

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 - (lwnyc.org)

Spring 2003

2003 ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, May 31, 9:30 a.m.
45 East 33rd Street, 1st Floor

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

JOEL I. KLEIN

**Chancellor of the New York City
Department of Education**

Joel I. Klein is the first New York City schools chancellor appointed by the mayor under the new school governance legislation.

Under the new law, the mayor assumes responsibility for New York City's public schools for the first time since 1969. The chancellor selects the superintendents of the local school districts and oversees a system of 1,200 schools, 136,000 employees and a \$12 billion budget.

In partnership with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Klein has launched "Children First," a multi-year effort aimed at significantly improving New York City's public schools.



Agenda in Brief

- 9:30 a.m.:** Registration
Refreshments
Meet & Greet
- 10:00 a.m.:** **Business Meeting**
Call to Order
Introduction of Board Members
Treasurer's Report
Proposed Budget
Chair's Report
Proposed Program
Nominations and Elections
- 11:45 a.m.:** Lunch
- 12:30 p.m.:** **Keynote Speaker**
- 1:30 p.m.:** **Direction to the Board**
New Business
- 2:00 p.m.:** **Adjournment**

** Please see Proposed Budget on pg. 4 and Proxy on pg. 6*

**ONLY CURRENT PAID-UP MEMBERS MAY
PARTICIPATE AND VOTE IN THIS ANNUAL
MEETING.**

In order to assist you in determining your membership status, the address label on this mailing includes the date on which your current membership expires. If you have any questions or concerns about the expiration date, as listed, please call the League office: 212-725-3541.

Annual Membership Dues:
\$50, individual; \$65, household.

R S V P by May 21st!

\$17.00 per person for registration and lunch

Please return with payment to:

LWVNYC, 45 East 33rd Street, Room #331, New York, NY 10016.

Name: _____

Tel: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Voter Service

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

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Inside Editor

Patricia Young

While the only public offices that will be on the ballot in New York City this year are the 51 seats in the City Council, the months ahead promise new challenges for the League in promoting voter registration, voting, and informed citizen participation in government.

In all likelihood, we will have a new Voter Registration form in the near future, partly as a result of the requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), described on page 7. The form will also have to be revised to deal with the fact that three of the eight political parties currently listed lost their permanent ballot position because they did not reach the required threshold of 50,000 votes in the last gubernatorial election. The parties affected are the Green Party, the Liberal Party and the Right-to-Life Party. The Green Party has filed a lawsuit to require the Board of Elections to continue to maintain their list of enrollees. Pending the outcome of the suit, the board may not remove the three parties from the registration form and is required to continue to allow people to enroll in them. Even if the court rules in favor of maintaining their enrollments, these parties will not have primary elections, at least until after the next gubernatorial election, and individuals enrolled in these parties will not be able to participate in another party's primary.

Together with the HAVA requirement that new voters provide identification at the polls (see related article on the "Help America Vote Act"), the new form means that the League will have to embark on an intensive campaign to educate prospective voters. We are particularly concerned that the new ID requirement not discourage young voters from participating in the process.

We're also looking at the prospect of new voting machines. What all of this portends for the New York City League is a gigantic effort to produce new literature and to train volunteers for speaking engagements and voter registration drives.

Everyone is encouraged and invited to join the Voter Service Committee. Contact the office. Speak to Adrienne Kivelson or Fannie Conner or send us a note letting us know what you want to do and when you're available.

In Memoriam

Lenore Chester, our former New York City League president (1983-1987), died on March 29, 2003 after a long and courageous battle against cancer. She was a revered colleague, whose wisdom and wit inspired friends and co-workers. Her indomitable spirit and desire to right the world's wrongs will always be a compass for those who knew her.

Our Voting Rights Award Luncheon at the Roosevelt Hotel on March 26 was a tremendous success—thanks to the support of our members, guests and sponsors.

