



NEW YORK STATE VOTER

Charter School Issue Heats Up

The state board's December adoption of a charter school position has allowed the League to speak to the Legislature in opposition to the immediate increase in the number of charter schools. Although no agreement was reached, Governor Spitzer has indicated support for increasing the number of charters.

Get to know our new position on page 6, along with CFE updates.

Phase III of Study Cancelled

The third phase of our financing education consensus was to have considered the use of gambling revenues as a means of financing education. Local Leagues registered consensus fatigue when an insufficient number to constitute a valid consensus elected to participate, thereby necessitating cancellation of the study. A reminder to all that our 2007 - 09 program planning process is underway!

Infrastructure Impacts Us All

Long range plans for transportation in New York State have been completed. Gladys Gifford, Off-board Specialist, Transportation, recommends taking a look at the "NYS Master Plan for 2030," released in November, and available at www.nysdot.gov, to see how it impacts your region.



Gladys Gifford

Bartoletti Named To Spitzer's Transition Team

Governor Eliot Spitzer asked Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNY legislative director, to be on his transition policy development team on government reform. Barbara took that opportunity to offer testimony and expert advice to the team in the area of government reform. After so many years of advocating for government reform we may finally see some concrete results of the hard work of many League members.



Barbara Bartoletti

Convention '07 hosts All-stars

Join the LWVNY for Convention 2007 at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains May 18-20. The theme is



Reaching Out/Reaching In and features some all-star speakers. On Friday, May 18, a panel of New York State government gurus, including NYPIRG's Blair Horner will analyze the first six months of our new governor's term. On May 19, Eve Burton, general counsel for Hearst Corp., whose job description now includes the "chronic, grinding task" of "keeping Hearst reporters out of jail," speaks.

Make plans to be there! Watch for the gavel for more ways to get involved in the fun of convention.

LWVNY Announces '07 Legislative Agenda

By Joan Johnson, LWVNY VP for Issues and Advocacy

Thank you to all the Leagues who submitted their priorities for the 2007 Legislative Agenda and all state board members and off-board specialists who reviewed the recommendations at the November State Board meeting. Based on the input, these are the LWVNY's priority advocacy issues for the upcoming session.

✓ Reforming State Government (including):

- Budget Reform
- Redistricting Reform
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Ethics Reform
- Legislative Rules Reform
- Lobby Reform
- Public Authorities Reform

✓ Cost Effective & Affordable Health Care

✓ Court Restructuring/Judicial Reform

✓ Equitable Funding For Education

Along with these priority items, we will continue to track additional ongoing and long held League issues:

- Capital Punishment
- Elections
- Reproductive Rights
- Salary Equity Reform
- Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl



The 2007 Legislative Agenda brochure should be in the hands of local Leagues by now. The brochure is a tool for members to use as they lobby their representatives, or speak about the League to potential members. The LWVNY's Legislative Packet, with detailed



Joan Johnson

information on all priority issues, has also been sent to local Leagues and will be posted on the LWVNY Web site where you will also find the latest on issues and pending legislation. To make the most of all the advocacy information, turn to CATT, the Citizen Action Toolkit. Go to www.LWVNY.org and click on Tool Kit. It's the fastest way to have your voice heard. Hard copies of League publications are available from the Albany office by calling 518-465-4162.

Remember, you hold the trump card. Legislators know who elects them and that they are accountable to the citizens of New York State.

UN Briefings on Human Trafficking

Following the LWVNY UN Briefings on Human Trafficking in November, Membership Outreach Director Barbara Thomas said, "You really had to be there to absorb the passion that Lucie Hrbkova and Anke Strauss bring to their UN positions trying to combat trafficking in humans." These annual briefings are an opportunity for League members to learn about an international topic in depth and have become a much sought after ticket. The 2006 briefing was no exception.

LWVNY President, Marcia Merrins prefaced the briefings by focusing on questions in need of answers: "For countries of origin, what will it take to create an environment where vulnerable persons are free to pursue a life of freedom and dignity in their homes, without fear, in a safe and just environment? For countries of destination, what will it take to create environments where exploitation is not tolerated? What is it we are not doing right, in order to correct this human wrong?"

"Our government estimates that each year up to 800,000 people are taken from their homes and families against their will and transported across international borders, while millions more are trafficked within their own countries. Eighty percent of these victims are women and girls. How can we measure our success? There is only one standard that we have to meet and that is how many victims of trafficking we are rescuing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating into society.

"The fight will take dedication and perseverance."



Above, LWVNY President Marcia Merrins and former LWVUS President Kay Maxwell, listen to Anke Strauss, liaison officer of the International Organization for Migration.



The hall at the UN was filled for the briefing.

Help Protect Women Everywhere!

- To seek assistance for a trafficking victim, call the Department of Health and Human Services Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888 or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE or 800-787-3224 (TTY). Both hot lines are prepared to answer calls in a number of languages.
- To report suspected trafficking crimes to law enforcement, call the U.S. Department of Justice Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force at 888-428-7581 or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at 866-DHS-2ICE.
- There are several Hot Lines for victim assistance, including the Department of Health and Human Services (888-373-7888) and the National Domestic Violence 800-799-SAFE or 800-787-3224).
- To report suspected trafficking crimes, contact: the U.S. Department of Justice Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force (888-428-7581) or the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (866-DHS-2ICE)
- To learn more visit the Web pages of the various organizations listed below
 - Amnesty International USA—www.aiusa.org
 - Tahirih Justice Center—www.tahirih.org
 - Vital Voices Global Partnership—www.vitalvoices.org
 - Women's Funding Network—www.wfnetwork.org
 - Equality Now—www.equalitynow.org
 - U.S. Department of Homeland Security—www.dhs.gov
 - International Justice Mission—www.ijm.org
 - U.S. Department of State—www.state.gov/g/tip
 - Polaris Project—www.polarisproject.org

Leagalities: *the Business of Being in League*

Marcia's Memo

You Are My Valentines

By Marcia Merrins, LWVNYS President

There is almost springtime giddiness in New Yorkers at the start of 2007. Oh yes, the weather has been blessedly benign and even a dismal forecast by Puxatawny Phil wouldn't dampen this euphoria. Hard working local League members and supporters are a bit giddy as well and stepping lighter as they sense a mighty change in the way politicians "do business" in Albany. So much of what we support in government reform from campaign financing to public school financing seems to be on Governor Eliot Spitzer's agenda.

