

INSIDE the New York City League

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

150 Broadway - 14th floor New York, NY 10038 ♦ Tel. (212) 725-3541 ♦ Fax (212) 725-3443
<http://www.lwvny.org> ♦ office@lwvny.org

Fall 2008

"Help Hire a President"

Wednesday, October 22nd, 11:00 - 2:00

Workmen's Circle, 45 East 33rd Street

Our first membership meeting for this fall promises to be a stimulating pre-election/post-debate session featuring *New York Times* columnist Clyde Haberman. Come to hear the views of this lively writer on the Presidential election and the effects of the old and new media on political campaigns.

Long time League members will remember a Presidential election campaign decades ago, when the subways and buses were filled with League of Women Voters cards saying **Help Hire a President**. Our Telephone Information Service was overwhelmed with calls about the primaries, how to register, where to vote, and how to get in touch with a candidate's campaign headquarters. Today we are still getting the phone calls and voters can also get that information from the traditional sources of newspapers, television, and direct mail, but more and more are turning to the internet.

In addition to YouTube, Facebook, and email, television and radio outlets have websites where you can hear the speeches, see the political ads, and catch the commentators' spins and opinions in case you missed them in real time. As the parties and civic groups work overtime to ensure that newly registered voters go to the polls on November 4th, we wonder what impact will these new sources have on the outcome of the election.

The meeting will also provide time for a look back at the debates, a review of the November ballot, including other candidates for president, races for Congress and the State Legislature, and the one statewide ballot issue. Come prepared for a lively discussion.

\$12 registration fee for this session includes lunch and is payable by check or cash at the door, or in advance by check. To reserve your place, call 212-725-3541 or email office@lwvny.org. or write to us at 150 Broadway, 14th Floor, NY, NY 10038.

* * * * *

Options for Campaign Finance Reform

A public forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters and Citizens Union

Thursday, September 25th, 6:30 p.m. Baruch College, 135 East 22nd St., Room 301

Panelists:

Blair Horner, Legislative Director, NYPIRG

Nicole Gordon, vice president, JEHT Foundation;

formerly founding executive director, NYC Campaign Finance Board

Michael Malbin, Professor of Political Science, SUNY-Albany;

executive director, The Campaign Finance Institute

Moderator: **Dick Dadey**, Executive Director, Citizens Union

Introductions by **Barbara Bartoletti**, Legislative Director, League of Women Voters of New York State

All members are encouraged to attend this timely event to learn about the range of possible alternatives to our present method of financing political campaigns.

For more information or to let us know you are coming, call or write 212-725-3541 / office@lwvny.org

Letter from the Management Team

This has been a year of innovation and challenge for your League of Women Voters. With the sale of the Workmen's Circle building, we had to find and then relocate to new quarters. We elected five people to our new Management Team, and they hired a new office assistant (*see photos on this page*). And we are in the midst of a history-making Presidential election campaign. Exciting, exhilarating, exhausting times!

Voter Service is, of course, our *raison d'être* – educating and engaging citizens in the democratic process -- and the demand for our help and information has been tremendous. As co-chairs of this committee, Fannie Conner and Nicky Heller are handling the huge number of requests for speakers on election issues and voter registration drives. And the call volume at our Telephone Information Service continues to grow.

We are confident that we can meet these challenges -- and whatever the future has in store for us -- but we cannot do it without you. Throughout this newsletter you will read of committees and events which will benefit from your participation. We hope to see you soon.

Laura, Robin, Jane, Sheila, Gladys



*Members of the new Management Team
(l. to r.) Sheila Hosni, Robin Bahr, Jane Colvin,
Gladys Krasner, Laura Altschuler*

Who's In Charge?

New challenges often demand new structures and for the LWVNYC that has meant the election of a five-person Management Team to oversee the growth in variety and volume of our activities. These leaders will share their responsibilities on at least two dimensions and communicate with one another by rigorous use of a Daily Log.

Oversight for the daily operations of the League office will be divided among the five as follows: Monday - Gladys Krasner; Tuesday - Laura Altschuler; Wednesday – Jane Colvin; Thursday – Robin Bahr; Friday – Sheila Hosni.