Our very generous corporate sponsors included:
AT&T
Con Edison
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I. to r. Frances A. Resheske, Con Edison's senior v.p. for public affairs, accepting congratulations from Kay Maxwell, LWVUS president, on Con Ed's designation as recipient of the 2003 Voting Rights Award at the NYC League's Education Fund Luncheon. The award was presented by Robin Bahr, former NYC League chair.

Tribute Fund

In Honor of

Laura Altschuler
by
Edith & Kurt Strauss-Goldsmith

In Memory of

Mildred Goldberg
by
Laura Altschuler
Beatrice Dinitz
Natalie & Herman Gross
Helen Heller
Upper West Manhattan Branch

Evelyn Vernoff

by
Hyman Vernoff
Upper West Manhattan Branch

Doris Warren

by
Dorothy Chafkin
Tara Ellentuck
Mildred Feren
Elaine Machleder
Mickey Morris
Micki Rubenstein
Pat Young

Criminal Justice Consensus

by Barbara E. Friesner

Members of the New York City League gathered at the League office on February 22 to discuss the current study of "Arrest to Sentencing," which focused on the role of racial and economic factors in the criminal justice system in New York State. The Criminal Justice study committee presented information and analysis of the issues, and members responded to questions which had been prepared by the State League.

Annette Johnson, a member of the LWNYS Criminal Justice Resource Committee, presented an introduction and overview of the subject. A panel moderated by Fannie Conner, and including Katherine Jacobson and Georgia Guida, presented aspects of two specific issues: whether racial and/or economic factors affect the treatment of individuals who are arrested in New York State, from the moment of arrest until they are convicted of a crime and sentenced, and whether implementation of the death penalty is unfairly affected by racial, economic, or geographic factors.

The subject of racial profiling, which until recently had primarily affected African-Americans and Hispanics, generated a great deal of discussion. "Racial profiling" is defined as "any police-initiated action that relies on the race, ethnicity, or national origin of an individual rather than the behavior of the individual or information that leads the police to an individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal activity." In other words, are police using race, ethnicity, or national origin as a primary reason to stop and detain a person—what has been called "driving while Black"—rather than behavior? The exchange became spirited on evidence that post-9/11 people are being stopped because they "look Arab."

At the end of the presentation, members were asked to respond to the consensus questions. Their conclusions will be combined with those from other NYS Leagues to determine a statewide consensus which may be used to support action on future legislative proposals.

Education Committee Report

Over the years the League of Women Voters has been a staunch advocate for educational equity in the schools of New York State. With the prospect looming of enormous cuts in the state education budget which would disproportionately target high-need districts, Marian Bott, chair of the Education Committee of the NYC League, testified before a joint State Senate–Assembly education and budget hearing urging that educational adequacy and equity be fostered and improved.

She voiced our concern over the governor’s proposal to cut \$1.24 billion from our state’s schools and called upon the legislators to maintain the student-related “Ladder” programs, including funding for class size reduction and pre-kindergarten, as well as full funding for minor maintenance of school facilities and full-day kindergarten.

“High quality research has consistently found that low-income, urban students make significant learning gains when placed in smaller classes in kindergarten or first grade,” she explained. “These gains are sustained and enhanced if they remain in smaller classes through third grade. Both class size reduction and quality pre-kindergarten programs are research-based education interventions that help children, particularly in low-income neighborhoods.”

“In terms of equity, we need to improve, not exacerbate,” she continued. “The January 9, 2003 issue of *Education Week*, ‘Quality Counts 2003’ assigns New York State a score of 68 out of 100, or a D+ for equity.” The New York State League has supported an increase in the state’s share of education funding to 50 percent, up from the current 46 percent. The governor’s new budget proposal reduces that state share of responsibility, selectively jeopardizing adequacy in high-need districts, like New York City.

Prior to testifying before the legislature, Marian had sent a letter to Governor Pataki on behalf of the NYC League urging him to reconsider his proposed cuts and restore full funding to these important education programs.

