

LWV

The League of Women Voters® of Port Washington-Manhasset

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February 2007

LWV Women's History Month Celebration Set for March 20

The Women's History Month celebration sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Nassau County will be held on Tuesday, March 20, 5 to 8 pm at George Washington Manor, Roslyn. The League is honoring the following organizations and individuals: Circulo de la Hispanidad, Inc, Erase Racism, Interfaith Nutrition Network, Sarah J. Meyland, Esq., Lisa Tyson and Patricia Wood. They are dedicated to improving the lives of all people. Their work is multifaceted and involves diverse issues such as hunger and homelessness, institutional and structural racism, economic development, environmental exposures and health education, New York State water resources, and citizens' rights protection.

Kaiman Draws Record Crowd for State of the Town Address

By Chris Pines

On February 1, a cold and blustery Thursday, more than 130 people came to the George Washington Manor in Roslyn for lunch and to hear the Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Jon Kaiman give his annual State of the Town address. The event was hosted by The League of Women Voters of Port Washington-Manhasset, expertly co-chaired by Amy Bass and Rita Tanski with assistance from Leaguers Jane Thomas, Sue Fitzgerald, Pat Maher, Marie Bellon and Kay Ullman.

Kaiman, who is now in his fourth term as supervisor, began by recognizing the town's elected officials and staff members and thanking them for their commitment to public service. Included among his thanks was May Newburger, his predecessor who, he said "made many of the tough decisions during tough times that put this town on the road to recovery and a solid financial footing." In 2006, the Town received another upgrade from Standard and Poor's Rating Service from A+ to AAA/SS. This strong assessment "indicates that fiscal practices are strong, well embedded and likely sustainable."

Kaiman listed some of the Town accomplishments in 2006: reconstruction of Ridder's Pond in Manhasset Hills; authorization to begin a multimillion dollar restoration of Mill Pond in Port Washington; grants to restore Roslyn Pond and Searingtown Pond; removal of 232 tons of debris from Sheets Creek in Manhasset Bay; cleaning over 1000 tons of dirt, sand and debris from roadways during the *(Continued on page 2)*

Kaiman Speech *(Continued from page 1)*

Clean Sweep program; adding 10 hybrid electric cars to the electric car fleet. The hybrid electric bus fleet conversion Kaiman said, "is well under way and our truck fleet already meets the new low sulfur emission standards."

In describing the Town of North Hempstead, Kaiman said "it is one of three towns in Nassau County. Combined we account for over 1.3 million people. While the Town of North Hempstead is the smallest of the three towns with only 230,000 residents, we have something no other town in New York has. We have over 100 municipal governments within our borders. The Town of North Hempstead has 31 villages, 14 school districts and approximately 60 special districts, associations and authorities. We are, in fact, the poster child of specialized government. In some ways we benefit from this and in some ways we are hurt by it. Always we pay for it." Kaiman said that we understand the need on Long Island for specialized services in regard to water, fire protection, garbage removal, parks maintenance and education. But do we need so many layers? We need, he said, to find efficiencies, share services and information and learn from one another. For example, a study is underway for the possible merging or reorganizing of ambulance services within the town.

Kaiman was proud to talk about the exciting projects and programs in the Town of North Hempstead. The Spring Ecofest is a two day festival where we learn about energy alternatives, the evils of pesticide use and how to protect wildlife in the region. The Family Beach Festival at Bar Beach Park in the Fall is one of the most popular events along with the Memorial Day fireworks. Earth Day is also well observed. As is the October "Spooky Walk" and the new "Not So Spooky Walk" for younger children.

Kaiman closed by telling the receptive audience that "The Town of North Hempstead is alive and well and we will continue to work hard to make it the best that it can be. This is a vibrant, demanding place and I am proud to serve this community." He then graciously answered questions from the audience.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE**Reprinted from League of Women Voters of New York State-Legislative Packet -2007**

Independent researchers and the public at large have long criticized New York State's disgraceful system of campaign financing. Indefensibly high contribution "limits," coupled with disgracefully inadequate disclosure requirements and nonexistent enforcement, create a system that cries out for change.

The State Assembly has regularly passed legislation that the League supports. This legislation would address the numerous shortcomings of New York's campaign finance system as well as creating a voluntary system of public financing that would reduce the influences of the rich and powerful, while strengthening the possibility that challengers have resources to take on incumbents. It is the model that we support.

Governor Spitzer may shortly propose legislation that addresses many of the issues below. He also has proposed in his first State of the State speech, the ultimate goal of full public financing of campaigns.