Nonetheless, there are still battles to be fought—and won! There is a wonderful quote by Winston Churchill which I believe is the credo of Leagues everywhere, "Never, never, never give up." No state League is scrappier than New York! Here are some examples on how we never, never, never give up.

With a determination that the "Iron Jawed Angels" would have admired, we, along with New Yorkers for Verified Voting, are still fighting the fight to get Optical Scan type voting machines in all counties in New York. I don't have to tell you how difficult it has been to get election commissioners to hear us. But you know what? With the unbending tenacity of Aimee Allaud and all of you, we have definitely made an impact on deliberations. Perhaps being last in the country to have complied with HAVA regulations may help us continue to gain momentum.

LWVNYS Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti once said that the task of reforming Albany is similar to that of women winning the right to vote, a campaign that took decades. She said, "I figure in the next 60 years, some of what we've been discussing will occur." It has taken us 87 years to get where we are, but we know there's more to be done. (Just ask Lois Haignere about pay equity!) I think success will come sooner than that since Governor Eliot Spitzer has asked Barbara Bartoletti to be on his policy development on government reform transition team. Barbara took that opportunity to offer testimony and expert advice to the team in the area of government reform. After so many years of advocating for government reform we may finally see some concrete results of the hard work of many League members. How absolutely wonderful for us! The proposed reforms in Albany have been on our agenda for as long as I can remember. This may be the LWVNYS's Moment in the Sun and all New Yorkers will benefit! Bouquets to everyone who has worked on reforming Albany.

Candidates' debates have become a tradition in American politics. They often are the only opportunity during the election campaign for voters to get a side-by-side comparison of the candidates. Although local Leagues have been very successful in sponsoring debates, LWVNYS has not been able to accomplish this for many years.

With high hopes, the state board felt it was our responsibility to tackle state-wide debates this past fall. We succeeded in sponsoring three. We believe all qualified candidates should be heard since educating voters is at the heart of the League's mission. Executive Director Kris Hansen, Administrative Assistant Stephanie Lopez, and VP Voter Service Paula Blum worked into the wee hours through the debate season. League bouquets to them.

A special bouquet for LWVNYS VP for Development Lyle Toohey, who coordinated our annual UN briefings with our able staff. The "Briefing on the Status of Human Trafficking" brought to the forefront a dismal reality.

What can we do to stop human trafficking? Educate ourselves. Tell our friends and family. Once we know the facts, we must educate our family and friends about this human rights abuse. Urge them to join the fight to stop human trafficking. Contact your elected representatives – they need to hear from us. While there are some laws that combat human trafficking, more needs to be done. Contact our federal and state representatives and urge them to do more to stop human trafficking and to provide needed services and protection to victims. One call can make a difference and will let your representatives know that this issue is important to the people they serve. Report a suspected case of trafficking.

Be alert to signs in your community that someone is being held against her will and forced or coerced to work.



Marcia Merrins

Greetings From Grand Street

All Is Grand

By Kris Hansen, LWVNYS Executive Director

You will notice the new title for this column, "Greetings from Grand Street." The change was necessary as the state League has officially settled into the new building at 62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207. We are quite pleased that the availability of off-street parking has immediately increased the presence of board members, off-board specialists and members at the office. If you are in the Albany area, please stop in. We would love to see you!

We will of course miss Maiden Lane and all that it represented. We have begun a memorial hallway at the new location including the large donor plaque formerly located in the entrance to Maiden Lane and other signs, plaques and pictures.



Kris Hansen

Coming Soon..

The *Students Inside Albany* conference will be held at the Hampton Inn and Resorts located in Albany from April 22-25, 2007. The 2007 conference will provide a focused framework through which youth will learn about New York State government and policy development. Specific student learning objectives include:

- To increase student understanding of the framework through which public policy is determined in New York State.
- To enhance student understanding of the roles of the various forces seeking to impact New York State legislation and policy development, enactment and change.
- To promote an increased understanding of the New York State legislative process through legislative shadowing experiences.
- To develop assessment and analysis skills through experiential learning activities.
- To facilitate increased understanding on the part of the student of leadership qualities and skills.

Students will reach these objectives through a combination of lecture, experiential learning, group activities, and presentation. The conference is open to thirty high school youth from across the state. *Students Inside Albany* is a top notch learning opportunity with a lot of fun and camaraderie built in. There is limited space for this conference so if you know of a student who will benefit from this experience, please contact your local League today.

Leagues Lunch and Learn at Ida Trager Workshops

The Ida Trager workshops once again provided local Leagues with a chance to meet with state Leaders to learn about current state programs. Pictured here are participants in the workshops in Farmingdale and Scarsdale.

Clockwise from upper right are: Nancy Marr, LWV Brookhaven; Lyn Lubliner, LWV White Plains and Elinor Miller LWV of New York City; Lisa Scott, LWV Smithtown; and Adam Gaus (left), LWV Smithtown and Suffolk ILO; Arlene Forward, LWV Huntington; and Martha Kennedy, LWVNYS second vice president, membership.



