

INSIDE the New York City League

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

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Winter 2011

Remembering the Triangle Fire

Tuesday, March 8, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

In our annual celebration of **Women's History Month**, on a date which is also **International Women's Day**, the New York City League will focus on an event that had a major influence on public policy in the early 20th century and has been reflected in the League's advocacy agenda since our founding in 1919. The need for protection of women in the workplace and the lack of immigrants' rights were brutally brought to public attention by the greatest industrial disaster the city had ever known, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911.

It had been an ordinary Saturday at the Triangle factory, which occupied the top three floors of a building at Washington Place and Greene Street. The low-paid seamstresses were preparing to go home when someone yelled "Fire!" and smoke was seen billowing from the 8th floor. The trapped workers ran for the exits but many were desperate to escape by any means and jumped to their death on the pavement below. Fire trucks came but their ladders were too short and the stream of water from their hoses too weak to be of any use. No one knows how the fire started but when it ended, it had taken the lives of 146 garment workers, most of them women, most of them Jewish and Italian immigrants, many of them still in their teens.

It was truly **A Fire that Ignited a Movement**.

In this year of the centennial of the Triangle fire, we are a sponsoring member of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, which includes a wide array of organizations which will be presenting events throughout the month of March. Together with Women's eNews, the Women and Gender Studies Program at Hunter College, and Hunter's Department of Romance Languages, we invite you to hear leading scholars and activists discuss the implications of the tragedy and worker rights then and now.

Speakers will be:

Hasia Diner, Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at NYU and Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History. She will talk about the immigrant experience and what happened to the workers on that fateful day.

May Chen, a consultant and adjunct professor with the Joseph S. Murphy Institute at CUNY and an active volunteer for more than 25 years with Workers United/SEIU. She will describe the relatively recent fight for improved conditions for women in factories in Chinatown.

Priscilla Gonzalez, director of Domestic Workers United, which was founded in 2000. She will address the recent gains in respect and fair labor standards for domestic workers in New York State, and explain how this might expand throughout the country.

Location: Hunter College, Hunter West Building, 1st Floor Lobby
(southwest corner of Lexington Avenue & 68th St.)

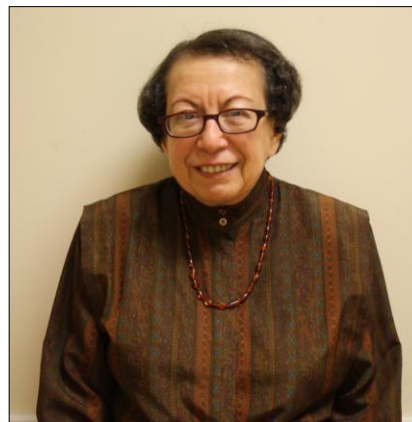
RSVP: 212-725-3541 or office@lwvnyc.org

Message from the President

The past few months have been an exciting and busy time for the League. Looking back to November, a large contingent of our members stayed at the polls after closing time on Election Night so that they could report the results to the Associated Press. We were also interested in the results of the survey of voters regarding the new op scan machines and sent a report of problems which arose at several polling places to the Board of Elections. While we were disappointed that the ballot issue restoring two-term limits for office holders in city government was approved, we welcomed other changes in the City Charter and will continue to work for additional revisions in the future.

In December, before our calendar fell victim to what seemed like endless snow, our program on Juvenile Justice drew a standing-room-only crowd at the NYC Bar Association. (*A summary of that meeting appears elsewhere in this issue.*) Our long-anticipated forum on redistricting was rescheduled and will be held on February 24th.

Early in February I was privileged to attend an exciting and informative meeting of a new committee which will be the lobbying arm of the League of Women Voters of New York State. Several other members of the City League joined me as we traveled to Albany to meet with League women and men from around the state and to hear from the State League's Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti, and executive director Laura Ladd Bierman. Barbara is the only full-time volunteer lobbyist in the State Capitol and has many years of experience as an advocate for League issues. We were able to tour the Capitol and the Legislative Office Building and several members also attended a Joint Legislative Hearing



LWVNYC President, Miriam Adelman

on the 2011-12 Executive Budget proposal regarding Environmental Conservation as well as a meeting of the Assembly Health Committee, chaired by Manhattan Assemblyman Richard Gottfried. State League President Betsey Swan then treated us all to a wonderful dinner at her home.

