



Suffolk County Voter

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Wed. Oct. 20 LWVSC Board Meeting, Riverhead 10am - 12noon

October 2010

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Ethics Reform Bill Becomes Law

The Suffolk County Legislature, during the August 4th General Session Meeting, overrode the veto of County Executive Steve Levy to enact a charter law that strengthens the independence of the Ethics Commission. This is accomplished by providing for the appointment of an independent Counsel to the Suffolk County Ethics Commission. Until this legislation was passed, counsel was given by the County Attorney (appointed by the County Executive) and the Department of Law. In his veto, Mr. Levy had objected to the cost such a resolution would impose on taxpayers, as well as to the implication that the Commission had not been acting independently in the past.

Legislator Ricardo Montano (D-Brentwood) sponsored and fine-tuned this legislation with the conviction that the Commission needs to be truly independent and not undermined by even the perception that its decisions could be influenced by political pressure. The Legislature strongly agreed with this, voting 15-2 with 1 abstention, to override the veto and pass the bill.

The Commission has three members, one of whom is appointed by the County Executive, and two by the Legislature. Independent Counsel will now further insulate the Commission, thereby enhancing its credibility. This law will take effect on January 1, 2011, and its costs will be in the annual County Operating Budget.

Under the new charter law, the Suffolk County Ethics Commission will appoint an

executive director, independent counsel, and support staff which will be funded by the allotment in the Budget. The responsibilities of the Commission include the review of completed conflict and financial disclosure statements as directed by law, and to receive complaints alleging any violation of pertinent laws. It will prepare an annual written report to be submitted to the County Executive and the County Legislature summarizing its activities and recommending changes in the laws governing the conduct of local elected officials, party officials and local officers and employees.

Ethics reform is an important advocacy issue for The League of Women Voters of New York State, and the Suffolk County LWV is proud of the continued emphasis that all our own Suffolk County appointed and elected officials place on this issue.

Katherine Hoak



Amy Sugimori (La Fuente Executive Director), Judie Gorenstein (LWVSC Voter Service Chair) and LaFuente volunteers

Naturalization Ceremonies and Voter Registration

LWVSC has begun helping new citizens register to vote. Adam Gaus, Sondra Irvine, and Judie Gorenstein volunteered with LaFuente Sept. 13 at Federal Courthouse in Central Islip. 134 people from 5 continents and 40 countries were sworn in as citizens by Judge Bianco. They were processed, took the oath, gave the pledge of allegiance and got their citizenship papers. It was a wonderful experience. Although negative voices are raised about immigrants to the US, it was uplifting to see new citizens happy to be able to take the oath. We will return on September 20th, again on October 4th with members of LWV of Nassau County, and on October 18th with LaFuente. If you are interested in assisting later in the year, please contact lisawscott@optonline.net, or call (631) 523-1653.

Judie Gorenstein