The New York State Voter is published four times a year by the League of Women Voters of New York State. Subscriptions are available for \$6 a year, free for members. Reprinting permitted if *The New York State Voter* is credited.

The League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS) is one component of a unique tri-level organization. Members of the LWVNYS are also members of the League of Women Voters of the United States and, wherever possible, members of a local League as well. Membership is open to all.

President: Marcia Merrins

Executive Director: Kris Hansen

League of Women Voters of New York State, 62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207.

Phone: 518-465-4162; Fax: 518-465-0812; E-mail: <lwwny@lwwny.org>

Web site: <www.lwwny.org>

Editorial Services and Production: Joyce Hickling and Patty MacLeish, Ideas into Print, Newport, R.I. Printed at Tri-Town News, Inc., Sidney, N.Y.

© 2007 LWVNYS

Comings and Goings

Off-Board specialists play a very important role in our organization. As their title states they are the League's "specialists" on a variety of issues the League has long championed. We welcome the following members to our list of specialists:

Anne Huberman, LWV Buffalo/Niagara and **Ruth Bonn**, LWV Schenectady, will share responsibilities for the Urban Sprawl portfolio. (See page 7 for an update on Urban Sprawl.)



Roberta Wiernik

Roberta Wiernik, LWV New Castle, has agreed to return to the Natural Resources portfolio. She held the position from 1999–2000, but resigned on becoming president of the LWV Westchester County. She held the environment portfolio for LWV Westchester County and has served on many environmental issues for her local League and the LWV Westchester County, including pesticide reduction legislation, environmental shopping, and sewage disposal. "I look forward to the challenge and working with all of you to create a better environment and ultimately, a better society," said Roberta.

We Did Elections!

By **Barbara Thomas**, LWVNYS Membership Outreach Director

Leagues throughout the state participated in election related activities during the 2006 election season such as LWV Rockland County, which had its Voters' Guide published in the Sunday edition of the *Journal-News*. Others helped voters register, organized forums, and get out the vote programs. Here's a wrap-up.

Candidate Forums and Debates? We Held Them

National attention was focused on LWV Utica/Rome's first televised debate. Featuring the candidates vying to fill Sherwood Boehlert's congressional seat, the debate was televised live on channel 7 and then picked up and televised by C-Span. **Barbara Brookes**, voter service chair, reports that this was a cooperative effort with the television station, the local newspaper and the Resource Center for Independent Living.

The LWVs of Buffalo/Niagara, East Nassau, and Saratoga County reported that there was standing room only at some of the debates they held this fall. Both East Nassau and Saratoga gave candidates "red cards" to use up to two times to rebut other candidates or to extend their time to give more detailed answers on an issue. The red cards helped make the forum more lively, and overcome the "not enough time" complaint of candidates.



LWV of Plattsburgh members **Sara Hurwitz**, **Kathryn Reinhardt**, **Barbara Landes** prepare to time the 23rd Congressional race debate.

LWV Plattsburgh co-sponsored debates with Mountain Lake PBS. LWV Geneva held its candidate forum during its regular lunchtime meeting. LWV Oneonta, under the direction of voter service chair **Karen Geasey**, arranged its debate at SUNY Oneonta, where it was broadcast live. Also broadcast live (from the Binghamton City Council Chamber on Time Warner public access) was the Assembly District forum run by LWV Broome-Tioga. The Fredonia candidates forum, one of two organized by LWV Chautauqua was also broadcast live on public access TV. LWV Buffalo/Niagara, under the able direction of **Jeanne Bowman**, held five forums, including one for governor.

Due to the way congressional districts in this state are drawn, LWV Rensselaer County needed to have one forum and include the candidates for two congressional districts. LWV Schenectady's candidates forum was moderated by **Nancy Snyder** and co-sponsored by AAUW and the Social Action Committee of the First Unitarian Society of Schenectady. After much negotiating with candidates **Irma Moore**, voter service chair for LWV Bronxville, had to schedule candidate forums on two consecutive days.

Voter Registration? We Did Voter Registration

League members from LWV Central Nassau, East Nassau, and Greater Five Towns, along with AAUW registered over 350 students at freshman orientation sessions at Hofstra University. LWV of Saratoga conducted voter registration every other Saturday at the Farmers' Market. LWV Plattsburgh conducted voter registration at Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, Literacy Volunteers, and Clinton Community College. **Bette Wagner**, LWV Oneonta, organized seven volunteers to do voter registration at its fund-raising garage sale. During the Elmwood Festival of the Arts, LWV Buffalo/Niagara registered voters in the Central Terminal at a picnic that NOW organized for victims of domestic violence. Eleven members of LWV Scarsdale distributed absentee ballot applications and registration forms at the Scarsdale Sidewalk Sale. LWV Albany registered voters for three days of the Altamont Fair. LWV Port Washington-Manhasset conducted voter registration at both libraries and the local King Kullens.

League Pulled Sponsorship of Several Statewide Office Debates

"The voters of New York State deserve better," stated **Marcia Merrins**, LWVNYS President in announcing withdrawal of sponsorship from a debate between candidates for the office of Attorney General to be hosted and broadcast by WXXI in Rochester on October 17, 2006. Similarly, the League withdrew sponsorship from two debates to be hosted by WABC in New York City: an Attorney General debate scheduled for October 15, and a debate between candidates for the United States Senate scheduled for October 22.

