.

We are updating our membership database, and we need experienced help once a week, 3-4 hours on a regular basis. If you prefer to volunteer from home, we certainly could use you to contact members regarding meetings and other activities.

For more information, please call Fannie Conner at the League office (212/ 725-3541) on Tuesdays from 11:30 – 5:30.

Development Committee

by Pamela Roderick

Our fundraising objective for this fiscal year is \$50,000. That may sound quite optimistic, and it is. We believe in trying harder. A number of fundraising initiatives are already underway.

We have developed a promising list of potential funding resources for the Telephone Information Service and are submitting proposals to each. We are developing a master list of possible donors and finalizing our financing requests. A review of old donor lists has led us to several labor unions that have supported us in the

past and we are preparing appeals requesting their support again.

Our biggest single fundraising effort is an awards luncheon tentatively scheduled for March 2003 from which we intend to net \$10,000. This luncheon will reinstitute an LWVNYC tradition that lapsed for several years, and this year will include what we intend to be a new tradition of granting an LWVNYC Voting Rights Award to an organization or person who has been stalwart in supporting voting rights and the League's effort to expand voting rights.

Communications Committee

by Valerie Warner

The League has a lot to be proud of this year—from our newly updated web site to a high-profile panel planned for October—and the Communications Committee plans to get the word out. We initiated a public relations campaign of press releases and media contact this summer and will continue through the election season.

Mailings to the media will feature our web site and our election-season telephone information service, as well as new publications and plans for the spring fundraiser. A release will also announce our upcoming panel discussion entitled "What Makes New York City Run, and

How Can It Run Better?" which will be taped, and a report will be sent to the media later in the year. The panel is the first of a series of events planned to raise the League's profile and solidify its reputation as the expert source of information on the workings of city government and the voting process.

We also plan to call the media's attention to the incredible progress LWVNYC has made in the last year, and to ask their help in spreading the word about the newly revitalized League and its unique mission and services.

Women's Leadership Initiative

by Katherine Flaherty

A new project has begun at the NYC League—the Women's Leadership Initiative. Many LWV members are leaders in their fields or have leadership potential.

The purpose of the project is to develop and broaden the leadership potential of interested members. The first forum is tentatively planned for Tuesday, November 12, with the topic being advocacy and lobbying. Several experts will discuss various strategies on developing more effec-

tive lobbying techniques. If there is significant interest, more forums will be organized for next year.

Another idea may be hearing from women elected officials on obstacles they overcame to achieve their goals, issues they face in office, and encouraging and training more League members to run for office. Please contact Katherine Flaherty with your suggestions at 212/399-1244 or kflaherty1@nyc.rr.com.

Council Watch Committee

by Nicky Heller

The Council Watch Committee anticipates a busy 2002-2003 season. Recognizing the role of the New York City Council as a power player in the city, the Council Watch Committee plans to follow the committees that contemplate dramatic changes in the city in an era of constrained budgets. There will be times for the LWV to comment and express the civic voice and times to

keep the League membership informed and ready for involvement.

To become a part of the committee and the excitement of seeing things happen at the source, call (212) 874-1680, ask for Nicky Heller, leave your name and phone number. Your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Youth Agenda Convention

The League of Women Voters, with the assistance of a new League volunteer Sononda Samaddar and the help of Fannie Conner and Adrienne Kivelson, hopes to be in four New York City high schools this fall discussing politics, social issues and community affairs. We

want to build on the students' civic skills to assist them in developing a political agenda.

The students will come together at a Youth Agenda Convention where they will be involved in consensus-building and decision-making skills. This is a guiding principle of our mission: "informed citizen participation in government."

National Convention Report

by Mary Lou Urban

The 45th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of the United States was held this June in Miami Beach—contrary to what the Chamber of Commerce says, it is not always sunny in Miami.

Approximately 1,500 members attended, representing all states and the Virgin Islands. New York State had one of the larger delegations with 38 members attending.

A new president was elected: Kay Maxwell, a former LWVUS board member and president of the Connecticut state League. She is a dedicated, enthusiastic Leaguer. The slogan of the new board is LWV-FIRST—Financial sustainability, Impact on Issues, Revitalized Leagues, Strength in diversity, Teamwork and tolerance.

The League was commended for its work in the passage of Campaign Finance Reform legislation. Congressman Christopher Shays (R-CT) appeared to extend his thanks. Video messages from Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Con-

gressman Marty Meehan (D-MA) were shown.

In addition to a \$2.00 per member payment increase, a surcharge of \$1.35 for one year was passed. The \$1.35 will fund a study on the updating of the Election of the President position. A study for the second year covering apportionment was passed if adequate funding can be obtained.

Workshops on membership, alternatives to our election system, making democracy work—it is up to us, were well attended and informative.

