



Inside

THE NEW YORK CITY LEAGUE

League of Women Voters of the City of New York • 45 East 33rd Street, New York, NY 10016

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SPRING/SUMMER 2005

2005 New York City League of Women Voters Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 11 9:30-2:30

45 East 33rd Street, 1st floor

We are very pleased to announce that Congressman Charles Rangel (HR-15) will be the keynote speaker at the Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of New York City. Since 1970 he has represented the constituents of Harlem/Inwood/Washington Heights. He is the Ranking Minority Member of the powerful Committee of Ways and Means, a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, a leader in the Federal Empowerment Zones to revitalize urban areas and author of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Bill. Other items on the agenda will include: a Report on League Activities and Future Plans, a Vote on the Proposed Budget (2005-2006), Committee Reports, Directions to the Board, and a Door Prize. **(Please register by using the sign-up form on page 7).**

Public Debate on Non-Citizen Voting Rights

by **Toni Coffee**

The issue of voting rights for non-citizens has been on the agenda of the NYC League for the past year but it is clear that we are not alone in our interest in this subject. On April 21st, a public forum organized by the League and the New York County Lawyer's Association was also attended by our co-sponsors from the American Association of University Women, Citizens Union, and New York Public Interest Research Group. Opening remarks were given by **Pat Marks**, the hard-working chairperson of this committee.

The thorough, sometimes heated, discussion of the pros and cons of non-citizen voting in local elections was moderated by Eugene J. Glicksman, chair of the Committee on Immigration and Nationality Law for the County Lawyers' Assn. Speaking in favor of the question was Cheryl Wertz, Director, Government Access, for New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), a coalition of forty organizations which is working to expand voting rights. Her opponent was Stanley A. Renshon, professor of political science at City University of New York Graduate Center. *continued on page 4*

Editor's Note: The consensus question for this study item was: Should non-citizen legal residents of New York City be permitted to vote in municipal elections (all city offices ballot questions and referenda)?



Stuyvesant Student Wins Trip to Albany and \$3,000

by **Janet Anast**, Project Coordinator

Students Inside Albany is an annual essay contest and conference sponsored by the Education Foundation of the New York State League of Women Voters and open to all high school students from grades 10-12. The program is designed to increase high school students' awareness of their responsibility in representative government and to provide the necessary tools and resources for meeting that responsibility. Students from across the state were invited to participate in the contest by submitting a 1200-1500 word essay on the topic. "Describe three responsibilities of effective citizenship in a representative democracy. How can schools and parents prepare students to meet these responsibilities?" Local winners, selected by local League members, were awarded an all-expense trip to the 2005 Students Inside Albany Conference (April 3-6). Student activities included interactive lectures, a tour of the Capitol building, observation of the Senate and Assembly in action, and an afternoon shadowing a Senator and an Assemblymember. From the winning essays at the local level, tenth grader, Philip Shapiro's essay won first place in the statewide competition. He received a \$3000.00 scholarship for his post-high school education. Philip, a 10th grade student at Stuyvesant High School, is indebted to Ms Jennifer Suri (AP-Social Studies) for her encouragement and support.

(pictured above, left to right) Marica Merrins, NYSLWV President, Philip Shapiro, Stuyvesant High School Student, and James Utermark, Director of Senate Internship Program.

CHARTER REVISION

By **Adrienne Kivelson**, Director of Election Projects

In August 2004 Mayor Bloomberg appointed a 13-member Charter Revision Commission, chaired by **Esther Fuchs**, Special Assistant to the Mayor for Governance and Strategic Planning. The Mayor charged the Commission with reviewing the entire Charter, paying particular attention to fiscal stability, administrative judicial reform and governmental efficiency and accountability.

In a welcome departure from the rush to judgment of recent commissions, this Charter Revision Commission has established a thoughtful deliberative process grounded in extensive research and outreach for expert and community opinion. To date, they have held at least one public hearing in each borough, three of which were preceded by "expert forums" on the issues listed above, published a *Summary of Issues Under Consideration for Charter Revision*, and met with representatives of a wide range of city organizations, including the League. Our members have observed five of the hearings.

At a meeting with the Chair and Executive Director, LWV representative **Adrienne Kivelson** explained that the League believes that the Charter should provide an overall framework for the operation of city government and not become a repository of mandates which can be determined through the legislative process and enacted as local laws, amending the administrative code.

While we certainly commend the efforts and process of this Commission, we will review their proposals to determine the nature of our testimony before future hearings, and our support or opposition to any proposals slated for the November ballot.