All withdrawals were necessitated by League policy, which requires an invitation be extended to each candidate whom the League has determined to be a bona fide contestant. Once a candidate has complied with the League's criteria for inclusion in a debate, the League cannot sponsor a debate from which that candidate is excluded. To act otherwise would violate the League's fundamental belief in the public's right to know.

Green Party nominee for the Senate, **Howie Hawkins**, and Green Party nominee for Attorney General, **Rachael Treichler**, had been excluded by the stations mentioned, disallowing maximization of public debate by all candidates for public office.

LWVNYS Election Season Highlights

By **Paula Blum**, LWVNYS VP/Voter Service

The responses to our statewide *Voters Guides* and to the local ones that were done totally or partially at the state level were terrific. We did our best to overcome the problems that came about following the format's debut two years ago, and I think we succeeded.

Some Leagues would have preferred to receive the guides earlier, but although we did the best we could, there were problems with obtaining all the information we needed early enough and with candidates who were overwhelmed and understaffed and could not provide all that we needed. Time was also a factor when it came to including the ballots in the guides. Ballots are just not available early enough. Perhaps it can be done for some editions in the future, if not for all. Special thanks to **Stephanie Lopez** and **Rob Marchiony** for their excellent, professional work on this project.

The statewide debates that occurred were well received and we were indeed proud. Unfortunately, candidates and circumstances prevented us from doing many that were planned, and, in fact, the League chose not to participate in a couple of forums, which ended up happening without us. We had to stand with our principles, as difficult as that was, and step down when a qualifying third party candidate was not included by the media (see story above). There was a huge amount of preparation that was done by the local Leagues involved and by our state office staff. Executive Director **Kris Hansen** had a trial by fire in this her first election season with the League. She had to handle these problems before she had much of a chance to acclimate. I would like to express my admiration and appreciation to the local Leagues and Leaguers who worked on the debates, both those that occurred and those that didn't.

The preliminary report on SmartVoter.com was that we had a lot of hits – far more than expected, since we had little time to publicize it, and only one BOE involved. The service was available only in Westchester County for local races, but the rest of the state could access information on state-wide races. Individuals who logged on to it indicated to me that they were quite impressed. We hope that it will grow exponentially.



Paula Blum

Dear "Inside Albany,"

A fixture in the Capitol District media since 1975, the television program, "Inside Albany" is now off the air. Over this time, **Lise Bang-Jensen**, **Dave Hepp** and **Gary Glinski** reported on our state government in a responsible and trustworthy manner. They are past recipients of the League's 2000 Citizen of Achievement Award, and LWVNYS President, **Marcia Merrins** recently wrote to them on behalf of the League:

We are devastated that you are going out of business! For Leaguers around the state you have provided a continuous stream of thoughtful, thought-provoking reporting of events in the Capitol and the State which otherwise would not have been reported with even-handedness. Many of us remember your first incarnation and have been with you throughout several changes of format and timing. Your determination to keep the program going with the same high standards in place is a model for other aspiring journalists.

Your recognition of the importance of educating and empowering students as future citizens by your participation in the New York State League's "Students Inside Albany" has been greatly appreciated.

We wish you success in your future endeavors – and hope they will include in some way, keeping the public well informed on the Albany scene.

Ethics in Government — More Reform Needed



This year—2007—marks the twentieth anniversary of New York’s ethics law, and the League, along with the Brennan Center for Justice, Common Cause, Citizen’s Union, and NYPIRG, continues to speak to this issue. In a letter in early January, these groups urged Governor Eliot Spitzer and state legislative leaders— Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senate Minority Leader Malcolm Smith, and Assembly Minority Leader James Tedisco to seize a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity and embrace a package of ethics reforms in the 2007 legislative session. The group’s call came after a series of controversies and scandals involving state lawmakers. In the letter, the groups listed the Top 10 Recommendations to support Ethics Reform Legislation (see below), and the groups noted,

We write to urge you to embrace ethics reform as a top legislative priority for the 2007 session. As you know, the last few years in Albany have been marked by a series of ethical low-lights. Three members of the Assembly, one Senator, and one cabinet-level agency head have been convicted of political

crimes. Two Assemblymembers and two Senators are currently under investigation. And the state Comptroller has been forced to resign.

Lawmakers would normally respond to such controversies by holding hearings, drafting legislation and advancing reforms. Yet in Albany, little significant change has occurred.

Obviously, passage of reforms cannot guarantee that government will be scandal-free. There will always be those who seek to enrich themselves at the public’s expense. But a well-enforced, strict ethics code will make people more likely to behave. Right now, New York has neither.

Please add your support to this “once-in-a-generation” opportunity. Go to www.lwnyny.org and click on “Recommendation To Support Ethics Reform Legislation.” Reprinted below are excerpts of the “Top 10 Ethic Reforms” or go to www.lwnyns.org to read a more detailed explanation. Don’t forget, for a quick and easy way to speak to your state representatives, try CATT (Citizen Action Toolkit) on the Web site.

Top 10 Ethics Reforms

1. Create an Independent Ethics Commission.

It is important that legislation be enacted that creates an independent state ethics commission with jurisdiction over statewide elected officials, state officers and employees, state legislators, and legislative employees. New York’s state ethics law is presently enforced by two agencies. The State Ethics Commission monitors the executive branch and the Legislative Ethics Committees monitors the legislative. The State Ethics Commission’s membership is dominated by gubernatorial appointees and the legislative branch is monitored by the Legislative Ethics Committee, which consists of eight members, appointed by the leaders. Elected officials essentially police their own behavior and that of their employees.