Looking ahead, we will celebrate Women's History Month with an outstanding program honoring the centennial of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire (*see page 1*). Our annual meeting will take place on Saturday, June 4 – please save the date.

We are also excited to announce our annual Award Luncheon, to be held on Thursday, May 5, at the Hotel Roosevelt. Chaired by Don Lowery, Senior Vice President of The Nielsen Company, the event will honor Merryl Tisch, Chancellor of the State Board of Regents. Errol Louis, host of "Inside City Hall" on NY1 News, will speak. It is not too early to reserve your place (*see page 5*).

We look forward to an exciting year. Please join us as often as you can.

Miriam

League of Women Voters of the City of New York

Officers

President	Miriam Adelman
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Inside Editor	Toni Coffee
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LWVNYC Education Fund Receives Bequest

A little over two years ago, a call came to the League office from an attorney in Queens who told us that one of his clients, Lucille McFarland, had made a bequest to our Education Fund. At that time Miriam Adelman was our counsel and I was treasurer and we went to his office to review the papers.

According to her will, Mrs. McFarland's entire estate was to be distributed among six charitable organizations. In addition to the LWVNYC Education Fund, she named the Educational Broadcasting Corporation (WNET), Long Island Educational Television Council (WLIW), Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, and WNYC Foundation (WNYC Radio). The Surrogate's Court appointed the LWVNYC Education Fund to be administrator of the estate.

As far as we know, Lucille



*Lucille McFarland
Lieutenant (junior grade) U.S. Navy*

McFarland was never a member of the League and we have very little information about her. She was born in 1921 in West Hoboken, NJ, and she died, a widow, in 2008 in Forest Hills, New York. She received an A.B. from the New Jersey College for Women and attended graduate school at Columbia University. She served in the U.S. Navy and held the rank of Lieutenant (junior grade) when she was

retired from active service because of physical disability resulting from an incident while on active duty. She married Harold McFarland, also a navy veteran, in 1970.

Mrs. McFarland's apartment was filled with books and music and her own writings. We sold the apartment and collected all the assets of her estate. After filing the requisite paperwork with the New York State Attorney General's Office, we received permission to distribute the proceeds to all the beneficiary organizations, in accordance with Mrs. McFarland's instructions.

The League is very grateful to Lucille McFarland for this bequest. It will be used for citizen education programs and publications which will be identified as having been made possible by the generosity of this unknown woman.

Laura Altschuler

Note from our Executive Director

Our organization has been making great strides with our website since the last edition of *Inside the New York City League*. Since my last report, we have added information about our current advocacy work, enhanced by links to useful resources. I am pleased to share news about our work with New Yorkers and it is certainly paying off. Traffic on our website has skyrocketed, publication sales have increased, and we are slowly gaining new members.

We have continued the development of an online version of our beloved course *How to Run for Public Office in New York City*. With the help of a few tutorials, webinars, and consultants, we will soon have a grant proposal ready to present to potential funders. It has been very exciting to

see our organization cross the threshold into new technological possibilities and expand our reach to new voters and members.

I would like to take a moment to thank all of our Volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the NYC League. Without their help we could not accomplish our goals. As always, we have room for you to join us in our efforts! If you would like to volunteer with the NYC League, or if you would like to join us in our advocacy work, we would be delighted to hear from you. In the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

*Sincerely,
Ashton Stewart*

City Affairs Committee

In our continuing effort to learn the intricacies of New York State's Election Law and applications, we were fortunate to be able to welcome David Kogelman, former counsel to the New York State Senate Elections Committee, as a guest speaker at our committee meeting in January.

