



Suffolk County Voter

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Wed. Sept. 15 LWVSC Board Meeting, Riverhead Library Stage Room 10am - 12noon

September 2010

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LWVSC Visits Suffolk County Board of Elections

Twenty two representatives of LWVSC and the Brookhaven, Hamptons, Huntington, and Smithtown local Leagues met with the Suffolk County Board of Elections on Wednesday, August 18, 2010.

The group learned a great deal about the new voting systems which will be in place for the September primaries and the November general election in Suffolk County. The new paper ballots and optical scan machines were available for the group to test. While individuals simulated a variety of possible markings that might occur on voters' ballots, the scanners performed very well.

The BOE itself has done a county-wide mailing to alert voters to the new system, and explain the process in a simple way. They will be sending bipartisan teams to groups to demonstrate and educate voters, and will cooperate with the local Leagues in Suffolk County as the Leagues organize dates and places for local community group voter education meetings. There will be BOE kiosks as well to assist in voter education. On Election Day it is reasonable to expect lines during peak voting times, but poll workers have undergone extensive training and will make every effort to assist voters as they adjust to a new process.

There will be four privacy booths for each ED, and these appear to be functional and will contain instruction sheets and ballot styluses. Secrecy sleeves will be available although the BOE anticipates that many voters will not use them since the ballots themselves can be inserted into the scanners face-up, or proposition-side-up, and either end may be inserted first. The ballots themselves now have oval marking spaces rather than boxes, which should less likely lead to check marks or x's (which might lead to insufficient ink in the space to be counted).

The write-in process will be very simple but the scanner will detect the writing and drop that ballot into a separate slot internal to the machine to insure the write-in vote is counted. Also, if a voter "overvotes" (fills in more than one circle for a specific race/seat) the voter is advised and the ballot can be returned to the voter by the scanner; thus the voter has the option of getting a clean blank ballot and re-doing the process from the start. (However there is a 3-ballot maximum.)

There is a very secure system to keep track of ballots (which are detached by poll workers from a bound pad, stubs sequentially numbered; ballots cannot be traced to a voter). There are many contingency plans and clearly the Suffolk County Board of Elections has put a great deal of thought and effort into this new voting process.

Absentee ballots, are identical with those cast at the polling place, but are on normal paper stock (lighter for mailing). They are no longer sent to the polling place, but are retained at the BOE, and visually scanned and recorded.

LWVSC and our local Leagues look forward to assisting in voter education in the coming months, in order to ease the adjustment process to the new procedures. We hope that many of our local League members will be engaged in this work.

Edie Emblar, active in LWV Huntington, LWV Brookhaven, and a board member of LWV of Suffolk County, was recently memorialized on the LWNYS Education Foundation's Sustainers' Plaque displayed in the Albany office. Edie was remembered for her deep commitment to the League's mission of securing equal rights and safe, affordable housing for all people.

Help with Voter Registration at Citizenship Ceremonies in Central Islip

Plans are well underway as the LWVSC teams up with LaFuente to conduct voter registration at the Central Islip courthouse, when the naturalization ceremonies are held for new citizens. Citizenship ceremonies are every Monday except for Federal holidays. Those staffing the table will arrive at 9am, and the process is concluded before noon.

We would like to begin on Sept 13 (the first non Federal holiday Monday in September). LWVSC would work alternate Mondays through Oct 22 (since those naturalized after Oct 6 have until that date to register to vote).

Please advise Lisa Scott (631 523-1653; lisawscott@optonline.net) if you wish to help with this important voter service project!