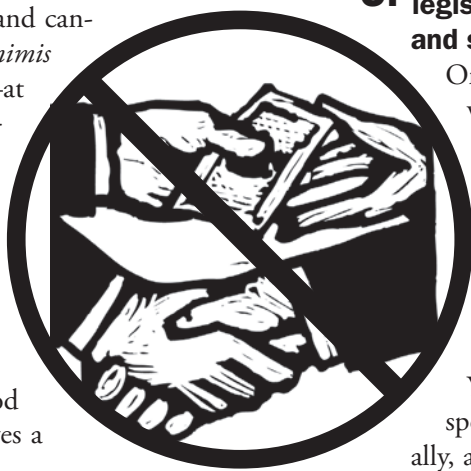
We believe that this system is unacceptable. We propose that this new state ethics commission consist of 17 individuals with two persons appointed by each of the following officials: the comptroller, the attorney general, speaker and minority leader of the assembly and the temporary president and minority leader of the senate, and five persons appointed by the governor. The executive director should be appointed by the commission, without regard to political affiliation. No member of this commission should be allowed to hold public or political party offices or be employed as a lobbyist.

2. End “Pay to Play.”

We urge you to implement pay-to-play restrictions. The infusion of large sums of money by businesses and unions with public contracts and lobbyists into the campaign coffers of elected representatives has generated a widespread public belief that contributors are “paying” those officials for the opportunity to “play” with the government. The common Albany practice of holding political fund-raisers that are attended by professional lobbyists exacerbates the public perception that lobbyists are “buying” access to elected officials. Unlike many states, moreover, New York does not limit state or local contractors from making large campaign contributions to the very officials who must determine to whom a contract should be awarded. New York should join a growing number of states and localities with “pay to play” restrictions on lobbyists and public contractors.

3. Strengthen New York’s gift ban.

Gifts to elected officials, state officers or employees, and candidates for those offices, with limited exceptions for *de minimis* (i.e. trivial) items, should be banned. It is widely agreed—at least behind closed doors—that allowing lobbyists to offer gifts to lawmakers both corrupts the legislative process and provides unequal public access to government decision-makers. Even without actual corruption, allowing officials to accept gifts of any significant value erodes the public’s confidence in the integrity of our government. It’s important for a new ethics law to be approved that bans all gifts to all legislative and executive officials, except for certain enumerated *de minimis* items, including food or beverages served at an event where a public official gives a speech or answers questions.



4. Ban honoraria.

We urge you to ban honoraria paid to public officials, except those paid for private professional services at the rate generally charged by specialists in the relevant field. Current New York law does not prohibit honoraria in any form for state legislators, and it only requires that such payments be disclosed if their value exceeds \$1000. Giving speeches and participating in public policy discussions are important parts of a public official’s job. To allow groups to offer state lawmakers honoraria for performing these duties, however, creates a real or apparent conflict of interest for public officials.

5. Restrict the personal use of campaign contributions.

Restrictions on the personal use of campaign funds must be strengthened and enforced. In recent years, reports of politicians using their campaign funds to cover arguably personal expenses have exposed a serious inadequacy of current legal restrictions on such behavior. While current New York law forbids contributions for strictly personal use, the statute’s language is too vague to provide any meaningful restraint. The use of campaign contributions should be limited expressly to pay for costs directly related to promoting the nomination or election of the candidate.

Legislation should set forth clear definitions of “personal use” and specifically prohibit the use of funds on expenditures ranging from tuition payments, mortgage, rent, utility payments, and attorney’s fees for defense against charges of violating state or federal law, to dues and fees at a country club.

6. Strengthen the “revolving door” ban.

We encourage you to strengthen the state’s “revolving door” ban by extending it to political party officials and lengthening the period of prohibition for lobbying by legislative employees. Bans on “revolving door” lobbying [should] seek to restrain former state government and party officials from using their government connections to benefit themselves, their clients or their business interests after they leave office. New York is one of six states that impose a two-year ban on legislators and state agency officers and employees. New York’s ban does not apply, however, to political party officials and imposes a ban on lobbying by legislative employees that lasts only until the end of the legislative session during which the individual was employed. Accordingly, a legislative employee could leave at the end of a session and begin lobbying immediately thereafter. Apply a two-year lobbying ban to political party chairpersons and ban former legislative employees from lobbying during the term of office of the Legislature in which he or she was so employed or within one year after ending legislative employment, whichever is longer.

7. Create more stringent requirements for financial disclosure for public officers.

Financial disclosure requirements for state employees must be strengthened. Requiring disclosure helps to ensure the transparency and accountability of state government and to avoid possible conflicts of interest. It’s important that any ethics reform include ways to enhance the requirements for disclosure of financial information by state employees in various ways. For example, as of January 2006, half of the states required that lawmakers disclose the names those who are clients. At a minimum, such names should be reported to the new ethics commission in order to ensure that potential conflicts are adequately monitored.

8. Require ethics training for lobbyists and for the governor, legislators, legislative employees, state agency officers, and state agency employees.

Once good laws are on the books, the good way to prevent ethics violations is through education. A reform package should expressly require ethics training for all state officials, including the governor, and legislators, as well as continuing education in these areas provided by the state ethics commission. While it is essential for lobbyists to understand the ethics laws that regulate their practice, and especially the new “pay-to-play” restrictions that this bill would enact, currently New York does not require any training of lobbyists. Instead the New York Temporary State Commission on Lobbying should be responsible for online ethics training of lobbyists at least semiannually, and all registered lobbyists should be required to complete such training.

9. Strengthen accountability of “member items” and other lump sum appropriations.

We urge you to require greater accountability in “member item” spending. Some of the most recent scandals have resulted from misuse of “member item” spending. Any ethics reform package should address such abuses. Member items are appropriated without clear standards established by law or even agency rule. The State Comptroller’s Office identified more than \$1 billion in the fiscal year 2005-06 budget that was appropriated subject to Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) among the Budget Director and the two houses. At the very least, the choices made about how to spend this money should be made public, so New Yorkers can examine who is benefiting and weigh the costs and advantages for themselves.