The schedule of Charter Commission hearings, their reports and transcripts of testimony are available on their web site: <http://www/nyc/html/charter>.

A Fun Fundraiser with Results

The Associated Press has again requested our expertise for Primary Election Night, Tuesday, September 13 and for the General Election Night, Tuesday, November 8. If you and a friend are available for a half hour, when the polls close, and are interested in calling in vote tallies from a precinct, please see the sign-up form on page 7.

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

2004–2006

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CALENDAR

Tuesday, May 3	Lobby Day in Albany
Thursday, May 12	12 Noon – 2PM LWVNYC Education Fund Annual Awards Luncheon
Friday, May 13	Consensus Responses due on non citizen voting (see March mailing)
Tuesday, May 17	11:30 – 12:30 LWVNYC Caucus of Delegates for New York State Convention
Friday, May 20–22	LWVNYS Convention
Thursday, May 26	11:00 AM Lobby Committee
Monday, May 30	Office closed
Saturday, June 11	LWVNYC Annual Meeting
Wednesday, June 22	10:00 AM
Wednesday, July 20	Education Committee
Tuesday, September 13	Primary Election Day
Wednesday, September 14	10:00 AM Education Committee
Tuesday, November 8	General Election Day

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

For the past several months we have had a League member at each weekly meeting of the New York City Board of Elections. A League presence at these important meetings serves several purposes, including receiving timely information on legislation, the status of HAVA implementation, reports on voting system options and any procedural changes in registration or voting. Our attendance at these meetings also reminds Board of Elections Commissioners and staff of our continuing interest and concern about how elections are conducted in this city. We have joined with the Women's City Club in critiquing the 2004 election, meeting with Executive Director John Ravitz and his senior staff and sending letters to the Mayor and City Council leadership supporting increased funding for the Board to implement HAVA mandates.

TRIBUTE FUND

In memory of:

LENORE CHESTER

from Amy Chester and Phyllis Wells

MARY PATURIS AND SUSAN POPE

from Upper West Manhattan Branch

EDITH SABLE

from Marjorie Dycke Ferrigno

In honor of:

FANNIE CONNER AND ADRIENNE KIVELSON

(Voter Service Co-chairpersons)

from Rose and Harvey Yalan

PAULINE HELPERN'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

from Upper West Manhattan Branch

NICKY HELLER'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

from Miriam Gemson, Gladys Krasner, Riva Mandel,
Myrna and Joel Sherman, and Meta Willis

JUNE STRAUSS'S 75TH BIRTHDAY

from Elaine and Irv Gelston

Joan and Murray Suskin

SYLVIA BERMAN, BETTE EISNER,

GLADYS HYMAN, AUDREY ROSENBLATT

from Ann J. Reiss

From the Desk of the Co-Presidents:

It has been a successful and active year for this City League. We urge members to complete the consensus question and return by Friday, May 13. Our members have worked extraordinarily hard on several fronts -financially, on the May 12 Annual Awards Fundraiser, legislatively, promoting real reform in Albany and successfully pressured State legislators to pass a timely budget. We are pleased with the State League's strong support for optical scan voting machines because they are "secure, accurate, recountable, and accessible."

Meanwhile, on the city level, the consensus position on the study item of Non Citizen Voting Rights in City Elections will be announced at the Annual Meeting. We urge members to complete the consensus question as soon as possible. (For an excellent review of the public forum, please see Toni Coffee's article on page 1).

The City Elections are rapidly approaching. You can get involved in the following ways:

- (1) join the Voters Service Committee
- (2) attend a training session to learn skills and techniques for setting, up, sponsoring and moderating debates
- (3) after voting in the Primary and General Elections, report precinct voting results to the Associated Press
- (4) join the Speakers Bureau to develop more expertise on various topics
- (5) sign up for Email Action Alerts from the City, State, National Leagues

See you at the Annual Awards Luncheon and at the Annual Meeting!!!

