

# INSIDE the New York City League

Summer 2014 – Vol. 32, No. 1

League of Women Voters of the City of New York  
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## Annual Meeting Highlights

On May 31, League members from all of the boroughs assembled in the ballroom at 4 West 43rd Street for the Annual Meeting of the New York City League. Highlights of the meeting included the election of a new slate of Officers and Directors, an address by First Deputy Mayor Anthony Shorris, and Directions to the Board.

Serving terms from 2014-2016, our new Officers are: Melissa del Valle Ortiz, President; Cathy Gray, Co-Vice President, Doris Welch, Co-Vice President, and Jane E. Colvin, Treasurer. (See below for their biographies.) Our new Directors also serving two years are: Fannie Conner, Kate Doran, Sheila Hosni, Mary Jenkins, Evie Katz, Tiana Leonard, Joanne Pugh, Nancy Schwartz, and Mary Anne Sullivan. Additional Directors can be appointed to the Board. (Continued on Page 2)

## Introducing Our New Officers:



**President:** A lifelong Brooklyn Resident, Melissa graduated from Norman Thomas High School in 1988. She became involved with the non-profit sector, after leaving the United States Army, to raise her children Jeffrey and Victoria now 22 and 23. It was while working in the non-profit sector that Melissa quickly evolved into a volunteer and community activist. She currently serves on a variety of boards including New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development Community Action Board ~ the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc. ~ the National Alliance of HUD Tenants, Inc. ~ Turning Point, Inc. Her community organizing interests include affordable/subsidized housing, racial/women's equality and empowerment, children's literacy, civic engagement, missing persons, anti-violence and cancer awareness.



**Co-Vice President:** Doris became a League member three years ago and is currently an active participant of the Membership and Affordable Housing Committees. Now retired, she worked at the New York City Housing Authority for 28 years where she was the second female Resident Building Superintendent. She serves on the Board of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans and is an advisor to the Jewish Association Servicing the Aging's (JASA) Joint Action for Public Affairs Committee (JAPAC). She also served on the New York State Governor's committee for the Department of Aging for six years. Doris lives in Hackensack, New Jersey, and she loves to bowl.



**Co-Vice President:** Cathy is a librarian by profession. She moved to New York to join the staff at the Brooklyn Public Library, moving up to become Branch Manager at two Brooklyn locations. Since retiring, Cathy has volunteered at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, City Harvest, and the League's Education Committee; she is the League's representative on the NYC - Transparency Working Group. Last year, Cathy stepped up to fill a vacancy as Vice President and this year served as a co-chair of the Annual Award Luncheon.



**Treasurer:** Jane has been a League member for eight years. From 2006-2008, she served as secretary of the Board and from 2008-2010, she shared Management team responsibilities with four other co-presidents. She again served as Board secretary from 2012 - 2014 and is currently editor of the *Inside*. Jane received a BA from Cornell and a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. She worked for over 30 years in the financial services industry at Bankers Trust/Deutsche Bank and after retiring, for several nonprofit organizations.

## Message from the President: NOT JUST A CONVENTION ..... AN EXPERIENCE!

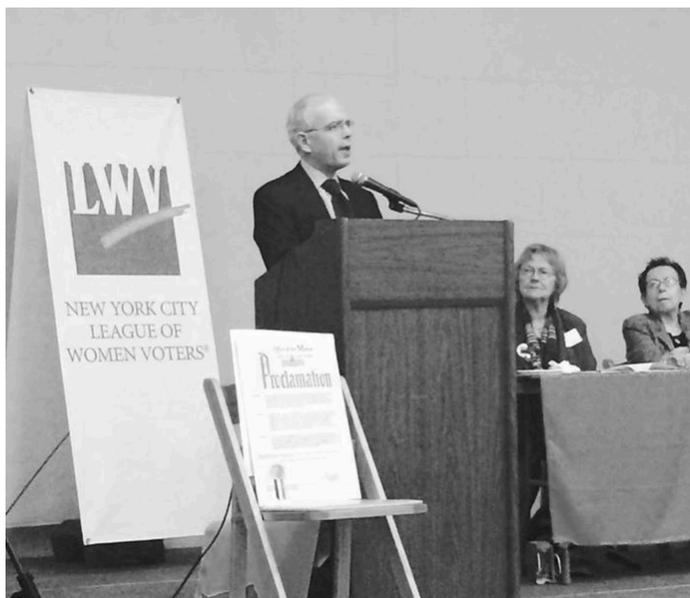
As a community organizer I have easily attended over 30 conventions in the last 10-15 years. The League's convention however, was orchestrated with military precision, from the 7:30 AM reporting time, to the meticulously organized debates and caucuses! Unlike other conventions, where folks tend to stroll into 9 AM classes, clutching cups of coffee or scarves and sweaters to bear the convention air (conditioning); Leaguers, from all across the nation were hurried and eager to arrive! I would walk in and every seat, including spaces on the floor, albeit carpeted, were taken! Attendance was high in each workshop from fracking, to membership retention, board development, none were spared a bright eyed, bushy tailed and fevered "Leaguer".

As I came to know specific members from Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York and other states, I found their conversations to mirror my own. They were all working to ensure that diverse individuals were represented in their membership and in every conceivable capacity. We were all wanting to know "where are the young people, where is the diversity our country is known for?" There were clutches of women and occasional men, who met for breakfast or during breaks to strategize a concept, discuss and/or debate the issues of the most recent workshop.