10. Strengthen ethical standards for public officials.

We recommend that a new ethics law prohibits business relationships between public officials and lobbyists and those with receive government contracts. Moreover, a new law must make it clear that public officials cannot use public employees in order to provide personal services.

TOP PRIORITY

We Rally for Paper

By Aimee Allaud, LWVNYS Off-board Government Specialist

A rally sponsored by the state League and New Yorkers for Verified Voting (NYVV) was held on November 15, 2006, on the east steps of the Capitol Building in Albany. The subjects were a *post mortem* on electronic voting in the 2006 elections and the future of voting in New York State.

Speaking at the event, along with me, were Bo Lipari, Executive Director of NYVV, Russ Haven, Counsel, NYVV, and Assemblyman Bob Reilly, Assemblyman Jack McEneny all of whom endorse optical scan voting systems.

On behalf of the League, I called for then Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer to put election reform measures he supported in his 2001 report, *Voting Matters*, in his State of the State message, and to submit a budget including funding for a state-funded voters guide, especially in the year in which new voting machines will be introduced. About 30 people jammed the Press Room after the event. Bo and I were able to pass out our press release and speak with the press about the issue. The event was covered by Dave Hepp, *Inside Albany*, Karen DeWitt, New York Public Radio, and Dan Wiessner of Gannett papers.

Please visit the LWVNYS Web site, www.lwvny.org, for up-to-date information, and information you can use for your personal advocacy efforts.

Watching the Watchdog— Certifying Voting Machines

By Bo Lipari, Executive Director of New Yorkers for Verified Voting

The principle contractor managing certification testing for the State Board of Elections is CIBER, Inc., one of three large testing companies which have close ties to the voting machine vendors. CIBER was responsible for the certification of several voting systems that were later shown to have defective software and defects, and were subsequently de-certified by several states. CIBER's performance for New York State has thus far been poor, tending to favor machine vendors' very loose interpretation of State requirements. CIBER has submitted inadequate drafts of "Master Test and Security Test" plans, and seems willing to tolerate poor testing practices in order to allow machines to pass tests they otherwise would not.

New York State regulations call for an independent security review of voting machine source code. The firm NYSTEC was hired to fulfill this role. NYSTEC was hired without any real evaluation by the State Board of Elections or voting rights advocacy organizations. Many, including the author, were concerned that NYSTEC was unqualified to perform the independent analysis as they lacked any relevant experience with voting systems. But to date NYSTEC has indeed acted independently of CIBER, pushing back on several important security issues. Still ahead of NYSTEC is the actual source code security review.

Challenging the Usability of Voting Systems

By Aimee Allaud,
Off-board Government Specialist

The Brennan Center for Justice Report, "Usability of Voting Systems" was issued in August 2006 and offers new evidence that one of the two major types of voting machines being considered for use in NYS—the full-face DREs—has a higher rate of unrecorded ("residual") votes, suggesting that it is too confusing for many people. The full-face DREs which New York may purchase had twice the rate of residual or lost votes than optical scan ballots counted at the precinct. The conclusions of the report have particular implications for jurisdictions with high percentages of minorities and low-income voters. Researchers examined records for the 2004 presidential elections from 2,402 counties. They found that the disparity between the two systems, in the percentage of unrecorded votes, was even higher in counties where the median income was less than \$25,000 (2.8 percent versus 1.4 percent), where blacks made up more than 30 percent of the population (1.3 percent versus 0.9 percent) and where Hispanics made up more than 30 percent of the population (2.0 percent versus 1.2 percent).

For the full report and press release, go to www.brennancenter.org.



Counsel For The Indigent: Its Time Has Come

By Lenore Banks, Off-board Judicial Specialist

The Kaye Commission issued its final report in June 2006, along with a lengthy report by its consultant, The Spangenberg Group. Release of the final report, calling for a statewide system of defense services headed by an independent commission, engendered publicity statewide. Furthermore, press references to it continue

The Judiciary cannot reform public defense alone. The advent of a new Administration provides what we hope will be a welcoming ear in the Executive on this issue. But promises of many reforms that give rise to hope also give rise to the fear that public defense clients will—once again—be pressed to the bottom of a long list of governmental needs. The League must not allow this opportunity to achieve its long-held goal of justice to be lost.

Locally and on a state level we must press for Executive support of our position and for State legislation creating an Independent Public Defense Commission in 2007. In media responses and in contacts with officials, local examples of systemic problems resulting in low quality representation should be noted and tied to Chief Judge Kaye's call for reform.

And plan now to take part in Gideon Day, the observance of the United States Supreme Court case that recognized the right to counsel in non-capital cases. On Tuesday, March 6, 2007, in Albany, Gideon Day will be back, bigger than ever. Access Lenore's complete report in the January State Board Report at www.lwvny.org (Member Resources).

Selecting State Supreme Court Justices After Lopez-Torres

Nomination by a political party at a Judicial Nominating Convention has been the traditional process by which candidates for Supreme Court reach the ballot. However, this partisan method of selecting nominees has been held unconstitutional by Federal District Court in *Lopez Torres v. NYS Board of Elections*, which said that it violated the First Amendment rights of both voters and judicial candidates.