As a member of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the New York State League has filed an *amicus curiae* brief in support of the campaign’s appeal of an Appellate Division reversal of an earlier court finding that students in New York City, and in other districts across the state, are not receiving an adequate education. The *amicus* brief asks the Court of Appeals to affirm the initial State Supreme Court finding that to reach the constitutional threshold of a “sound basic education,” students must be prepared for their civic responsibilities. The League’s brief states: “The record conclusively establishes that students need a range of analytic skills, substantive knowledge and civic values to prepare them to be capable jurors, voters and civic participants.” It concludes that “it is vital to the future functioning of our democracy that this court ensure that the next generation of jurors and voters—on whom we will all depend—receive the opportunity for a sound basic education.”

The League has been working closely with the Campaign for Fiscal Equity on a series of public engagement activities designed to ensure that the community fully understands the critical policy issues in this case.

CALENDAR

LWVNYC Annual Meeting
Saturday, May 31,
9:30 am to 2:00 pm

—see pg. 1

City Hall Tour
Thursday, May 29,
10:45 am

—see pg. 9

Branch Meetings
—see pg. 8

lwnynyc.org

by Beatrix Dinitz, Website Coordinator

www.lwnynyc.org ... These letters are the address of our website, set up last year and updated regularly. Once on the home page you can choose to look at information about New York City Government or find out 'How to Reach Elected Officials' and 'How to Register and Vote'. You can click to see League events; link with other pertinent websites, or click on Publications to print and fill out order forms for *What Makes New York City Run?* and *They Represent You*. This complete *Inside* can be read on line.

Want to know what the League does to promote informed and active participation in government? A click gets you to the Telephone Information Service page; another to the Membership page. Becoming a member of the League is as easy as printing, filling out and mailing in the membership form. Probably the most helpful part of the web site is the TRY page where you can look up your representatives. You can also link to the state LWV and the national LWV web sites (lwnyny.org and lww.org) to receive relevant information about League activities. Maintenance of the web site is made possible through generous contributions from Verizon Foundation.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Article IX, Section III, Quorum: One hundred voting members, or 10% of the total members entitled to vote, whichever shall be less, shall constitute a quorum at the Annual Meeting. The record in the office of the LWVNYC of paid-up members as of 60 days prior to the Annual Meeting shall determine the voting membership count for this purpose. Any member entitled to vote may designate by written proxy another member to be present to vote in his/her stead. Mailed proxies must be received at the League office no later than three (3) business days prior to the Annual Meeting.

Please sign and date the proxy where indicated, print your name next to your signature, and return to the League office by May 28, 2003: LWVNYC, 45 East 33rd Street, Room 331, New York, NY 10016.

**PROXY
FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
to be held on May 31, 2003**

KNOW ALL MEN AND WOMEN BY THESE PRESENT that the undersigned member of the League of Women Voters of the City of New York hereby constitutes and appoints Robin Bahr or _____ (member may select agent) by true and lawful attorney and agent in my name, place, and stead, to vote as my proxy at the Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the City of New York to be held on May 31, 2003 or at any adjournment thereof, for the election of Officers, and for the transaction of any business which may legally come before the said meeting, and to act as fully as I would do if personally present; and I hereby revoke any other proxy heretofore given by me.

Witness my hand this day of _____ 2003.

Signature

Print Name

If no name is filled in, the named designee will be deemed the appointed agent to exercise the Proxy. If you fill in a name, only your named agent will be authorized to vote as your agent at the Annual Meeting.

Help America Vote Act

A new federal law, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), which was signed into law by President Bush last October, has far-reaching implications for New York elections and, in turn, for the League's registration and education programs.

Depending upon how it is implemented by New York State, the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) can lead to meaningful electoral reform and enhance voter accessibility or it can impede registration and further disenfranchise underrepresented communities. The League of Women Voters has been in the forefront of efforts to achieve positive reforms and expand opportunities for voter participation.