Financing Education: Now A Statewide Priority

by **Marian Bott**, Chair, Education Committee

Albany has passed a budget by April 1st for the first time in 21 years. This long overdue achievement was based on legislators' belief that, above all, timely action was valued at the voting booth. The details of the budget agreement for education can be found at assembly.state.ny.us, cfequity.org, and nyssba.org (click on "SLN: They Did It!"). It lacks the fundamental reforms mandated by CFE advocates including our League. Thus our advocacy continues with legislators and other policy makers. The tireless efforts by the Education Committee demonstrate that we need to continue constant pressure on our elected officials to help bring about more educational reform. *continued on page 4*



(left to right:) Pat Marks, LWVNYC Committee chairperson, Professor Stanley Renshon, Moderator Eugene Glicksman and Director of NICE, Cheryl Wertz

Public Debate on Non-Citizen Voting Rights

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Among the arguments raised by **Cheryl Wertz** was historical precedent. In the early days of our nation, she pointed out, the only people who were entitled to vote were white men who owned property - "the right to vote was not about citizenship, it was about the right to have a say." Closer to our own time, and closer to home, non-citizens were permitted to vote in School Board elections. Government, she maintained, should be run by the governed. In New York City, there are 1.3 million adult non-citizen residents, they pay \$18.2 billion in New York State taxes, and they have the same concerns as their neighbors, for good schools, health care, safe streets, etc. They are eager to be part of their communities but without the vote they feel marginalized. In summary, she argued that voting rights for non-citizens is a matter of democracy, fairness, and justice.

Speaking against the question, Professor Renshon stated his belief that voting is a core element of citizenship and should be retained as such. Comparisons with other times and places are of little value since the size and scope of the immigrant population in the United States today is far greater than in any other nation, and more diverse than it has ever been. It takes time, he believes, for new residents to become conversant with issues, and the waiting period for citizenship provides that opportunity. The taxes that non-citizens pay is not in exchange for the franchise; it contributes to the cost of services and public facilities that they use, and the men and women who represent their neighborhoods know that it is in their long-term interest to vote on behalf of all their constituents, not just those who vote.

VOTERS SERVICE UPDATE

Voter Registration—On April 6th we held our first registration training session with a group of student leaders from the Department of Education's Region 5 Student Activity Council. Thirty students and faculty advisors from 15 public high schools turned out to hear about the offices to be filled in the 2005 election and to learn how to organize and run a school voter registration drive.

Each participant received a kit including sample literature, our up-dated Voter Registration Manual, a copy of the 2005 TRY and a copy of *What Makes New York City Run?*, including the just released 2005 Update. Through this Spring and into the Fall we hope to meet with Student Activity Councils in other city regions to encourage and help them organize registration drives in their own schools.

On March 30th, we registered voters at a Dress for Success event. This wonderful organization helps low income women entering or returning to the workforce with clothes suitable for job interviews and in the work place.

The Board of Directors is very pleased to announce that **Kathy Jacobson** has been selected as the new director of the Voters Service Committee for 2005–2006. We extend a very grateful thanks and appreciation to the two former co-directors, **Fannie Conner** and **Adrienne Kivelson**. Their tremendous hard work, dedication, and commitment to civic activism included registering hundreds of new voters, compiling a voter registration manual, and intensive outreach to the high schools. Now as LWVNYC Director of Election Projects, Adrienne is an observer on the Charter Commission, and on the NYC Board of Elections, and has just completed producing the supplement to her classic League publication, *What Makes New York City Run?* Meanwhile, Fannie continues her extraordinary outreach to the high schools and re-establishing the Bronx branch.

Financing Education

continued from page three

On April 12th, Michael Rebell, Esq., of Campaign for Fiscal Equity, an honoree at our May 12th Annual Awards Luncheon, gave us a technical briefing on the proposed Schools for the Future Act. We will join members of the Lobbying Corps for a final briefing prior to our May 3rd Albany trip. At State Convention in Albany (May 20-22), our education position will be a major topic of discussion. Sub-issues will include gambling, charter schools, and the School Tax Relief (STAR) program.

Please avail yourself of these opportunities to have your voice heard by your legislators and by your League colleagues. New members are always welcome to the Education Committee. Please contact Marian Bott at 212-534-4076 or sydneymab@aol.com. See the calendar for meeting dates.

Reforming Albany Continues

by **Phyllis Wells** and **Robin Bahr**, Lobby Committee Co-Chairs

Following its December public forum on the need for reform of legislative rules in state government, the Lobbying Corps focused on public policy and briefed the membership in February on the issues that have been adopted as priorities for legislative action. We are devoting our final advocacy efforts on Equity in Financing Public Education, Procurement Lobby Reform, and Opposition to the Death Penalty and the newly adopted League positions favoring Optical Scanning Voting Machines and the Gianaris bill on Redistricting.

