

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)

Winter 2003

Saturday, February 22, 2003

Criminal Justice Consensus Meeting

to determine whether or not racial and economic factors have an impact on the treatment of individuals from arrest to sentencing in the criminal justice system of New York State.

Annette Johnson

NYS LWV Criminal Justice Resource Committee

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

at our office – 45 East 33rd St., 1st Floor

\$5.00 a person

Light refreshments will be served.

We encourage all members to attend this consensus meeting, or one of the branch meetings (see page 4). If you have access to a computer, you can download the background information and consensus questions from the New York State League website (lwnyc.org) which can be reached directly through the “Useful Links” on our City League website (lwnyc.org). Click on “Education” and then “League Criminal Justice Study.”

If you can't attend a meeting but want to participate in the consensus, print out the consensus questions section. Ignore the first section and go directly to “A. Phase I.” Return the completed questionnaire to the City League office by February 28.

If you do not have access to the web, you can obtain the materials by calling Fannie Conner at the League office (212-725-3541).

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

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| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
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| Katherine Flaherty | Adrienne Kivelson |
| | Mary Lou Urban |

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| Tel Info Svc (TIS) | Donna Landay |

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| | |
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| | Ada Montare |
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| Marian Bott | Phyllis Wells |
| Toni Coffee | Rose Yalan |

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| | |
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| | Beth Stark |
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Inside Editor

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| | Patricia Young |
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**Experienced Management Team
Coordinates League Activities**

For more than a year Robin Bahr worked tirelessly as chair of the New York City League. When she accepted the nomination again at our annual meeting in June 2002, it was with the understanding that she would serve only until December.

While we are sorry that Robin has stepped out of the chairmanship, we recognize that she worked many miracles and leaves us a much stronger organization, capable of maintaining the high level of service we have traditionally provided to the community and our members. She will also continue in a leadership position, particularly in the area of fundraising.

We are most fortunate that a group of former LWV chairs have volunteered to form a Management Team and lead the LWV in this new year. The team includes former chairs Laura Altschuler, Katherine Flaherty, Nicky Heller, and Mary Lou Urban, as well as Toni Coffee, Fannie Conner, and Adrienne Kivelson, with Ada Montare serving as secretary and Eileen McEvoy as treasurer. Five members of the team are serving as co-chairs on a rotating monthly basis. They will also cover the League office so that at least one co-chair will be on-site each day.

We are confident that, with the support of the Advisory Committee and our executive director, Beth Stark, 2003 will be a banner year for the League. A new edition of *They Represent You* is already in the works. Our Voting Rights Award Luncheon, set for March 26 at the Roosevelt Hotel, promises to be a stellar occasion. We are expanding membership outreach and are already planning voter registration training and student registration drives. We will be working with the State League and the NYC Voters Coalition on election reform and will study non-partisan elections. Our Council Watch Committee continues to monitor City Council activities and will focus our attention on important legislation.

We will testify at hearings, sponsor informative programs, and provide speakers to other organizations. The Telephone Information Service is operating every weekday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Most of all, we are going to remain true to our mission to increase informed citizen participation in government. With your help, we will succeed.

Tribute Fund

In Honor of

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Robin Bahr | Sydonia Presser |
| <i>by Barbara Friesner</i> | <i>by Joseph Greene</i> |
| <i>by Elma Smolen</i> | |
| <i>by Rose Yalan</i> | |

The Transition Team & Advisory Board
by Phyllis Wells

In Memory of

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| John Hall | Ray Marcus |
| <i>by Rose Yalan</i> | <i>by Sydonia Presser</i> |
| Edith Sable | Evelyn Vernoff |
| <i>by Marjorie Ferrigno</i> | <i>by Upper West Side Branch</i> |

Spotlight on an Active League Member

It was Barbara Barr who first suggested that the New York City League hold a debate on the death penalty as part of the State League study of "Arrest to Sentencing." Those who attended this long-awaited event last fall were treated to some fireworks between Ronald J. Tabak, president of New York Lawyers Against the Death Penalty, and Queens Assemblyman Ivan C. Lafayette, who had helped write the New York State death penalty legislation. Organizing this program was just one example of Barbara's efforts to involve League members in important issues.