Mr. Kogelman is a lawyer who was Counsel to the State Senate Elections Committee until January, when control of the Senate went from the Democrats to the Republicans. In 2010 he worked for the New York City Board of Elections as a trainer of poll site inspectors. He is a founding member of the HAVA Committee for the New York Democratic Lawyers Council and he assembled a team of lawyers and experts who helped write standards for the optical scanners that were used in New York City for the first time at the September 2010 primary. He continues to work in general practice, arbitration and election law.

In his talk to the committee, Mr. Kogelman described the accomplishments of the Senate Elections Committee over the past two years, including action on 69 bills in 2010. He is most proud of a bill which was enacted into law that simplifies the Absentee Ballot application. Looking ahead, he noted that we can anticipate resistance in the new legislature to any bill that appears to include an "unfunded mandate."

Among the current proposals which Mr. Kogelman hopes the League will support is Senator Addabbo's bill #S609, in relation to the typeface to be used on paper ballots. The bill does not create any additional expense and is something both parties could endorse

since voters across the political spectrum complained about the small print on the optical-scan ballots.

Not covered by his remarks but also supported by the League was the law that took effect in March 2010 which allows the Board of Elections to employ election inspectors to work half-day shifts with adjusted compensation. Regrettably, the NYC Board chose not to make use of this option in the recent elections.

With reference to the NYC BoE, Mr. Kogelman commented that "We pass laws in Albany to get New York City to do things that upstate counties are doing voluntarily." For our committee, this was reinforcement of our plan to continue our study of election law and best practices in other counties and states in order to be able to cite examples as we encourage the Board to improve its service to the voters.

Adrienne Kivelson, who is heading our subcommittee on the City Charter, also spoke at the meeting about our efforts to get the New York City Department of Education appropriately defined in the Charter. Adrienne prepared a sample letter which could be sent to each member of the Council requesting a meeting to discuss the issue. Committee members have been signing up to visit Council members.

If you would like to be part of an interview team please notify the office (212-725-3541, office@lwvnyc.org) and leave or send a message for Robin Bahr, who will be coordinating the interviews.

Kate Doran, Chair

LWV of New York State Legislative Agenda 2011 Steps to a New and Better State Government

Redistricting: Create an independent redistricting commission to draft the New York State legislative and Congressional political boundaries for the 2012 elections.

Campaign Finance Reform: Support lower contribution limits and increased disclosure. Support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased penalties for violations.

Ethics Reform: Put in place a new independent ethics oversight agency and tougher enforcement. Make the legislature more open and accountable through continued rules reform.

Election Reform: Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Other League Positions: The League also has positions on Health Care, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, State Finances, and Social Policy including Women's Issues. We monitor proposals in these areas and can take action if an opportunity arises.

Reaching out to Young Voters

It is important for students who are approaching voting age to prepare for their responsibilities as voters in elections for all levels of government. Over the next few months, members of the voter service committee will be reaching out to high school seniors and conducting voter registration drives. All members are urged to help in this effort by making contact with schools in their area and participating in school visits. Please call the League office for more information.

Hope Freeman, Chair, Voter Service

LWVNYC Education Fund Annual Award Luncheon

Honoring

Merryl Tisch
Chancellor, New York State Board of Regents

For her dedication to public service and
commitment to high standards and innovation in public education

Event Chair - Don Lowery, Senior Vice President, The Nielsen Company
Commentary by Errol Louis, Host, "Inside City Hall," NY1 News

Thursday, May 5, 2011
12 noon - 2 p.m.

Terrace Room, Hotel Roosevelt, Madison Avenue & 45th St.

League of Women Voters of the City of New York Education Fund Award Luncheon
Advance reservations required. To reserve a place, return this form to League of Women Voters,
4 West 43rd St., Suite 615, New York 10036. For further information call 212-725-3541.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ **email** _____

Individual tickets: members \$150 non-members \$300
(all amounts over \$100 per person are tax-deductible)

of reservations: members _____ non-members _____ Total enclosed \$ _____

Please make check payable to **League of Women Voters of the City of New York Education Fund**.
Your cancelled check will be your receipt. No tickets will be mailed.