Monthly duties, including preparation of the agenda and chairing the board meeting for that month, will be handled by rotation: September – Laura; October – Sheila; November – Gladys; December – Robin; January – Jane; and so forth.

Each member of the team has also accepted responsibility for a separate area of operations: Gladys – relations with LWVUS & LWVNYS, grants, and voter service; Robin – committees; Jane – publications; Laura – finance and grants; Sheila – membership and office administration.

The first priority for the M-Team in this pre-election season is Voter Service. Simultaneously, and continually, their focus is member involvement, with the goal of including more members in every aspect of League activity. They welcome your comments, suggestions, and participation.



Lakisha Adams joined our staff in July as our new Office Administrator. Before coming to the League, Lakisha worked for the New York City Administration for Children's Services and, before that, as a Probation Officer. We welcome Lakisha and are thrilled to have her skills and energy on our team.

Fall Calendar

September

Thursday, 25 th	11:00 – 1:00	Legislative Action Committee*
Thursday, 25 th	6:30 p.m.	Options for Campaign Finance Reform (<i>see page 1</i>)
Friday, 26 th	9:00 p.m.	<i>First Presidential Debate (see page 5)</i>

October

Thursday, 2 nd	11:15 a.m.	Trip: Museum of the City of New York (<i>see page 7</i>)
Thursday, 2 nd	9:00 p.m.	<i>Vice-Presidential Debate</i>
Tuesday, 7 th	9:00 p.m.	<i>Second Presidential Debate</i>
Tuesday, 7 th	10:00 – 12:30	City Affairs Committee*
Friday, 10 th		<i>Last Day to register for November 4 election</i>
Wednesday, 15 th	9:00 p.m.	<i>Third Presidential Debate</i>
Thursday, 16 th	2:30 – 6 p.m.	Election 2008 Youth Panel (<i>details to come</i>) at Museum of the City of New York
Wednesday, 22 nd	11:00 – 2:00	Membership meeting: “Help Hire a President” (<i>see page 1</i>)
Thursday, 23 rd	11:00 – 1:00	Legislative Action Committee*
Tuesday, 28 th		<i>Last Day to apply by mail for absentee ballot for November 4 election</i>

November

Tuesday, 4 th	6 a.m. – 9 p.m.	ELECTION DAY
Thursday, 6 th	10:30 – 1:15	Trip: United Nations (<i>see page 7</i>)
Thursday, 13 th	10:00 – 12:30	City Affairs Committee*
Wednesday, 19 th	11:00 – 2:00	Membership meeting: Post-Election Roundup (<i>see page 5</i>)
Thursday, 27 th		Thanksgiving Holiday – office closed until December 1

December

Tuesday, 2 nd		League Day at the U.N. (<i>see page 7</i>)
Thursday, 11 th	11:00 – 1:00	City Affairs & Legislative Action Committees* (<i>joint meeting</i>)
December 25		Christmas Day – office closed until January 5

**All committee meetings are held at the League office: 150 Broadway, 14th Floor*

For more information

Visit our website: www.lwvny.org. For up-to-date details of LWVNYC committees and events, click on Events. Go to “Useful Links” to learn about programs and activities of the State and National Leagues and for information about voting, issues, candidates, and legislation.

For information about the Presidential debates, see www.debates.org.

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

Officers		Board Members	
Co-Chair	Laura Altschuler	Miriam Adelman	Adrienne Kivelson
Co-Chair	Robin Bahr	Toni Coffee	Donna Landay-Laden
Co-Chair	Jane Colvin	Beatriz Dinitz	Jeanine Plottel
Co-Chair	Sheila Hosni	Patricia Friedland	Lillian Seidman
Co-Chair	Gladys Krasner	Helen Heller	Valerie Warner
Secretary:	Elinor Miller	Kathy Jacobson	Phyllis Wells
Treasurer:	Eileen McEvoy		Rose Yalan
	Office Administrator	Lakisha Adams	
	Inside Editor	Toni Coffee	

Democracy is NOT a spectator sport.