In the late '90s, Barbara served as an officer of the NYC League and, during the League's crisis in 2000, she jumped in with both feet to find a solution. She formed a

Barbara Barr presides at the "Arrest to Sentencing" debate



management committee to negotiate with the State League and our creditors, and saw to it that our office remained open and members were kept informed of our activities. Under her leadership, the media were

alerted to our dire condition; funds were raised from individuals, foundations, and corporations; our bills were paid, and a new leaner League structure was developed. We moved to a smaller office and established the current governance in 2001. Barbara served as treasurer and then as secretary through the fall of 2002.

In her spare time, Barbara represented the League at hearings, meetings of the Voters Coalition, speaking engagements, and voter registration drives. She was also a regular volunteer with our Telephone Information Service.

Kudos to Barbara Barr for her many contributions! She exemplifies what an active League member can do. She made a difference.

United Nations Program

by Mary Lou Urban

The second session of the "briefings on the status of human rights for women around the world," organized by the Leagues of Women Voters of New York State and New York City, took place on December 3, 2002, at United Nations headquarters in Manhattan. This event was held to accommodate the overflow of registrants from the first session, which was held in October. It was well attended by League members from all parts of the state and representatives of our co-sponsors.

The first speaker was Susan Safi Rafiq, founder of the International Federation of Afghan Women, who outlined the difficulties encountered by women in Afghanistan with regard to schooling and opportunities in the workplace.

She presented a documentary film, which she had made, featuring women who are now in the government and are fighting for the rights of women to have a voice in government and in their own lives. It is a powerful piece and is available for League use.

The second speaker was Maarit Kohonen from the New York office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her stories of fact-finding missions around the world, including Korea, Kosovo, Congo, Bosnia and more, were riveting. She is a dynamic speaker and genuinely enthusiastic about her mission.

Kay Maxwell, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, confirmed the League's dedication to human rights around

(continued on page 9)

Branch Meetings*

Members are welcome to attend any branch meeting.

BRONX

Bronx

Contact: Lee Abramowitz

Date/Time: Tuesday, Jan. 21; 1:30 pm

Date/Time: Tuesday, Feb. 25; 1:30 pm

Date/Time: Tuesday, Mar. 25; 1:30 pm

Please call for information.

Riverdale

Contact: Pat Young

Date/Time: Wednesday, Jan. 15; 7:30 pm

Please call for information.

BROOKLYN

Midwood

Contact: Rose Yalan
or Janet Vickrey

Date/Time: Friday, Mar. 28; 1:00 pm

Topic: From Arrest to Sentencing

Please call for information.

MANHATTAN

Mid-Manhattan

Contact: Elma Smolen

Please call for information.

MANHATTAN (continued)

Upper West Manhattan

Contact: Sylvia Berman

Date/Time: Monday, Jan. 20; 11:00 am

Date/Time: Monday, Feb. 17; 11:00 am

Date/Time: Monday, Mar. 17; 11:00 am

Please call for information.

QUEENS

Jackson Heights

Contact: Barbara Barr

Date/Time: Monday, Feb. 24

Please call for information.

North Shore

Contact: Marjorie Ferrigno

Date/Time: Wednesday, Feb. 19; 12:30 pm

Date/Time: Wednesday, Mar. 19; 12:30 pm

Please call for information.

Southeast Queens

Contact: Mary Cox

Date/Time: Saturday, Feb. 15; 2:00 pm

Date/Time: Saturday, Mar. 15; 2:00 pm

Please call for information.

*Non-members call the League office for information (212) 725-3541

Where There's A Will...

It's alarming but true that one out of every four adult Americans does not have a last will and testament. Even more alarming is the fact that if you haven't specified how your estate is to be distributed, a judge will make the decisions for you after you're gone—in a way you may not have intended.

It makes sense to provide for your loved ones while you're alive. And while we're on the subject, think of what a wonderful gesture it would be to include the New York City League of Women Voters Education Fund among those you remember in your will.

A bequest to the League will help assure that we can continue our important work into the future. And it will mark you as one of those

caring, dedicated people whose generosity lives on after them.

Your bequest to the League will continue to put your money to work when you no longer need it. If you don't have a will, don't let another day go by before calling your attorney to help you draw one up. And if you do have one, please try to include the League among the beneficiaries. You'll feel good about it.