Biggest problems with New York's campaign finance law

- **Soft money**
- **Sky-high campaign contribution limits**
- **Transfers from one political committee to another**
- **Limited disclosure**
- **Poor enforcement**
- **Use campaign contributions for "personal" uses**
- **Heavy reliance on special interests for elections funds and the extreme difficulties for challengers to raise money**

Recommendation:**Enact comprehensive campaign finance reform**

Solution # 1: Create a voluntary system of public financing modeled on New York City

Solution # 2: Overhaul existing campaign finance law

Solution # 3: Limit the use of campaign contributions to those activities directly involved in campaigning



NYS Assembly Bill Calling for New Voting Machines

A bill (number A5170) was introduced in the New York Assembly by Assemblywoman Sandy Galef on February 13, 2007, calling for a single statewide optical scan system. This bill seeks to amend the election law, in relation to implementing a statewide voting system using paper ballots, precinct-based optical scanners and ballot marking devices for voters with special needs; and to repeal certain provisions of such law relating to voting machines. The purpose of the bill is to provide a secure, accessible, verifiable, transparent, and economical voting system for New York State.

Summary of specific provisions: This bill requires the State Board of Elections to adopt a statewide voting system using equipment bought through a competitive bidding process which will become the exclusive, official voting system used in New York State taking effect the first of December of the calendar year following the date on which it shall have become a law.

The voting machines are precinct-based optical scanners, to be used in conjunction with precinct-based paper ballots, and a ballot marking device for the disabled.

Under this bill, the State Board of Elections is authorized to contract for voting machines and provide them to counties.

This bill defines the voting methods to be utilized throughout New York State as paper ballot, precinct based optical scanner, and ballot marking device for the disabled. Privacy screens are also required to ensure voting secrecy. No other voting machinery, such as DREs or punch cards, is allowed.

Pursuant to this legislation, paper ballots are the ballot of record. These records will be retained by the voting machine.

Justification: This legislation is designed to comply with the Help America Vote Act, to provide for a secure, accessible, verifiable, transparent, and economical voting system which will be chosen through a competitive, open process. Under this bill, such system will ensure voting is accessible to all voters and protected by safeguards against vote tampering or fraud.

The system is easy for voters to understand and provides an auditable paper trail necessary for accurate recounts whenever required. The advantages included the following: all voters including the disabled use an identical paper ballot, optical scan ballots are easily understood by voters, optical scan ballots allow each voter to vote only once, are vote-verified, are easy to recount by hand and allow voters to verify that they have been given the correct ballot before they start to vote, precinct-based optical scanners allow voters to correct mistakes, optical scan systems have lower rates of invalid votes and provide over-vote and under-vote protection. Financially, they are more cost effective because they have a lower equipment and election worker training cost, and storage for these systems costs less also.

The experience with electronic voting (DREs), including touch screen and ATM-like equipment, has been problematic and, in some states, disastrous. Electronic voting errors in various counties in California, Hawaii, Ohio, Georgia, and Florida have been documented by studies and election year results. Several states have decided against electronic voting because of inherent problems such as voting errors in under and over votes, voter confusion, election worker confusion, and lack of an auditable paper trail.

Fiscal Implications: None, since the costs are similar to those borne now by municipalities.

Effective Date: This act shall take effect on the first December of the calendar year following the date on which it shall have become law.

(Example: Should it be signed into law on July 16, 2007 then the machines would need to be in place for those elections beginning January 1, 2009.)



Ruth Shur Is Going South

Ruth Shur joined the Port Washington-Manhasset League of Women Voters in 1963 and served as President from 1974-1976, becoming a force in the League—from town to county to state. As a Board member for the NYS League, Ruth was the Public Relations Director, Editor of the New York State Voter, and State Director of Government and Election Law.

Born in Texas and educated at the University of Texas where she met her husband, Walter, Ruth recently commented that, “the League gave me the equivalent of a Ph.D. in government and practical politics.” The Shurs will soon leave their home in Sands Point for North Carolina’s Chapel Hill area in Galloway Ridge.

League members wish them the happiest of transitions.

Bill to Congress for New Voting Machines

New Jersey U. S. Representative Rush Holt has introduced HR811, a bill to amend the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 to require a voter-verified permanent paper ballot under title III of such Act. This bill (the text of the bill is not yet available) would require voting machines nationwide to produce permanent paper records which would enable all U.S. voters to have proof that their ballots were recorded correctly.

On February 2, 2007, the New York Times reported that Florida Governor Charlie Crist plans to abandon paperless electronic touch-screen machines, choosing to spend \$32.5 million to replace them with optical scanners, providing verifiable paper records.

All League members are urged to contact U.S. Representative Gary Ackerman at gary_ackerman@mail.house.gov requesting that he support HR811.

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Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization dedicated to building citizen participation in the democratic process and to fostering government that is responsive to its citizens. It takes positions on issues but supports no political candidates or parties. Both men and women of voting age are welcome as members.



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