

INSIDE the New York City League

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

4 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10036 ♦ Tel. (212) 725-3541 ♦ Fax (212) 725-3443

<http://www.lwvny.org> ♦ office@lwvny.org

Fall 2009

"Office-Warming" & Pre-Election Meeting

WEDNESDAY, October 14th

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

4 West 43rd Street, Suite 615

The fall is always the busiest season at the League, a time for identifying the key governmental issues that will demand our attention during the coming year and especially for providing our unique and highly valued services to voters. In this year when the November 3 ballot will include three citywide offices, the Borough Presidents, 51 City Council seats, and two proposed amendments to the State Constitution, we will be registering voters, sponsoring and moderating debates and candidates meetings, preparing literature and distributing "Facts for Voters."

At this time we are also celebrating our move to new quarters. After a short stay on lower Broadway we have returned to midtown and are settling into bright clean space on the sixth floor at 4 West 43rd Street. Members and friends are invited to attend an "office-warming" on October 14th, beginning at 5:30 p.m., followed by a Pre-Election information meeting at 6:30. In addition to a review of the ballot, we will look at procedures for absentee voting and affidavit ballots and will discuss the status of new voting machines and the use of Ballot Marking Devices.

Copies of the League's signature publication, *What Makes New York City Run?*, will be given to all who attend.

Coming Events

Tuesday, October 6 - 5:45 p.m. - Membership Committee*

Thursday, October 8 - 10:30 a.m. - City Affairs Committee*

Friday, October 9 - Last Day to register for November 3 election

Saturday, October 24 - Voters Service at Greenmarkets (*see page 4*)

Tuesday, October 27 - Last day to apply by mail for absentee ballot

Tuesday, November 3 - Election Day - polls open 6 a.m. - 9 p.m.

LWV/AP Election night reporting at selected polling sites (see page 5)

Thursday, November 12 - 10:30 a.m. City Affairs Committee*

*all committee meetings are held in the League office, 4 West 43rd St., Suite 615

See page 8 for schedule of Candidate debates

From the Management Team

Welcome to a new League year! As we deal with the demands of a busy election season and plan a full schedule of citizen education and advocacy, we look forward to working with you, our members, to increase public awareness of public policy issues at every level of government. This newsletter includes a review of our activities, both past and pending, and information about ways in which you can become involved.

In the fall our efforts to educate and motivate voters shine most brightly and this year they have been shining quite literally on TV screens throughout the area as we co-sponsored debates that have been bringing candidates to public view on WABC-TV Channel 7, WXTV Channel 41, NY1 News, Manhattan Neighborhood Network, and WINS and WNYC radio. (See page 8.) We were proud to see graduates of our course on "How to Run for Public Office" among the candidates for City Council nominations. (See page 3.) Members of our Voters Service Committee "talked the talk and walked the walk" as they distributed information about registration and voting at Greenmarkets (see page 4), and perplexed voters turned to our Telephone Information Service for all kinds of election information.

In the coming months we will be looking at the electoral system as it affects New York City (see page 4). We will also be working with Leagues around New York State on a range of proposals designed to bring about needed reforms of our state government; at the national level, our primary focus will continue to be Health Care. (See page 6.)

All of this will be happening with the help of our new Executive Director, Ashton Stewart, and we will be working from our new headquarters at 4 West 43rd St. There is something in our program for everyone, and we need your help to fulfill our goals across this broad front. Join us! Come to our kick-off meeting on October 14 and be sure to bring a friend – you will both enjoy it!

Laura, Robin, Jane, Sheila, Gladys



Ashton J. Stewart, our new Executive Director, started in this position at the end of June – just in time to coordinate our move, and we couldn't have done it without him! Previously Ashton worked at the League as project coordinator for our "How to Run for Public Office" courses and helping to market and distribute the 2009 edition of They Represent You. Ashton has a decade of experience with not-for-profit organizations and, best of all, is unfazed by reporting to five managers. He is an accomplished musician and recently received his B.S. from CUNY in music.