League-Sponsored Panel Discusses “What Makes New York City Run?”

On October 23, 2002, an illustrious panel of New Yorkers met at UBS America to discuss “What Makes New York City Run and How Can It Run Better?” The purpose of this League-sponsored event was to ask experts on New York City governance to look to the future—to consider what types of charter or legislative changes might help us avoid “boom and bust” cycles and make city government more efficient and effective.

The extraordinary panel included former Mayor Ed Koch; Mitchell Moss, a professor of urban policy and planning at NYU; New York City Finance Commissioner Martha Stark; and Kathryn Wylde, CEO of the NYC Partnership and Chamber of Commerce. Adrienne Kivelson, author of our book, *What Makes New York City Run?* was the moderator.

For almost two hours, the audience of League members, community leaders, and UBS employees enjoyed a lively discussion of whether charter change is necessary, or even desirable; new city policy or regulatory initiatives that could improve efficiency; the need for regional cooperation, and the problems of dealing with an often unsympathetic state legislature.

In an article in *West Side Spirit*, which carried the subhead “League of Women Voters seeks ways to improve city government,” *Spirit* editor Christopher Moore wrote, “the evening felt like a tonic in a time of inane TV commercials. The panelists came from different backgrounds and represented different philosophies, but they shared a let’s-make-it-work approach that gave hope during an aching and awful time for the city and the nation.”

L-R: Adrienne Kivelson, Mayor Ed Koch, Kathryn Wylde, Mitchell Moss, Martha Stark



Presentation by State Senator Liz Krueger

by Nicky Heller

The Honorable Liz Krueger, State Senator, 26th District, addressed the League on December 10, 2002, in a lively and informative presentation. Acknowledging that she was speaking to the converted, she emphasized that if you do not vote, you are not a player in the democratic process. She urged the League to focus on getting the 18 to 25-year-olds out to vote because they are particularly cynical and believe that only money matters.

In discussing the Albany legislative scene, Senator Krueger has observed that very little happens there. She further explained that if a state senator is present on days that the legislature is in session, the senator’s vote is

counted as a “yes” vote, whether or not he or she is present at the time of the vote.

Another example of how little democratic activity exists is when Senator Krueger shows up for a committee meeting to discuss a particular bill, she and the chairperson are often the only ones present.

In an effort to effect change, she has compiled a document titled “Waking Up the State Senate: 34 Proposals for Reinvigorating Democracy in Albany through Rules Reform.” To obtain a copy of these proposals, contact Senator Krueger’s office at 212-490-9535 or access her website at www.lizkrueger.com.

Telephone Information Service

by Donna Landay

Election time at the Telephone Information Service (TIS) of the New York City League is both gratifying and unsettling: gratifying when we can provide information that the questioner has been unable to find elsewhere, and unsettling when a questioner's need is beyond our capacity to help.

We don't guess, or express opinions, but a query like "What are the cross streets to my polling place?" can be a little daunting. A senior citizen in Queens whose polling place was moved miles away from her previous site, forcing her to cross Queens Boulevard—the "boulevard of death"—gets no satisfaction from learning that this is a result of re-districting and affects several neighborhoods. What she knows is that "I always voted here before; why can't I go where I have always gone?"

And then there was the young man who told us he lived at 2300 University Avenue in the Bronx and wanted to know where to vote. You grab the "street finder," look up 2300 University Avenue in the Bronx and find that there is no such address: University Avenue begins at 2400

You try to explain this but the young man insists he has been living there with family all of his 18 years. You tell yourself to keep calm, and ask for his name and phone number "so I can get back to you." Here's the gratifying part: through research you discover that parts of University Avenue in the Bronx have been renamed "Martin Luther King Boulevard"—and there is his address. The mystery has been solved. With a great sense of relief and accomplishment, you call the young man to give him the happy news that he does in fact have a valid home address. Not only do you feel wise, but you have created a voter.

Listen to the homeless woman, living in a shelter, wondering if she can vote. "Of course you can, just give the address of the shelter." She blesses you, and it is almost a religious experience.

Rewards like this come from working in TIS, not only at election time but throughout the year. For those of us who answer the phones, and anyone who would like to join us, they make all the years of service and dedication worthwhile.