The court has decreed that Supreme Court candidates will run in direct primaries as of November 2007, *unless* the New York State Legislature provides a remedy for the Lopez Torres Decision. The League has long been a supporter of merit appointment of judges. The Assembly held hearings in New York City, Rochester, and Albany in November and December. Below are excerpts of the testimony given before the Assembly Standing Committee on Judiciary on December 15, 2006, by Helga Schroeter, LWVNYS Off-Board Court Restructuring Specialist.

The League's position clearly states that Judges should be chosen on the basis of merit. Judges, unlike members of the Legislative and Executive Branches of Government are not expected to represent the will of the people, political parties or to be responsive to political pressures. They are to provide fair and impartial administration of justice, thus the independence of the judiciary is essential to performing this function.

For fifty years the League has held a strong position in support of a qualification based appointive system for selecting all judges in New York State. To accomplish this goal, we strongly support a Constitutional Amendment to create an appointive system for all judges. We urge the Assembly to introduce such a Constitutional Amendment this session. The League will work with you to secure first passage in this session to move us forward toward this imperative goal. Since the League also feels that ultimate control over a major government institution should always rest with the people, we also support the establishment in the Constitutional Amendment of broadly based, diverse nonpartisan Nominating Commissions. These Commissions should be composed of lawyers and laypeople necessary to reflect the diversity of the community. The Qualifying Commissions would propose a list of candidates "highly qualified" and appointment from this list would be mandatory. Such Qualifying Commissions would promote independence, diversity, integrity, and legal scholarship, judicial qualities important to the League.

Recognizing that time constraints imposed by the Courts under Lopez-Torres do not allow for the minimum three-year period required for amending the State Constitution, the League also put forth specific recommendations for reforms to the existing party Judicial Nominating Conventions. To see these recommendations, see the January 2007 *State Board Report*, available through your local League president, or at www.lwvny.org (Member Resources).

Do You Deserve an Award?

Of course you do. All you need to do is choose the category that your home League shines in most brightly. Award Night at state convention is a great experience. Put your League in the spotlight. Let your President know that you can help by filling out the form due in the state League office by February 25, 2007. Access the form and criteria in the January *State Board Report*.

The categories are: Member Development, Leadership Development, Fundraising, Action on State/National Issues, Action on Local Issues, Publications, Visibility, and Voter Service. A local Bulletin Award will also be given, but bulletins are being read, and will be judged on their effectiveness over this biennium. There is no need to nominate a specific issue.



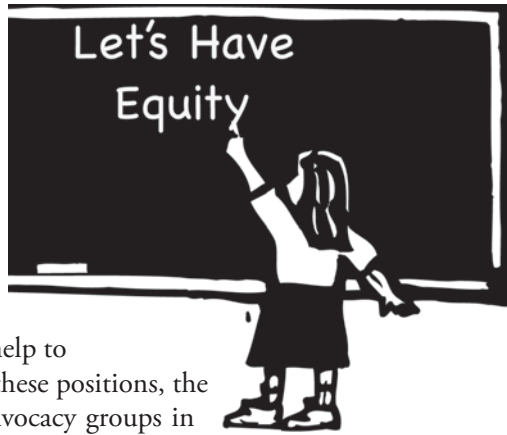
How Well Will New York State Fund NYC Schools?

By Betsey Swan and Lee Tetkowsky, Off-board Specialists, Financing Education

On November 20, 2006 the New York State Court of Appeals reaffirmed the state's responsibility to increase funding for New York City schools. The court set an appropriation of \$1.9 billion in operating expenses, or \$2.5 billion statewide, and noted that the Governor and Legislature were best able to arrive at the appropriate figure to provide all New York City students with the opportunity for a meaningful high school education. To that end the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, which the League supported in this litigation, has called for additional funding of between \$4 and \$6 billion for NYC, a figure previously supported by both Governor Spitzer and former Governor Pataki.

The League's positions support the higher level of funding in two respects. First, the League's new financing education position provides that money must be sufficient to enable children to meet all Regents standards in addition to enabling districts to provide a sound basic education, the constitutional minimum. The first Court of Appeals decision in this case noted that funding need not be at a level sufficient to enable children to meet all Regents standards. While this distinction was relatively unimportant in light of the Appellate Division decision supporting CFE funding in the \$4 to \$6 billion range, it becomes paramount in light of the intervening Court of Appeals decision in support of the lower minimum remedy.

Secondly, the LWVUS position supports early childhood education, including preschool, as part of our social policy position advocating early intervention for children at-risk. Studies have shown that at-risk children enter school without the requisite readiness skills, and they are unable to overcome the initial gap. Quality pre-school education can help to alleviate this gap. In keeping with these positions, the League has joined a number of advocacy groups in calling for a higher level of funding for New York City Schools.



Legislate For The Future— Fund Education Now

Implementation of the CFE order on a statewide basis is one of the League's legislative priorities for 2007. We urge all League members to write their legislators in support of the higher level of implementation. Some talking points to be raised are:

- Guarantee New York's future by improving education now.
- Implement the Campaign for Fiscal Equity order on a statewide basis, with district accountability for educational outcomes. The Governor and Legislature should exercise their prerogative to fund New York City schools in the \$4 to \$6 billion range.
- Reduce current local property taxes so all school districts tax at the same rate, with any shortfall in education expenses provided by the State. Enact a meaningful circuit breaker tax relief program, replacing the current non-income based program with one tied to need, adjusted by means of an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).
- Take education out of the political arena by adoption of a foundation approach to education finance. After providing real property tax relief, raise additional funds required for education by means of the personal income tax, which is a better measure of ability to pay than the real property tax. Adjust the foundation amount annually by means of a COLA.
- Assure stability of education finance by creation of a dedicated education reserve to make up shortfalls in times of economic downturn.
- Create a capacity-building initiative to assist those districts without the current capacity to provide all children with a sound basic education. Such an initiative should include technical assistance with respect to validated best practices and professional development and facilitation of research to determine best practices in unstudied areas.