League of Women Voters of the City of New York			
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2009 City Elections - Informing the Voters

If you play a word-association game and say “League of Women Voters,” chances are strong that the first response will be “voting” and the second will be “debates.” Although the League has not participated in Presidential candidate debates for several years, we continue to be involved at the State level and especially here in New York City. This year we co-sponsored primary election debates for the three citywide offices – Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate, and for the office of Manhattan District Attorney, and we are co-sponsors of the general election debates for those offices which will be broadcast on WABC, Channel 7. Other cosponsors in this venture are Univision and WINS Radio. Members of the public were able to submit questions which were considered for use by emailing the league at our website www.lwvnyc.org.

(See page 8 for complete debate schedule.)

We also printed and distributed hundreds of copies of a “palm card” which provides the schedule of debates and up-to-the minute voting information in English and Spanish. Copies are available in our office and on our website. Also on our website is “Facts for Voters,” which provides a summary of the two questions on the ballot which seek to amend the New York State constitution.

This year's debates are being held under the auspices of the NYC Campaign Finance Board (CFB), which also administers the matching fund program for candidates who participate and follow its guidelines. Since 1997, the CFB has been seeking applications for sponsors for the debates, one of whom must be a TV or cable broadcast station. Since the League has been

working with WABC for several decades, we were able to work together successfully under this new program.

As part of our winning proposal to the CFB for 2009, we described our long experience in this field, including co-sponsorship with WABC-TV of primary and general election debates in 1997 and 2001 under the auspices of the CFB. In prior years, before the board was established, and also in 2005, we sponsored debates for candidates for District Attorney and for all city and Congressional offices on such outlets as Public Access TV, Channel 31 and WABC-TV, and we were involved in radio debates on ABC, CBS, WNYC and WLIB, as well as school and community sites. Frequently we worked with other civic organizations. Our guide in staging debates is the LWVUS publication *Face to Face*, which the CFB has used since 1997 to assist potential debate sponsors.

We believe that the format for the debates and the questions that are asked are important elements in insuring that the voters receive useful information. We are particularly pleased that, in addition to a Spanish translation which will be aired on WXTV-41, WABC will make this year's debates available so that they can be broadcast in Chinese and Korean and are made available for other foreign language stations. The credits at the end of each program will give the League's website and also the number for our Telephone Information Service, often the only resource that is covered by a human voice and not a recording which requires a complicated series of choices in order to obtain accurate information.

Laura Altschuler

League “Alumni” Enter City Council Races

Repeating a successful partnership from 2001 and 2005, the LWVNYC again co-sponsored Pre-Primary debates for City Council with Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). New this year was the participation of candidates who were graduates of the League's course in “How to Run for Public Office,” which was offered at five public colleges during 2008 with the support of New York Community Trust.

Eight debates were televised live over three nights, with 17 candidates taking part. The programs were rebroadcast in the three days before the September 15 Primary.

Taking part in the debates were Peter Gleason (Council District 1) and Calvin Solomon (C.D. 8). Another graduate of our course, Heidi Chain, was a candidate for the 29th C.D. In Queens. The League provided the moderators and the questions.

Gladys Krasner

From our committees...

City Affairs Committee

At our initial meeting of the year, we discussed possible areas for study and action. While almost every issue on the League program can have an impact in New York City, we realized we had to limit the scope of our work and chose two principal areas for study: Instant Runoff Voting and the administration of the Board of Elections. We also approved continuation of our work on voting machines.

Instant Runoff Voting, if enacted, would provide for voters to rank their preferences in a primary and eliminate the present requirement for runoff elections in citywide primary races in which no candidate receives 40% of the votes cast.

While we have been supporting election reform legislation for many years, we will take a closer look at the operations of the NYC Board of Elections and explore recommendations which have been made to change the administration of elections in the city and state.