Juvenile Justice in New York - A Broken System?

At a standing-room-only forum at the headquarters of the NYC Bar Association on December 2, League members and others heard from a panel of experts about the operations of the juvenile justice system and proposals for improvement.

Jeremy Travis, president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and co-chair of Governor Paterson's Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice, believes that the state should not keep young people in institutions unless they are out of control. For Gladys Carrion, Commissioner of the NY State Office of Children and Family Services, a major problem is that children are sent to facilities far from their homes, many of which are under-used and should be closed. Laurence Busching, Deputy Commissioner of the NYC Division of Youth and Family Justice, highlighted some alternatives to detention that are now being tried and offer promise for real reform. Alfred Siegel, Deputy Director of the Center for Court Innovation and a member of the Governor's task force, described a new program, "Respite," in which children live with a trained family until their own family is able to take care of them, and also praised the new Youth Courts, in which teenagers serve as judge and jury in cases involving troubled youths. Vincent Schiraldi, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Probation, drew on examples from around the country to underscore the general view of the panel that young offenders should be treated in their home

communities. The moderator for the evening was Supreme Court Justice Sheryl Parker.

In the weeks following our



forum, there was intense media coverage of the improvements that have been made in New York's treatment of young people who get caught up in the juvenile justice system and what still remains to be done. Mayor Bloomberg asked New York State to turn over control of prisons and services for juvenile offenders to local governments, a move that he said would end the failed and costly practice of shipping troubled young people from New York City to upstate facilities far from their families. Mr. Bloomberg planned to pursue changes to state law that would allow the rapid closing of large detention centers that are mostly empty but fully staffed.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's "Transformational Plan for a New New York" included a major proposal regarding juvenile justice. In order to reduce what he considers wasteful spending, he will undertake an immediate reorganization of the State's youth detention facilities with the goal of consolidation, while

providing priority for current staff for relocation to other facilities and/or for retraining and/or reemployment opportunities. He proposed a repeal of the requirement mandating 12-months notice to close facilities to avoid keeping facilities open that have few or no children.

In his State of the State address, the Governor called for a complete overhaul of the juvenile justice system. He said, "I understand the importance of keeping jobs, especially in Upstate New York. I also understand that that does not justify the burden on the taxpayer and the violation of the civil rights of young people in a program that they don't need, where they are not being treated, hundreds of miles from their homes, just to save jobs for state employees. An incarceration program is not an employment program. If people need jobs, let's get them jobs! Don't put people in juvenile detention facilities to give other people jobs."

Criminal justice advocates have hailed the Governor's remarks, which they and the League of Women Voters see as providing impetus for specific reforms in this legislative session.

Want to get involved?
Follow our Committee and
Advocacy areas online and
help us take action!
www.lwvnyc.org/committees

Welcome new members

*Rudolph Baker
Lila T. Belanoff
Enid Clott
Irene F. Dess
Sonia Ivette Dueno
Ellen Fister-Oxman
Cruz Garcia
Ralph Goldberg
Maxine Joiner
Elizabeth Kelley
Leslie Kerr
Beatrice Lemlein
Larry Pressler
Constance Rivers
Shari Siegel
Ashton Stewart
Marsha Suer Clark
Myra Thim Tattenbaum*

What Do You Know about Your Community Board?

Although Community Boards are the level of government closest to the people and make decisions with direct impact on the daily lives of the people in their area, hardly anyone knows anything about them. What are they, who are their members, how are they selected, when and where do they meet? WHO REPRESENTS YOU?

Address and telephone information about community board offices can be found in the League's directory, *They Represent You*. Or call the League office for information.

Remember, democracy is not a spectator sport!