The purported purposes of the HAVA were to standardize election procedures, eliminate voting barriers, and provide funding to the states to employ new technology to centralize voter databases and upgrade voting machines. New York State stands to receive as much as \$230 million over the next three years in return for developing and implementing a statewide plan that complies with the HAVA provisions. Included in these mandates, each state must:

- Appoint a committee to develop a state plan for the use of the federal funds. Each committee is to include local election officials and representatives of stakeholders, such as advocates for people with disabilities and other citizens.
- Develop a statewide computerized voter list.
- Provide for provisional (affidavit) ballots and "second chance" voting.
- Assure access for the disabled, and those with limited English proficiency.
- Establish a process for individuals who register by mail for the first time in the jurisdiction to present identification at the polls or with the mailed-in registration form.

Unfortunately, in New York State the implementation process ran into problems from the outset. It had been expected that the NYS HAVA Task Force would be headed by the executive director of the State Board of Elections but the governor chose to bypass that official and named the board's deputy executive director instead.

Furthermore, the task force, which was appointed and began meeting in February, is anything but representative of the stakeholders. Its members are primarily election officials, with only two citizen representatives. Even though one of these two is Aimee Allaud, representing the League of Women Voters, the NYS and NYC Leagues have joined a statewide coalition of civic organizations in protesting the composition of the task force.

Another potentially troubling provision of the law is the requirement for identification. The League is working with the coalition and other advocates to assure that the identification requirements are fair and nondiscriminatory, with an extensive list of acceptable documents, including student IDs, Medicare and Medicaid cards, Section 8 rent statements, and similar documents. We are also following closely the process of selecting new voting machines. The League is supporting state legislation to eliminate the current requirement that the voting machine have a "full-face" ballot, on which all offices are shown at once. This will permit consideration of a broader range of machines, including those which use multiple pages or screens.

Our efforts are all directed at opening up the HAVA planning and implementation process. In a memorandum to the members of the task force, League representative Aimee Allaud proposed a number of reforms to achieve this goal, including a public comment period preceding and following each task force meeting, two public hearings (one upstate and one downstate) to solicit public opinion on the draft recommendations early in the thirty-day comment period, and expanded publication of information on the task force and State Board of Elections websites.

To help members follow the HAVA implementation process, the State League has added a HAVA section to its website, lwvny.org, with a link to the site of the State Board of Elections.

Branch Meetings

Members are welcome to attend any branch meeting.

BRONX

Bronx

Contact: Lee Abramowitz (718) 549-9251

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 13; 1:30 pm

No meeting in June

Please call for information.

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, Apr. 25; 1:00 pm

Date/Time: Friday, May 23; 1:00 pm

Date/Time: Friday, June 13-to be determined

Please call for information.

MANHATTAN

Mid-Manhattan

Contact: Elma Smolen (212) 260-3134

No meetings scheduled.

MANHATTAN (continued)

Upper West Manhattan

Contact: Sylvia Berman (212) 923-0800

Date/Time: Monday, Apr. 28; 1:00 pm

Topic: From Arrest to Sentencing

Date/Time: Monday, May 19; 1:00 pm

Date/Time: June date to be determined

Please call for information.

QUEENS

Jackson Heights

Contact: Barbara Barr (718) 898-0128

Date/Time: Wednesday, May 28; 2:00 pm

Date/Time: June date to be determined

Please call for information.

North Shore

Contact: Marjorie Ferrigno (718) 461-5774

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

Date/Time: Wednesday, June 11; 12:30 pm

Please call for information.

Southeast Queens

Contact: Mary Cox (718) 341-3082

Date/Time: Saturday, May 24; 2:00 pm

Date/Time: Saturday, June 14; 2:00 pm

Please call for information.

News from the National and State Leagues of Women Voters

The New York City League has added its signature to a letter outlining a statement of principles for new voting machines in New York State under HAVA (Help America Vote Act, see page 7). The New York State League has not had a position regarding voting machines but the board voted at its March meeting to adopt a position under the LWVUS Election Law position to support the use of one voting machine statewide.