Replacement of our antiquated lever voting machines with a paper-ballot precinct-based optical scan voting system has been a primary focus of our efforts for several years. We had hoped the new system would be in place for this year's election but a series of problems prevented state certification of new machines so we will have to wait another year before New York City gets new equipment. Optical scanners are being used in a pilot project by as many as one million upstate voters, in order to test the system and comply with the federal court order that implementation begin this year. The NYC Board of Elections voted to stay out of the pilot project and we agreed with that decision because it would be inappropriate to use two different types of machines in a citywide election.

The committee will meet on Thursday, October 8th, at 10:30 a.m. in the new League office at 4 West 43rd Street. We welcome new faces and new ideas. Please join us.

Adrienne Kivelson

The Voters Service Committee has discovered anew that there is more than one way to skin a cat, or to make democracy work.

During the run-up to the general election last year, we realized that we could not meet all the requests that came from organizations in the five boroughs to conduct on-site voter registration drives. In order to expand our services in this important area, we decided this summer to reach out to the community groups that had contacted us since 2007 and to offer training for those planning registration drives. Two successful training sessions were held, one in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn Heights. Representatives from more than 25 groups attended to review materials, get answers to their own questions, and learn from experienced League members.

Our effort to get out the vote in this important New York City election year included distribution of information about the primary and general election, including the schedule of candidate debates and a description of the offices on the ballot, to visitors at Greenmarkets in Manhattan and Brooklyn during August. This program was expanded to cover all five boroughs on several Saturdays in October. We have also been responding to requests from schools and community organizations who want League members to speak to them about the election.

Members of the committee have been performing outstanding service to meet the demands for our impartial, accurate information but we could do more. Please join us in this important effort.

You can help by:

- 1) taking copies of our "palm cards" which list all the candidate debates and important deadlines and copies of the New York State League's "Facts for Voters" to your local library;
- 2) participating in the remaining Greenmarket visits in the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island;
- 3) speaking at meetings in your area about voting – we can provide the information you will need.
- 4) joining our committee. Write to me at LWVNYC@hotmail.com or call the League office at 212-725-3541; give your name and telephone number and the best times to reach you. Check the LWVNYC website (www.lwvnyc.org) to find the dates for our future meetings.

Fannie Conner

Women's Issues

This is a newly-activated portfolio for the New York City League. It includes three topics on which the League has already reached consensus and developed positions for action. During the coming year, we will be monitoring activity in the State Legislature on these issues and taking action when appropriate:

Domestic Violence, the major cause of injuries to women

Pay Equity, a continuing challenge as women and minorities continue to receive less pay than white men for equal and/or equitable work.

Reproductive Choice, where we must be ever-vigilant to protect access to abortion for indigent women.

Phyllis Wells

History Made 15 Years Ago: Passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

After years of dedication and hard work by countless advocates like the LWV and Senators Biden and Hatch, the landmark federal legislation now known as VAWA was enacted 15 years ago. Essentially, this act provided federal funding for communities to address the needs of survivors and hold offenders accountable for their actions.

According to the national Office on Violence Against Women, "thirty years ago, spousal rape was not a crime. Many states did not have domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, or hotlines. Disabled women and women in later life were not thought to be vulnerable to abuse. We had little understanding of the

dynamics of teen relationships and the potential for sexual assault and intimate partner violence..."

The landscape has changed considerably in 15 years. Communities are taking responsibility for what is happening to their citizens, primarily women and children, by providing better police support, shelters, and training of professionals.

The League continues to advocate for victims of domestic violence by supporting legislation and educating the public through forums throughout the state. Today we know this is a "community" matter. We all suffer from these crimes in both obvious and subtle ways.

Georgia T. DeGregorio, LWVNYS

AP Reporting - Fall 2009

The Associated Press will again be relying on the New York City League to assist them in reporting early results on election night. On November 3, New Yorkers will be choosing a mayor, a comptroller and a public advocate, as well as borough presidents and members of the City Council.

League members and friends who are interested in helping with this effort will be asked to go to a neighborhood polling place just before closing time (9 p.m.) in order to record the numbers as the votes are announced by the poll staff and to phone them in to the AP. This can be an interesting project and is a fundraiser for the League.