Last, but certainly not least—our Chair, Robin Bahr, was acknowledged on several occasions for her work in leading the New York City League on the path to recovery. On the last day of the convention a presentation was made to Robin on the convention floor acknowledging her success. She was held up as an example of what can be done with the knowledge, will and enthusiasm of a leader who inspires followers to work together for a cause.

Branch Meetings

Members are welcome to attend any branch meeting.

BRONX

Bronx

Contact: Lee Abramowitz (718) 549-9251

Date/Time: Tuesday, Sept. 24; 1:30 pm

Topic: From Arrest to Sentencing

Date/Time: Tuesday, Oct. 22; 1:30 pm

Topic: Election Issues

Riverdale

Contact: Pat Young (718) 548-7381

Please call for information.

BROOKLYN

Midwood

Contact: Rose Yalan (718) 339-7497
or Janet Vickrey (718) 836-0855

Date/Time: Friday, Sept. 27; 1:00 pm

Topic: From Arrest to Sentencing

Date/Time: Friday, Oct. 25; 1:00 pm

Topic: Election Issues

MANHATTAN

Mid-Manhattan

Contact: Elma Smolen (212) 260-3134

Date/Time: Tuesday, Nov. 12; 1:00-3:00 pm

Place: Workmen's Circle Library,
LWV Headquarters, 45 E. 33rd St.

MANHATTAN (CONTINUED)

Upper West Manhattan

Contact: Sylvia Berman (212) 923-0800

Date/Time: Monday, Sept 23; 12:00 noon

Place: Coogan's Restaurant, 169th St. &
B'way - Fundraising Meeting — \$30 / person
Guest Speaker : Manhattan Borough President

C. Virginia Fields

Date/Time: Monday, Oct 21; 11:00 am

Please call for information.

QUEENS

Jackson Heights

Contact: Barbara Barr...(718) 898-0128

Please call for information.

North Shore

Contact: Marjorie Ferrigno (718) 461-5774

Date/Time: Wednesday, Sept. 25; 12:30 pm

Topic: How Just Is the Justice System?

Date/Time: Wednesday, Oct. 23; 12:30 pm

Topic: Election Issues

Southeast Queens

Contact: Mary Cox (718) 341-3082

Date/Time: Saturday, Sept. 21; 2:00 pm

Please call for information.

Date/Time: Saturday, Oct. 19; 2:00 pm

Topic: Election Issues

Election Night Reporting

Thanks to the many League volunteers who participated in primary election night reporting. This joint Associated Press/League project will net the League in excess of \$2000. We hope to

repeat the project in November with even greater League participation.

Please call Barbara Barr at the office if you are interested in volunteering (212-725-3541).

Membership Meeting

Tuesday, October 15, 2002 — 5:30 P.M.

LWVNYC Headquarters
Workmen's Circle Building, 45 East 33rd St.
1st Floor Meeting Room

Guest Speakers: Ronald J. Tabak, President New York Lawyers
Against the Death Penalty
Pro Death Penalty Speaker: To be announced

Topic: A Time for Decision—The Death Penalty

by Barbara Barr

The Facts

- Supreme Court reinstates the death penalty in the United States in 1976.
- New York State reinstates the death penalty in 1995.
- As of this date there are six prisoners on death row in New York State.
- The Supreme Court in 2002 rules that retarded persons can not be executed.
- A U.S. District Court judge ruled in 2002 that the death penalty is unconstitutional.
- The New York City Council in June 2002 passed a resolution urging the governor and state legislature to place a moratorium on all executions in New York State and calling upon the U.S. Congress to pass the National Death Penalty Moratorium Act of 2001 and the Accuracy in Judicial Administration Act of 2001.

The above facts illustrate the salient points that we are now considering in regard to whether or not this state and nation should have a death penalty. A great debate started when DNA evidence was presented in courts and led to the release of several death row inmates who were found to be innocent. Although New York has not executed any prisoner since the death penalty was reinstated, there are six men awaiting death and more death penalty cases proceeding through

our courts. Our October League meeting will address this question. We will have speakers making the case for both sides. It is vitally important for our members, as for all citizens, to be informed on this life and death issue.

This spring the New York State League will have a consensus vote on the death penalty in conjunction with the Balancing Justice Project.

Come to the October meeting—learn—and question our guests.

Membership Meeting: Tuesday, October 15, 2002

\$10 per person registration

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Amount enclosed: _____

Please make check payable to and mail to: LWVNYC, 45 East 33rd Street, Room 331, New York, NY 10016.

Theatre and Tour News
by Dorothy Kreiselman

LWVers went back to our nation's roots with an awe-inspiring tour of Fraunces Tavern Museum on April 26. Of special interest was the Tavern's Long Room. George Washington chose this site to bid farewell to the officers of the Continental Army in 1783.