**The League of Women Voters of the City of New York Education Fund
Voting Rights Award Luncheon
will honor Con Edison with its 2003 Voting Rights Award
in recognition of Con Ed's long-term commitment to voter registration and education,
including underwriting the League's publication, *They Represent You*.**

**Wednesday, March 26, 2003, noon-2 p.m.
The Roosevelt Hotel, Madison Avenue at 45th Street
Tickets: \$150 each Member-only price: \$100**

Payment due: March 10, 2003. Make check payable to: LWVNYC Education Fund.
Mark check memo: Voting Rights Award Luncheon.

LWVNYC 2003 Education Fund Voting Rights Award Luncheon

Please return with check to LWV of the City of New York, 45 East 33rd Street, Rm. 331, New York, NY 10016

Name _____ Number Attending _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Community Outreach: League Monitors Election for Civic Organization

by Robin Bahr

In late October the League accepted a request to monitor an election of officers for a Chinese Benevolent Association named Tsung Tsin. We did so with great trepidation. For one thing, this required two volunteers, working from noon to 5 p.m. for 14 straight days in the basement of the association's building in Chinatown, and we had one week in which to recruit the volunteers. Secondly, only a handful of Tsung Tsin members speak English, which posed a potentially crippling barrier to communication. And finally, the two previous elections held by this organization had been torn by dissension and ended up in lawsuits.

Although the association was founded more than fifty years ago to help the Hakka people with immigration and integration into New York City, it has remained essentially Chinese in culture. Most of its 5,000 members are elderly and not accustomed to interchange with Americans.

It was a daunting project, but we pulled it off with extraordinary success. Not only did we line up volunteers on short notice, we fulfilled our function in providing fair, objective and

responsible supervision of the electoral process without the benefit of being able to talk directly with the voters. The results of the election were unchallenged by any of the warring factions because of the trust and respect the League had earned over the 14-day period.

We were rewarded for our efforts with a substantial contribution to our operating funds along with a celebratory banquet in our honor. There were many long speeches in Chinese—we did not understand a word, but the message of thanks to the League was clear. We were lauded and appreciated beyond reckoning. We returned the honor with a “thank you” to our hosts. The attendees did not understand us, either, but we had established a partnership of cooperation and trust that transcended language. As the high point of the program, we were presented with a beautiful plaque with the Chinese inscription for “trustworthy.”

This was grassroots voter service at its finest and a powerful reminder that the League of Women Voters has an enduring role to play in the life and well-being of our city.

Welcome New Members

Winthrop & Maureen Allegaert
Amanda Bergbower
Andrew Campbell
Ann Carlin
Carol Carrozelli
Choon Whe Cho
Gertrude Delson
Noreen Doyle
Keith Edwards, C W A,
Local 1105
Rhoda Epstein
C. Virginia Fields, Manhattan
Borough President

Pearl Green
Hester Irison Grice
Barbara Harris
Charlene Hines
Int'l Brotherhood of Teamsters,
Local 808
Robert Jackson, NYC
Councilman
Joyce Johnson
Norma Lombard
Thomas Maguire, IUOE,
Local 15, 15A-D
John Moran

Donna Muscari
Alfred Norde
Kathryn Oates
Frank Padavan, NYS Senator
Helen Serebin
Ursula Shih Liang
Toby Ann Stavisky, NYS Senator
United Brotherhood of Carpenters
and Joiners, Local 608
Jill Vexler
Mary Weslan

Election Night Reporting

by Laura Altschuler

The NYC League's participation in Election Night reporting continued in 2002 with 86 members and friends sending election returns to the Associated Press as the polls closed on November 5. Between the Primary and the General Election, the League earned \$5,500 for these efforts. Many thanks to all who helped us attain

these much-needed funds.

Thanks also for your comments and suggestions about what went right and what went wrong at the polls. We sent a report to the Board of Elections and intend to meet with them to discuss training of inspectors, supervision, and voting machines.

Tour News

by Dorothy Kreiselman

Two separate groups of LWVers were led through a magnificent showing of Japanese decoration and display on November 20, 2002, by Melanie Drugin, curator of education, at the Japan Society Gallery.