If you are willing to participate, please call the League office - 212-725-3541 - and leave your name and phone number. You will be called.

Membership --

always a priority

The goals of the Membership Committee are to recruit and retain League members and encourage their participation in our activities. Having a membership "team" makes us more creative and more effective as we endeavour to bring members to the League, and then to the forefront, so that we can insure the future of our organization.

We welcome new members to our committee. **The next meeting will be at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6, in the League's new office, 4 West 43rd Street, Room 615.** Come with your ideas and skills and help us keep the League alive and well.

Sheila Hosni

Health Care - where do we go from here?

We have all been watching Congress as it struggles to put together a new health care system that will check the ever increasing costs (to patients and to the government), provide medical care for all, furnish comprehensive health services and improve the general health of our nation.

This is not a cause for the faint hearted. The first U.S. president to suggest a national health plan was Theodore Roosevelt. The subject has been revisited, in turn, by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson (who was able to establish Medicare and Medicaid), and Bill Clinton.

In 1993, after a two-year study of the funding and delivery of health care in the U.S., the LWV announced its support for a program of universal health care that would be affordable, comprehensive, and managed with strong cost-control measures; it was anticipated that an employer-based insurance system could lead eventually to a national "single payer" plan financed by general taxes.

Now the League membership is being asked to weigh in. "The public option in health care

reform may not be essential to bureaucrats or insurance companies but it absolutely IS essential to the almost 47 million uninsured Americans who live day to day without health care coverage," said LWV National President Mary G. Wilson earlier this month.

On September 22, our League was co-sponsor with Hunter College of a public forum on health care which brought together four experts "from the field" to discuss the need and the outlook for action on legislative proposals in this area. All agreed that the Congress is likely to approve a bill before Christmas but they differed on the the likely substance of that bill. While they all believe that universal coverage is essential, they are concerned that pressure from various groups will lead to stalemate on specific aspects and that "the perfect will get in the way of the good." The League will continue to watch this process and more information will be coming throughout the year. Our committee would welcome your participation as we work to engage our members of Congress and the public in this important effort.

Kathy Jacobson

Reform New York

2010 State Legislative Priorities

Responding to the widespread dismay of League members as they observed this summer's stalemate in the New York State Senate, the State League has decided that the focus of our 2010 Legislative Agenda will be on governmental reforms. We will be working to make the State Legislature cleaner and more competitive by emphasizing campaign finance, redistricting, and other "good government" legislative and election reforms.

Other areas in which the League has positions will continue to be listed on our Legislative Agenda and we will take action on those issues as they arise. These include energy and the environment, cost effective and accessible health care, alternatives to incarceration, court restructuring, domestic violence and other women's issues, and equity in school financing.



Moderator of the panel at the League's health care forum was Dennis Rivera, Chairman of SEIU Healthcare. He is flanked here by Kathy Jacobson, and Robin Bahr who represented the League in planning the event with Hunter College.

IN MEMORIAM

MARION SINEK

With great sadness we note the death this past August of Marion Sinek, president of the New York State League from 1985 to 1989. A long-time resident of Westchester, Marion recently moved to New York City and became a familiar and very welcome presence at LWVNYC meetings, where she could be relied upon for thoughtful advice on matters ranging from Robert's Rules to state government. In the 1990's Marion became active in local politics and was a member of the Town Board and then Supervisor in the Town of New Castle. She later worked with Senator Hillary Clinton's office on election law issues. She is survived by her two children and seven grandchildren, who were joined at her memorial service by legions of friends and colleagues, including President and Secretary Clinton and Congresswoman Nita Lowey.

CORNELIA MARWELL

Cornelia Marwell passed away peacefully on July 27 at the age of 90. She was a dedicated volunteer for our League for many years and was the author of a history of the early years of the New York City League that was published in 1983. We were delighted to see her at our meeting in March when we celebrated Women's History Month – she was indeed part of our history. She was the beloved wife of 54 years of the late Julian Marwell and leaves two children and three grandchildren.