New Voter Education Portal for All Things Electoral

Not sure if you are registered to vote? Wondering about the new ballot-marker voting machines? In doubt about your polling place? For answers to these and other questions about the election process, go to the new voter education portal of the State Board of Elections, www.vote-ny.com.



You can also check your voter registration status online by going directly to the BoE website, www.elections.state.ny.us. Click on Voting Information on the left, then on "Look up your voter registration." You will be asked to type in your name, date of birth, county and zip code. From there, you will receive a prompt to link to the City Board's Poll Site Locator.

For those who do not have access to the internet, it is also possible to check your registration status by calling the NYC Board of Elections on 212-VOTE-NYC.



Don't leave home without ... registering to vote

At the request of American Express, members of LWVNYC conducted two voter registration sessions during August and September for AmEx employees. They also distributed information on the Presidential debates, Election Night reporting, and signing up to be a poll worker. League members Elinor Miller, Robin Bahr, and Patricia Friedland are shown here at our table at the AmEx tower where employees could register or obtain information.

Ballot Marking Devices Headed For Each NYC Polling Place

While the struggle continues to bring a Secure, Accurate, Recountable, and Accessible voting system to New York State, there will be at least one Ballot Marking Device (BMD) at each polling place on November 4, in addition to the mechanical voting machines which have been in use for more than 40 years. These BMDs will enable voters with disabilities to cast a secret ballot independently in the same place and in the same manner as their neighbors.



Any voter can use the BMD but it will be particularly helpful to a voter with a disability who will be able to view or listen to the ballot in any of the required languages (English, Spanish, Korean and Chinese – Mandarin or Cantonese) and then use either the ATM-style touch screen, Braille-enhanced keypad, sip-and-puff device, or rocker paddles to mark the ballot. The voter will then deposit the ballot in a box, to be counted by hand at the end of the day. The Board of Elections plans to have specially trained inspectors in each polling place to assist voters with the BMDs. A video and instructions on how to use the AutoMark device can be found on the NYS Board of Elections website www.vote-ny.com. The NYC Board will hold demonstrations of the ballot markers and we will post those dates on our website, www.lwvny.org, as they become available.

The next step in this process, the replacement of all our old voting machines, is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2009 elections. The only system which meets the requirements of NYS law and the standards established by the State Board of Elections is one which uses paper ballots with precinct-based optical scanners in conjunction with ballot markers. The League has long advocated for this type of system and also for the strict testing and high standards adopted by the Board, which are the highest adopted by any state. However, the certification and testing process continues to find faults in the machines under consideration.

As Bo Lipari, the League's representative on the State Board of Elections Citizen Election Modernization Committee, has said, "The good news is that we're identifying problems prior to an election – *the machines are failing New York's tests*. New York State will not use these machines until such time as they meet the standards required by law and regulation. In other words, *the process is working*."

Adrienne Kivelson

The Candidates Are Talking -- Are You Listening?

Having completed another offering of our popular course, "How to Run for Public Office," at LaGuardia Community College in July, the League has now designed a seminar for graduates of the course which will be based on the **2008 Presidential Debates**. Supported by a grant from New York Community Trust, we will conduct a five-week interactive guide to the debates on the internet which will also be open to League members.

The course will begin on September 22nd and conclude on October 17. Participants will review the history of the debates and see examples from past years. They will then watch the live debates and participate in online discussions, guided by League instructors.

Tuition for full participation in the course is \$20.08, which includes a copy of the LWVUS guide to the electoral process, *Choosing the President 2008*. Registration is open at our special website, www.LeagueandLearnNYC.org, which was designed by Alison Alpert and project coordinator Ashton Stewart.



League members may join the class as observers without charge. To enroll, call the League office (212-725-3541) to obtain a password that will admit you to the site.

Post-Election Round-up

Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 11:00 – 2:00
Community Church, 40 East 35th Street

Election Day will be over. At our November membership meeting we will look back on the campaigns and the electoral process, and ahead to the Electoral College and possible alternatives to that system.

Election Wrap-Up

The Electoral College

National Popular Vote

\$12 registration fee includes lunch and is payable by check or cash at the door, or in advance by check. To reserve your place, call 212-725-3541 or email office@lwvnyc.org. or write to us at 150 Broadway, 14th Floor, NY, NY 10038.