Committee members will call on local legislators and participate in the state Lobby Day May 3, sponsored by a coalition of advocacy groups including Common Cause, NYPIRG, and the Brennan Center. Although the Legislature adopted an on time budget for the first time in 20 years, the budget did not address key issues such as the court order to increase funding for New York City schools. Instead, the legislators seemed more interested in process over substance. In addition, the Legislature did nothing with regard to lobby reform. The Legislature's inaction on implementing HAVA legislation has put federal funding of more than \$200 million in jeopardy. We will continue to battle for these reforms. Fixing Albany is a long term proposition. We remain committed to that effort and look upon May 3 and beyond, such as at the League of Women Voters State Convention (May 20-22), as opportunities to further our objectives.

League Supports Optical Scan Voting Systems for New York State

The League of Women Voters of New York State announced its support for optical scan voting systems for New York State to replace lever voting machines. "Precinct-based optical scan systems meet the League's criteria of secure, accurate, recountable and accessible," said **Marcia Merrins**, League President. "As we move to implement the Help America Vote Act in New York State, lever voting machines will need to be replaced or augmented to provide accessibility for all voters. Precinct based optical scan systems, with the addition of ballot marking devices will provide accessible, private, and independent voting for persons with disabilities and different language abilities," said **Aimee Allaud**, Elections/Government Specialist for the League. Precinct-based optical scan systems are proven and tested voting systems, which have been in use in elections for twenty years and currently are used in twenty-five percent of all precincts in the United States. Arizona, Michigan, Ohio, and Minnesota will be using optical scanners to comply with HAVA.

For Further Information Contact:

Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director
League of Women Voters of New York State
518-469-8905

Aimee Allaud, Elections/Government Specialist
League of Women Voters of New York State
518-482-2617

Branch Meetings

(all members are welcome to attend):

Bronx

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Wednesday, May 4 - 1:00 PM
University Heights Presbyterian Church
2167 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd. aka Univ. Ave.
followed by a guided tour of the Bronx Hall of Fame

Queens (Jackson Heights)

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Monday, May 23 - 2:00pm
June Luncheon - call for information

Queens (North Shore)

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Wednesday, May 18th - 12:30PM
Wednesday, June 8th - Luncheon

Queens (Southeast)

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Sunday, May 22 - 2PM
Sunday, June 26 - 2PM

Brooklyn (Midwood)

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Thursday, May 26th - 1PM
Friday, June 17th - Luncheon

Manhattan (Upper West)

contact: LWVNYC office 212-725-3541
Tuesday, May 24th - 2 PM at The Esplanade on West End Avenue @ West 74th St.
Tuesday, June 21 - 12 noon
Luncheon at New Leaf Cafe, Ft. Tryon Park

Please use this one form to sign up for the Annual Meeting and for the other League activities:

RSVP by Friday, June 3 for the LWWNYC Annual Meeting — Fee \$20.00 (registration and lunch)

Please return with payment to: LWWNYC, 45 East 33rd Street, Room #331, New York, NY 10016

Name(s) _____ # Attending _____

Address _____ \$ Enclosed _____

Tel: _____ Email _____

Assembly District # _____ Senate District # _____

Yes! _____ Please contact me for the Primary and/or General Election Night Vote Tally for the Associated Press
(see details on page 2)

Sign me up for the following:

Techniques Training for Debates

Education Committee Lobby Committee Voters Service Committee

Telephone Information Services Speakers Bureau



Ready and Willing Volunteers of the Telephone Information Services

Through their generosity of spirit and loyalty to the League of Women Voters these volunteers of the Telephone Information Services come in weekly to answer phones. However, they are always willing to assist in other projects, i.e. mailings, collating, web research, etc. A very grateful thanks to the coordinator, **Donna Landay** and the “TIS family”: **Barbara Barr, Simone Bedient, Fran Garwood, Hester Irison-Grice, Sheila Hosni, Dorothy Kreiselman, Jeanette Mazzer, Ellie Miller, Esther Rosenstock, Sarah Sacknoff, and Elizabeth Shwal.**



League of Women Voters Internet and Email Updates

For New York City and State action alerts and contacting legislatures or the media, viewing voting records, go to www.lwvnyc.org and click **Citizens Action Toolkit**. You can also subscribe to our email list by sending a blank email to: **lwvnyc-subscribe@lists.riseup.net**.

For the National League of Women Voters Action Alerts, Issues, and Voting Records visit their home page **www.lwv.org** and click to **Get Involved**.

LWVNYC Publications Now Available—

They Represent You 2005 \$8.00

*What Makes New York City Run?
with 2005 update* \$8.00

For credit card orders please visit our web store at:
www.lwvnyc.org/ordercc.html

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