Representatives of the LWVNYC Management Team, along with representatives of other good government groups, met with the new director of the NYC Board of Elections to express our concerns and suggestions regarding needed improvements in the voting process.

At its last board meeting, the LWVUS voted

to adopt Election Reform and Campaign Finance Reform as its legislative priorities for 2003. Action will be taken as needed in the areas of Reproductive Choice, Clean Air, Oil Drilling in the Arctic Wildlands, and Title IX. The priority items were chosen because they reflect the core issues of the League and provide an overarching theme for League action in the coming two years before the presidential election.

In an effort to interest young voters, the LWVUS has become an unofficial partner in "Smackdown Your Vote." The board also accepted a role as a "lead sponsor" in the Freedom's Answer project, which encourages high school students to get pledges from adults to register and vote.

New LWVNYC Study: Nonpartisan Elections

Proposals to change the method in which New Yorkers vote in the city from partisan to nonpartisan elections have been considered and tabled by several charter commissions over the past 20 years. In nonpartisan elections candidates run as individuals rather than as nominees of political parties.

In April 2003 Mayor Bloomberg appointed a Charter Revision Commission for the explicit purpose of putting a question on the November ballot asking voters whether they would like to switch to nonpartisan elections for all city offices.

Given the fact that advocacy for a fair and open electoral process is intrinsic to the mission of the New York City League, we are undertaking a study of the issue so that we will be in a position to comment on the proposals under consideration by the commission.

Those who favor nonpartisan elections contend that they:

- Reduce access and influence of special interests
- Make it possible for newcomers to run for office
- Make it easier for all citizens to compete for office

Those who oppose nonpartisan elections contend that they:

- ? Favor higher income candidates
- ? Tend to produce lower voter turnout
- ? Are skewed against lower income people and ethnic minorities

The issue will be discussed at the May 31st Annual Meeting.

CITY HALL TOUR

See how politics and history intertwine in shaping the Big Apple!

Join us on a docent-led tour and hear an update from a city councilmember.

Thursday, May 29, 2003

10:45 a.m

City Hall, New York

(Meet on Broadway in front of the City Hall gate.

Take N, R to City Hall station, or 4,5,6 to Brooklyn Bridge station.)

Cost: \$12.00 for members; \$15.00 for non-members Payment due: May 22, 2003
Check payable to: League of Women Voters of the City of New York Mark check memo: City Hall Tour
Questions?: Call 212-725-3541, ask for Dorothy, Fannie or Nicky

City Hall Tour

Please return with payment to: League of Women Voters of the City of New York, 45 East 33rd St., #331, New York, NY 10016.

Name: _____ No. Attending: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Amount Enclosed: _____

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: The Struggle Continues

LWVNYC marked Women's History Month in March with a program focusing on the women of Afghanistan and the challenges they face as they try to rebuild their own lives and that of their nation. The speakers were two representatives of Women for Afghan Women (WAW), a New York-based organization which provides a support network for Afghan women in this area and advocacy for the rights of women in Afghanistan. Both speakers recently returned from Afghanistan and were able to provide detailed, informed descriptions of current conditions there.

Masuda Sultan, program director for WAW, described its efforts to support grassroots programs to increase literacy and economic self-sufficiency of Afghan women. Mary Lu Christie presented a vivid picture of the living conditions in Kabul, where every building shows signs of damage from fighting and the people still suffer from the trauma of war. She spoke of the lack of resources for reconstruction, including educational materials in the Afghan languages. Both women also discussed the work now under way to develop a new national constitution for Afghanistan and the need to insure inclusion of women's rights in the final document.

An important aspect of reconstruction in Afghanistan is outside funding and WAW is helping women's groups write applications for small projects. On a broader scale, several nations have provided economic support but U.S. promises to help repair the ravages of war have been largely unfulfilled, and there is a concern that the current focus on Iraq will reduce that level of commitment even further.

More information about Women for Afghan Women can be found on its website, www.womenforafghanwomen.org.