The Caucus was my favorite, the timed questions, pre-written responses, Red Cards on mic 3, one minute, 30 seconds, STOP! It was all an adrenaline filled CONVENTION HIGH and I couldn't wait to come back to NYC to bring all of it into play for our branch. The passion, the commitment, and fervor of it all, really fueled my veins.

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## Annual Meeting: Guest Speaker First Deputy Mayor Anthony Shorris (Continued from Page 1)



Anthony Shorris (left), Mary Jenkins (middle), Miriam Adelman (right)

The featured speaker Anthony Shorris, First Deputy Mayor of New York City, praised the League for its work in encouraging citizens' active participation in democracy. He spoke about what the NYC Government is doing to help make democracy work, citing two priorities: first, bringing down barriers between people and the government and, second, making people feel that they *can* have an impact on government. He stated that the City is changing the scale of projects in an effort to make an impact on the lives of a large number of people because "the issues are too serious and pressing to permit small pilot projects." Large-scale programs planned and/or underway include the preservation and construction of 200,000 units of affordable housing, the modification of 'Stop and Frisk' laws, municipal ID cards, universal pre-K, and "Vision Zero" to reduce traffic fatalities. He answered numerous questions ranging from governance of public authorities, to affordable housing, pre-school education and disaster preparedness. He received a standing ovation at the end of the presentation.

## Directions to the Board: Financial Issues

Expressing concern about the continued deficit spending that is depleting the reserves, Members urged the new Board to examine the finances of the organization, and to:

- Address the continuing budget deficit; appoint a committee to make recommendations for raising revenue and cutting expenses for the immediate present and future.
- Take a closer look at fixed expenditures to determine how savings might be achieved considering all options, including revamping the organization.

In addition, they directed the Board to take steps to increase and improve communication between the Board and membership, and to be actively involved in all advocacy issues.

## **The 2014 National Convention Adopts Ambitious Study and Concurs with LWV New Jersey's Position on Human Trafficking**

At this year's Convention in Dallas, Texas, 643 delegates from across the country voted to adopt the LWVUS Board recommendation for a comprehensive three-part program combining study and review of key, specific structures of American democracy, consisting of:

- 1.) A study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution, including constitutional conventions;
- 2.) A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change since the Watergate reforms, in order to enhance member understanding of the new schemes and structures used to influence elections and erode protections against corruption in our political process, and to review possible responses to counter them in the current environment of rapid change; and,
- 3.) A review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress, through the existing redistricting task force, for the purpose of developing action steps.

In addition to retaining all current LWVUS positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy, the delegates voted to concur with the Human Trafficking position of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey:

“The League of Women Voters opposes all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern day slavery and believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.”

As a result, state and local Leagues all over the country will now be able to advocate and lobby in support of this position.

### **Not Just a Convention (Continued from Page 2)**

I hope to bring all that energy into our 95th anniversary and to carry it into my 2016 term! I project 2014-15 to be an exciting one for us! Our board will be working on updating our office aesthetics, technology and membership materials. We will be conducting a variety of community outreach efforts across New York City and strategizing a five year projection plan that will grow and diversify our membership ethnically, gender and age wise. We are planning fun and creative fundraisers like NYC Suffragists "The Tour" highlighting New York City Landmarks and our involvement, organizing a trip to Seneca Falls, starting an online store, organizing after work mixers, a book club and of all things ... a NYC League Bowling Night!

All of this said, I have much to learn about our membership as a whole and as individuals. I have learned a lot about the League history and am focusing on our chapter. I am looking forward to increasing and diversifying our membership so that it reflects the Women's vote of New York City. As a proud Latina and a Wise Woman, I thank you for the opportunity to lead this historic and influential organization, to the longest Civil Rights movement in the country.

*Melissa del Valle Ortiz, President*

### **Special Summer Announcement from the President:**

I have enjoyed coming to know our staffers Ashton and Emily! They are both highly committed to the organizational mission and their roles within the organization. For those of you unaware, our executive director is not only going to be father, he's doubly blessed with TWINS! Please keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers for healthy and happy births. During his paternity leave Emily will lead the office with help from our Summer Youth Intern provided by New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and our Summer college intern. Any volunteer hours you can provide during this time will be greatly appreciated.

## Calendar of Events and Meetings

Committee Meetings (4 West 43rd Street, Suite 615, New York, NY 10036)

**Thursday, July 31st, 10:30 AM - Affordable Housing Committee**  
**Tuesday, August 12th, 1:00 PM - Membership Committee**  
**Tuesday, August 19th, 12:00 PM – Environmental Action Committee**  
**Thursday, August 28th, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM - Affordable Housing Committee**  
**Thursday, August 28th, 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM - Board Meeting\***  
**Tuesday, September 9th, 1:00 PM - Membership Committee**  
**Wednesday, September 10th, 1:00 PM – Campaign Finance Reform Committee**  
**Tuesday, September 16th, 5:30 PM – Voter Services Committee**  
**Wednesday, September 17th, 2:00 PM – Education Committee**  
**Tuesday, October 7th, 1:00 PM - Membership Committee**  
**Saturday, October 25th, 11:00 AM - Board Meeting\***  
**Tuesday, November 11th, 1:00 PM - Membership Committee**  
**Tuesday, December 9th, 1:00 PM - Membership Committee**  
**Thursday, December 11th, 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM - Board Meeting\***

\*Board Meetings - LWVNYC members invited to observe. Due to space limitations RSVP is required and limited to 10 members. Please contact our office to RSVP or for more information.

Please **RSVP** to our meetings by calling or emailing our office: **212-725-3541** or **office@lwvnyc.org**

**Save the Date:**

National Voter Registration Day  
Tuesday, September 23rd, 2014