By skillfully interweaving an explanation of the historic, economic and social elements of Japan's medieval period, Melanie enhanced our appreciation of this superb collection.

Many thanks to Melanie and the Japan Society Gallery for making this popular tour an excellent experience.

Please hold the date of April 10 open. We're planning an exciting trip to the Museum of the Moving Image. Further tours are "in the works." Look for descriptions in the next *Inside* as well as on our website (lwnyc.org).

American Museum of the Moving Image

Thursday, April 10, 2003

**Take a docent-led journey behind the scenes of film and television.
Watch demonstrations of film editing and other professional equipment.
Enjoy exhibits of computer-based interactive experiences.**

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36-01 35th Avenue, Long Island City
(F or V train to Steinway Street Station, Queens. Walk 3 blocks to museum.)

Meet in front of the building at 11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$12 per person, non-refundable, tax-deductible

Payment due: April 2, 2003. Make check payable to: LWVNYC Education Fund.

Mark check memo: Museum of the Moving Image.

Questions: Please call 212/213-5286. Ask for Donna, Fannie or Jeanette.

Trip to the American Museum of the Moving Image

Please return with check to LWV of the City of New York, 45 East 33rd Street, Rm. 331, New York, NY 10016

Name _____ Number Attending _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____ Amount Enclosed _____

United Nations Program

(continued from page 3)

the world and our determination to get the U.S. government to sign the CEDAW (Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women). She asked that everyone present contact her senator immediately to ask for support for ratification of CEDAW.

Doris Shapira, the League's representative to the UN, outlined our commitment to working with that organization wherever possible. A report on the program will be sent to all members and our co-sponsors.

Put Some Action in Your Life

by Phyllis Wells, Director of State Legislative Action

January 2003 marks the beginning of a new two-year legislative session in Albany and the newly elected members of the Senate and Assembly who represent the citizens of New York City received welcoming letters from the New York City League. To be truly effective in reaching them, however, we need you.

As you know, the League has studied and taken positions on many issues of state government, including election law reform, equal pay for comparable work, adequate health care, merit selection of judges, protection of natural resources, energy conservation, protection of the state's watershed, affordable quality child care, equity in education financing, and Medicaid funding of abortions. The State LWV will soon announce which issues will be the priorities on

our 2003 legislative agenda.

To be really effective in promoting the legislation in which we believe, we need to develop a Lobbying Corps for State Action. We promise an interesting and exciting year to those who join this action group. We need members who will make phone calls, send e-mails, and send letters by regular mail. Even if you are only able to make one phone call or write one letter a year, you can be a valuable member of this group.

We also hope to visit some legislators in their home offices or in Albany. We will have some initial briefings on the art of lobbying, on how the legislature functions, and on the substance of the issues we will be discussing with the legislators.

If you want excitement in your life, join us!

Please complete the tear-off and mail it to: Phyllis Wells, League of Women Voters of the City of New York, 45 East 33rd Street, Room 331, New York, NY 10016.

Lobbying Corps Member Information

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

(include apt. #; and 9 digit zip, if known)

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Circle preference(s) of involvement:

Phone calls Letter-writing E-mail Attend meetings at LWV office

Help prepare materials/briefings Visit legislators in local offices Annual trip to Albany

CALENDAR

Saturday, February 22,
10:30 am to 12:30 pm:
Citywide Membership Meeting on
State program item: "From Arrest to
Sentencing"

March Women's History Month

Wednesday, March 26, noon
Voting Rights Award Luncheon,
Roosevelt Hotel, see pg. 6

Thursday, April 10, 11:30 am:
American Museum of the Moving
Image Tour, see pg. 8

Office Improvements Make for Better Work Space

by Beth Stark

Our work space is now tidier, more efficient and user-friendly, thanks to the hard work of the LWVNYC House Committee headed by Ada Montare. The office has received a much-needed cleaning and reorganization, providing more room for volunteers and a nicer environment. Hats off to Ada and her committee!

We have made technological improvements that will enable us to perform better and faster. We purchased a new computer after the demise of one of our problem-plagued machines and leased a new photocopier that allows us to accomplish larger projects in-house. These upgrades will be a big help in our ongoing effort to modernize our operations. Now the League and its volunteers can work more effectively.