JEANETTE MAZZER

Jeanette Mazzer's passing left a great big hole in society. She was raised across the street from the Jewish Theater on 2nd Avenue. Her life became more than three acts. You consulted Jeanette on life's confrontations and in her sophisticated simplicity she solved your problem. She loved the League and of course was partial to TIS. We all loved her and she will live in the hearts of everyone who knew her.

Donna Landay-Laden

HESTER GRICE

Tall, beautiful, brilliant. A retired executive from Met Life, Hester Irison-Grice was a volunteer for TIS as well as an elementary school teacher and Salvation Army volunteer. Hester passed away on September 12 and will be missed by all who knew her.

Donna Landay-Laden

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome members of the LWVNYC who have been added to our roster since April 1.

Leslie Bailey	Clara Harari
Jeanette Hadley	Ronald Laitres
Marilyn Altschul	Frances Alongi
Minette Gorelik	Gretchen Bender
Carol Berkvist	Evelyn Katz
Sylvia Howard-Fuhrman	Doris Lyda
Earlene Bethel-Sperling	Charles Skeen
Margaret S. Scott	Elide Michel
Nina Sundell	Myra Goldstein
Ruth Altman	Bonnie R. Nelson
Richard Gradkowski	Sheila McLaughlin
Marcia Poston	Lena Furgeri
Rosaline C. Avrett	Marta Peimer
Jane Korczynski	Notoya Green
Leigh Hampton	L. Williams
Donna Frankel	Mary Wolf
Beverly Russ	Christie Robbins
	Monica Maron

TRIBUTES

In memory of Edith Sable
Marjorie Ferrigno

In memory of Pauline Helpern
Evelyn Greenblatt, Sarah Greenblatt
Upper West Manhattan Branch
Martin Helpern

In memory of Jeanette Mazzer
Alison Alpert, Laura Altschuler
Donna Landay

In memory of Marion Sinek
Laura Altschuler, Mary Lou Urban

In memory of Hester I. Grice
Alison Alpert, Laura Altschuler
Donna Landay

BRANCHES

FOR DETAILS CONTACT THE LEAGUE OFFICE AT:

(212) 725-3541 OR OFFICE@LWVNYC.ORG

Bronx – Meetings on Wednesdays, October 21st and November 18th. No meeting in December.
4101 White Plains Road. 1-3 PM

Contact: Fannie Conner

Upper West Side, Manhattan – call for details.

Contact: Sylvia Berman

Southeast Queens – December meeting only.

Contact: Mary Cox

Citywide Candidates Debates

Tuesday, October 13 th	7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Candidates for Mayor - NY1 News
Saturday, 17 th	11 a.m. – 12 noon	Candidates for Comptroller - WXTV 41
Sunday, 18 th	11 a.m. – 12 noon	Candidate for Comptroller – WABC Ch. 7 (LWVNYC co-sponsor)
Saturday, 24 th	11 a.m. – 12 noon	Candidate for Public Advocate – WXTV 41 (LWVNYC co-sponsor)
Sunday, 25 th	11 a.m. – 12 noon	Candidates for Comptroller - WABC-TV
Tuesday, 27 th	7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Candidates for Mayor - WABC-TV
	11 p.m.– 12 midnight	Candidates for Mayor - WXTV 41
Wednesday, 28 th	7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Candidates for Public Advocate - NY1 News
Thursday, 29 th	7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Candidates for Comptroller - NY1 News

(debates can also be heard on WINS and WNYC Radio)

We are "Going Green!"

Like many other organizations, including the League of Women Voters at the national and state levels, the LWVNYC is moving to reduce the costs of printing and postage, while also protecting the environment, by using email as much as possible. Beginning with this newsletter, we will use the internet to send publications and announcements to members for whom we have an email address. If we do not already have your email address, please send it to office@lwwnyc.org. We will not share it with any other organizations.

Members who do not have an email address will continue to receive the newsletter and special meeting announcements by postal mail.