On May 9 we were treated to a special exhibition of Iroquois beadwork at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Our charming native tour guide, Juanita, willingly imparted her first-hand knowledge of the Indian crafts and native culture to our fascinated and grateful tour members.

A very hot July 18 saw LWVers enjoying a guided tour to the cool and fabulous collections at Forbes Magazine Gallery. We had fun viewing the various exhibits, which included beautiful jeweled treasures made by the House of Fabergé for former Russian czars; toy boats; parades of toy soldiers; Monopoly games, and some presidential papers.

On August 14 we had an enjoyable theatre party to *Oklahoma!* Thanks to a thoughtful contribution from our enthusiastic Advisory Board member, Marian Bott, LWVers were joined by deserving students from Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School and from P.S. 111. Although located in inner-city areas, both schools are highly regarded for their stimulating educational environments. The Manhattan Comprehensive students were chosen after consultation with Gregory Cohen, Executive Director of Student Life Center, and Principal Howard Friedman, while P.S. 111's middle-graders were selected by Principal Sheri Donovan and volunteer Carolyn Lelyveld.

Kudos to Marian Bott for initiating this innovative collaboration. Our thanks also go to LWV's Fannie Conner and Barbara Barr who donated their tickets to this worthwhile project.

New events and activities are in the works, and members will be informed of them in future issues of *Inside*.

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) Revisited

(continued from page 1)

To the continuing great disadvantage, under the law, of all American women, the United States Constitution still does not include a guarantee of equal rights on the basis of sex. The ERA, if and when enacted, will provide that vital bedrock guarantee.

The "3-state strategy" newly developed during the 1990s provides a very promising means for attaining that goal soon, (1) by achieving ratification in just three of the 15 remaining unratified states and (2) by overcoming any opposition to the resulting enactment of the amendment. More than 160 national women's organizations (totaling about eight million members [including LWVUS]), and many other organizations and individuals, are currently supporting this effort.

(1) The "3-state strategy": In the 1990s a promising new strategy for achieving the ERA began to arise. The "Madison Amendment," concerning congressional pay raises, became the 27th Amendment to the Constitution after a ratification period of 203 years. This established a precedent such that the Alice Paul ERA's ratification period, currently just three decades, could hardly be considered unacceptably long.

(2) The 15 currently unratified states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia.

For additional information, see equalrights-amendment.org. and ERACampaign.net.

LWVNYC Opposes Mayor's Timetable for Charter Amendments

by Adrienne Kivelson

While Mayor Bloomberg had expressed an interest in amending the City Charter to provide for nonpartisan mayoral elections and to change the succession provisions, we were surprised and distressed at the haste in which he wanted these major changes considered. On July 13, with less than two months available before the proposals would have to be finalized, the mayor appointed a Charter Commission with the intent of having these amendments on the November ballot.

The League of Women Voters of the City of

New York does not have a position on these issues. However, we do believe that substantive charter changes merit careful study, ample public participation and thorough deliberation. The schedule set by the mayor does not permit this to happen. The League joined with a number of civic organizations in opposing this timetable. Additionally, LWVNYC chair Robin Bahr wrote to Mayor Bloomberg urging him to remove the time limitations and allow adequate time to ensure full and fair citizen participation.

NEW!

LWV Classic Cotton Box Tote / LWV logo on front

14½ x 12 x 4½ — 12 oz. Black Cotton Canvas

Front Open Pocket — 12" handle drop height allows for shoulder or hand carry

Cost: \$15 + tax prepaid, or send in a check with a request.

Sample will be at October 15 membership meeting. Orders will be taken.

Member Database Update

We are updating our database on members
and need your e-mail address as well as your phone numbers.

Please fill in this form and mail to LWVNYC, 45 East 33rd Street, Room 331, New York, NY 10016. The use of e-mails will reduce our mailing costs substantially.

League member data is not made available to other organizations.

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Office Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Volunteers needed: Please call the office (212/725-3541) if you are interested in serving on one of the League committees or helping out with occasional projects.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, Oct. 8 Reminder: Sept. 18 is registration deadline for *Briefings on the Status of Human Rights for Women Around the World* at UN Headquarters
(Members received a mailed invitation in late September.)

Tuesday, Oct. 15 Membership Meeting:
5:30 p.m. Discussion of the Death Penalty (see p. 7 for speakers)

Please mail registration form and check to LWVNYC.

Make a Note of these Dates--Details to be announced

December Holiday Party at the League—Guest Speaker: State Senator Liz Kreuger

Sept., Oct., Nov. Branch Meetings (see p. 6)

Check web site *lwnyc.org* EVENTS page for updates on meetings and events.

Please complete Member Database Update form on p. 9 and mail to LWVNYC.

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