Election Night Reporting

Where will you be when the polls close on November 4?

All League members are invited to share in the excitement of the presidential election by participating in our Election Night reporting for Associated Press. Your only obligation is to be present at a polling place in your area by 8:45 p.m. so that you can record the results of the voting at that site and report them by phone to the Associated Press. Your job will be finished by 9:30 and the League will benefit from a contribution from AP for every election district we cover.

All the information you will need to fulfill this assignment, including the location of your assigned polling place, will be sent to you by AP a few days before Election Day.

For further information and to volunteer for this program, call the League office, 212-725-3541 as soon as possible.



The Board of Elections Needs YOU

In anticipation of a record turnout of voters at the November election, the NYC Board of Elections is accepting applications from residents of voting age who would like to work at the polls on November 4.

Vacancies exist in all four categories: inspector/poll clerk, interpreter, information clerk, and door clerk. Every poll worker is required to take one training class and to work at a polling site to which she will be assigned from 5:30 a.m. until at least 9:00 p.m. on November 4. She will be paid \$200 for the day, plus \$25 for attending the training class.

Applications and additional information are available at www.vote.nyc.ny.us or by phone from the Board of Elections in your borough.

Report from the Annual Meeting

On May 31, members of the LWVNYC gathered for our 2008 annual meeting, the last one to be held at the Workmen's Circle building on 33rd St. A review of the past year included the record-breaking award luncheon, consensus on immigration reform and the move to our new location at 150 Broadway. Following the business meeting, members heard a stimulating address by guest speaker Jonathan Landay (see photo right).

The challenging agenda required decisions that will help guide the League through the years to come. Members approved a newly organized budget which clarifies the separate roles of the League of Women Voters membership organization and our Education Fund. Donna Landay, chairman of the nominating committee, presented a slate of new officers and directors, which now provides for a five-person management team (see page 2). Proposed program for the coming year included a new study of Instant Runoff Voting, continuation of our study of National Popular Vote, and further review of Community Boards.

What the League will be studying this year

Instant Runoff Voting

In anticipation of the 2009 municipal elections, when there may be multiple candidates in the primary election for the offices of Mayor, Comptroller, and Public Advocate, the City's method of dealing with races where no candidate for these offices receives 40% of the vote is coming under scrutiny. The present system, which would require a runoff primary three weeks after the Primary Election, runs the risk of an extremely short time frame if there are candidate challenges and recounts. In addition, a second primary is extremely costly to the candidates, the campaign finance board, and to the City.

Our new study, which will be chaired by Adrienne Kivelson, will look at alternative methods of voting, including Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). In this system, voters rank their choices for each office in order of preference the first time they vote. If no candidate receives the required percentage of the vote, the candidate with the lowest number is dropped and the second choices of the voters who voted for that candidate are redistributed. This process is repeated until one candidate has achieved the required percentage.

Leagues in California, Florida, North Carolina, Michigan, and Massachusetts have studied alternative election systems and now support Instant Runoff Voting. In NYC, a study committee will be looking at the subject from all sides and will present its material to members at a meeting in the spring, in the hope of reaching consensus on whether IRV would be preferable to the current method of runoff primaries. If you would like to join the study, please write or call the League office.

Community Boards in New York City

The Community Board study committee, under the leadership of Fannie Conner, will continue its review of the community boards in all five boroughs, with particular attention to their budgets and the various ways in which they publicize their meetings and decisions to their constituents. In addition, every member can participate in the study by attending one or more of the monthly meetings of her own Community Board and sharing her observations with the committee. Please call the League office to obtain copies of the reporting form. To locate your board, go to www.nyc.gov and Search for community boards.

National Popular Vote

Building on our preliminary study of the National Popular Vote last winter, we will proceed to the next steps in our evaluation of this possible alternative to the Electoral College. We will be aiming for a consensus on this issue by May 1.

For more information or to join a study committee, write or call the League at office@lwv.org or 212-725-3541.



Jonathan Landay, award-winning national security and intelligence correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers, made a repeat appearance at the LWVNYC when he spoke at the annual meeting on "The Future of Journalism and Democracy in America." Among his key points was the shrinking coverage of international affairs in the U.S. as a result of reduced numbers and staff of foreign news bureaus.