Tributes

In honor of Charlotte Elkind
Nicky Heller
In honor of Rose and Harvey Yalan
Leonard and Marilyn Klanit
In honor of her mother
Winnifred Richman
In honor of Nicky Heller's birthday
Joel and Myrna Sherman

and a very special thanks to everyone who contributed in memory of Dr. Stanley Ebert, brother of Gladys Krasner

From the Membership Committee

Nicky Heller and Elinor Miller are co-chairs of this committee, which includes new members as well as veterans, some of whom have been active in the League in other cities and states and bring the benefits of that experience to our deliberations.

We have two primary goals. The first is to identify and recruit new members, especially women and men who have some free time and an interest in public policy and could become active in our committees or other activities. We recognize that a key step in this effort is to increase the visibility of our organization – a daunting challenge in this city where hundreds of organizations are our rivals for public attention. Greater use of press releases to neighborhood outlets and distribution of information through such sites as health clubs will constitute part of this strategy.

Our second goal for 2011-12, which also promotes the first, is to build on our reputation for nonpartisan voter service in a citywide effort to increase voter participation. The numbers and percentages of eligible adults who participate in elections has been declining in New York City and elsewhere and the committee hopes that we can enlist both new and traditional media to try to reverse this trend. There will be few contests on the ballot this November so we will be focusing first on voter registration and party enrollment in preparation for the elections of 2012.

A continuing element in our membership effort is the striking public service announcement created by WABC-TV which appears on Channel 7 from time to time. You can see it now on our website, www.lwvnyc.org/membership.

WANTED: League Members for newly-formed EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee, chaired by Nancy Schwartz, will be part of a national study, "The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education." The study, on the federal role in pre-K through grade 12 public education, will focus on three major areas: historical development of the Federal government in Public Education; components of the Elementary and Secondary Act that pertain to Equity; and the Common Core Standards and Assessment issues.

Please join us for our Committee Meetings!

Questions...suggestions?? or for information about our next meeting, please email nschwartz23@nyc.rr.com.

Over the years bequests large and small have played a critical role in providing for the New York City League's immediate needs and inspiring us to undertake new projects and programs.

A gift to the League of Women Voters of the City of New York Education Fund (LWVNYCEF) qualifies for a federal estate tax deduction and will support our education and research efforts. A bequest can be an ideal way to honor a loved one or to support particular League activities. Please contact us at 212-725-3541 for more information, or visit the [Join Us/Make a Contribution](#) page of our website at lwvnyc.org

Note: The information on these pages is not intended as legal advice. Please consult with your lawyer or financial advisor.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 24 th 5:30 – 8p.m.	Redistricting Forum - re-scheduled from Jan. 27 <i>161 6th Avenue (@Spring Street) 12th floor</i>
Thursday, March 3, 2:30- 4p.m.	Membership Committee - <i>at the League office</i>
Tuesday, March 8, 5:30-7:30p.m.	Women's History Event: "The Fire That Ignited a Movement" – <i>at Hunter College - see page 1</i>
To Be Determined	Education Committee - <i>see page 7</i>
Monday, March 28, 1:30-3:00PM	100th Anniversary Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Commemoration Event <i>St. John's University, Staten Island</i>
Thursday, May 5, 12noon – 2p.m.	LWV Education Fund Award Luncheon <i>at the Hotel Roosevelt – see page 5</i>
Friday, May 20 – Sunday, May 22	LWVNY State Convention, <i>Hotel Desmond, Albany</i>
Saturday, June 4, 9:30-2p.m.	LWVNYC Annual Meeting – <i>location TBD</i>

They Represent You

They Represent You 2011 - 2012 will be available soon. This 40-page publication provides an alphabetized directory of New York City's national, state and city elected officials, useful websites and phone numbers, and maps of Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly and City Council districts. The 2011 - 2012 edition also includes an explanation of reapportionment and redistricting based on the 2010 census, in preparation for the 2012 election. **League members will receive a complimentary copy.** Additional copies will be available for \$8.00 plus shipping and handling.

For further information, call 212-725-3541.