Capping the success of the LWVNYC course on "How to Run for Public Office in New York City" was its selection to receive an award at the bi-annual convention of the LWVUS in May. The Pioneer Award honored the extension of the League's traditional role of educating voters to include prospective candidates and others wanting to participate in the political process. Shown above is the team which conceived and designed the course and oversaw its presentation at community colleges throughout the city: (l. to r.) Day Piercy, Gladys Krasner, Alison Alpert. Funding for the program was provided by The New York Community Trust.

Spread the word about the League

All League members are encouraged to share information about our plans and programs with friends and urge them to join. If you are reading this as a friend who has not yet joined, we welcome your inquiry. A membership form is available on our website, lwvny.org.

The Places We Go....

Celebrate the Democratic spirit in its most uncensored, insistent, and excited moments by joining other League members on a visit to the **Museum of the City of New York**.

Explore New York's role in boisterous politics and view a marvelous collection of campaign paraphernalia with the aid of a private guide.

Location: 1220 Fifth Avenue @ 103rd St.

Date and Time: Thursday, October 2; meet in the museum lobby at 11:15 a.m.

Cost: \$10 members; \$12 non-members (non-refundable)

Reservations required; send check payable to LWVNYC to League of Women Voters of NYC

150 Broadway, 14th Floor

New York, NY 10038.

BRANCH MEETINGS

Members are welcome to attend any branch meeting; please call the League office at 212-725-3541 to confirm time and location.

North Shore (Queens)

Contact: Marjorie Ferrigno 718-4615774

Date/Time: **Wednesdays at 12:30pm**
September 17
October 15
November 19
December 10

Bronx

Contact: LWVNYC office (212) 725-3541

Riverdale

Contact: LWVNYC office (212) 725-3541

Southeast Queens

Contact: Mary Cox 718-341-3082

Date/Time: **Saturdays at 2pm (except**
November 1
September 20
October 25
Sunday, November 16 at 2:30PM
December 20

Upper West Manhattan

Contact: Sylvia Berman 212-923-0800

LWV Visit to the United Nations

Thursday, November 6, 10:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Members of the New York City League are invited to join with members of the LWV of New Castle (NY) for a private briefing on a topic of the day and lunch in the Delegates' Dining Room. Cost: \$30 for members, \$35 for non-members.

For more information, call Mary Fox at 914-666-3536

League Day at the United Nations Tuesday, December 2

Theme: The effect of global warming on women and children

(More information to come)

Tributes

In Honor Of Rose & Harvey Yalan's 50th Wedding Anniversary

by

Lillian Yerlich

Christine & Edward Gitelson

Marc Saffer

Leonard & Marilyn Klanit

Michael & Joyce Honing

Alison Alpert

Fanny Conner

Florence & Sidney Layefsky

Wendy & Jerry Whittemore

Marjorie Franzel

Ira Nemeroff

In Memory of Betty Schack

by

Bernice Cavall

Barbara Heising

by

Susanne Ellis

Janet Veckrey

by

Rose & Harvey Yalan

Lenore Chester

by

Phyllis Wells

Day Piercy's Father

by

Gladys Krasner

Alison Alpert

Get Well Wishes for Gladys Hyman

by

Sylvia Berman

Attention Members: There are many ways to participate in the LWVNYC programs that can accommodate your busy schedules:

- participate in **AP** Associated Press Reporting on Election Night, November 4, 2008
 - I have done it before first time
 - Assembly District _____ Election District (if known) _____
- join the City Affairs Committee
- join the Development Committee
- join the Legislative Action Committee
- join Voters Service Committee / Speakers Bureau
- Join the Telephone Information Service

Name: _____

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mail to: The League of Women Voters of the City of New York, 150 Broadway - 14th floor,
NY, NY 10038 or email office@lwvnyc.org / fax 212-725-3443

✂ _____

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, NY
Permit No. 6897

INSIDE the New York City League

League of Women Voters of the City of New York
150 Broadway - 14th Floor, New York, NY 10038