More information is available in the January 2007 *State Board Report*, or visit the LWVNY Web page and click on "Advocacy." If you have any questions about the consensus, please feel free to contact Betsey Swan.

Healthcare for One New York?

Governor Spitzer, in his State of the State address, announced plans to, "introduce a budget that, in the very first year, guarantees access to health insurance for all of New York's 500,000 uninsured children." Those local Leagues who urged making "Cost Effective and Affordable Healthcare" a 2007 legislative priority may have remembered past League initiatives on this issue.

In 1992, the League lobbied for legislation which would provide technical assistance to school districts and BOCES to develop school based health care services for pre-school and school age children, but this bill died in the senate. In 1996 League supported the state's Child Health Plus (CHP) program that offered subsidized health insurance to children of families unable to afford health coverage. In 1998 we supported expansion of CHP using federal funding incentives.

We worked to include Family Health Plus as part of HCRA 2000, and pressed to see that HCRA continued to include CHP and Family Health Plus when it was reauthorized in 2003.

The League supports regulatory incentives to encourage the development of alternative ways of delivering and paying for health care. Delivery programs should provide quality care, be cost effective, and be adaptable to different geographical locations. Services may take place in a variety of settings, including the home, and must be staffed by personnel who meet state standards.

School based health care services are a reality for schools in central New York. Can cost effective and affordable healthcare like this become accessible state wide?

Financing Education Phase III Cancelled

Charter School Position Adopted

In December the board of directors of the LWVNY adopted a new position on charter schools, following completion of Phase II of the financing education consensus. The new position enabled the League to weigh in with the Legislature in opposition to the immediate increase in the number of charter schools. Although no agreement has been reached, Governor Eliot Spitzer has indicated support for increasing the number of charter schools. However, as a result of the consensus, the League will be opposing any increase in the cap on the creation of charter schools. The League believes that charter schools represent an educational experiment whose efficacy has never received appropriate validation. A review of the performance of charters in New York State indicates that, while some do an excellent job of educating children, others are less successful than the most substandard traditional public schools. Moreover, 11 of the 44 charters that would have come up for renewal by June, 2007 are no longer in existence, representing a failure rate of 25%. Current oversight does not require that charters outperform traditional public schools to receive renewal of their charters, and there is no indication of institutional capacity to judge whether charters are in fact doing a better job of educating all children.

A copy of the new position is printed below. A full compilation of the consensus results on which the position are based are available in the January *State Board Report*. Thanks to all who have worked so hard and under such tight time constraints to make the charter school consensus possible.

The third phase of the financing education consensus was to have considered the use of gambling revenues as a means of financing education. Because an insufficient number of local Leagues elected to participate the consensus could not be considered valid necessitating cancellation of the study.

Charter Schools in New York State

Adopted November, 2006

The League recognizes that charter schools represent an educational experiment whose efficacy has never received appropriate validation. Moreover, a review of the performance of charters in New York State indicates that, while some do an excellent job of educating children, others are less successful than the most substandard traditional public schools. Therefore, The League supports public funding of academic research into the characteristics of charters that lead to student academic success.

Authority to grant, oversee, renew and revoke charters, other than those granted in public school conversions, should be vested in a single entity. Charters should be subject to more stringent oversight of charter compliance in the renewal/revocation of process, with greater emphasis on positive educational outcomes.

The League supports measures to limit the negative financial impact of charter schools on their home districts, including: transition assistance; home district payment to charters based on the same standard used to pay operating aid to school districts (while the League supports enrollment as the appropriate measure, it believes the measure should be identical for both charters and traditional public schools); separate levels of reimbursement for elementary and secondary education to charter schools based on what the home districts spend for the level of schooling provided; limitation of the percentage of a school district's budget that could be paid to charter schools. The League is opposed to State provision of capital construction and renovation services and reimbursement of capital expenditures for charter schools.

The League supports limitation of the number of charters issued in New York State. As a general matter, it believes that the number of charter schools should not be increased without prior successful implementation of the improvements outlined in this position. In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason. Any increase in the cap on charter schools should be tied to amendment of the Charter School Act so that charters are required to prove positive educational outcomes for all children (disaggregated by special needs) exceeding those in traditional public schools as a precondition for charter renewal. To more accurately measure student outcomes in charters and to compare them to those in traditional public schools, the League supports public funding to measure educational growth in individual students as they progress from grade to grade in charter schools (a value added approach).

LET'S PRIORITY

Community Preservation Act, Act II

By Ruth Bonn and Anne Huberman, Off-board Sprawl and Land Use Specialists

In 2006, the League supported, and the State Assembly passed, the Community Preservation Act, to amend the environmental conservation law to authorize towns, after a referendum, to adopt a transfer tax of up to two percent on real property transactions for the purpose of establishing a community preservation fund to be used for land conservation. The State Senate, for reasons that aren't clear, failed to pass it. Some legislators have objected to it because it involves another tax. Towns, however, are completely in control of whether or not the tax is imposed. There will be no tax unless a town passes a referendum supporting it. Furthermore, the town has the option of choosing a lower rate than 2%. The law would simply authorize towns that value land conservation to use this act as one tool towards that end.

There will be ongoing efforts in 2007 to promote the passage of the Community Preservation Act in both the Assembly and the Senate. The League will again take action in support of these efforts, and hope to have the support of Governor Spitzer as well.

Where does Governor Spitzer stand on this issue? There is some indication of his position from a speech that he gave at the Linda Norris Auditorium in Albany, NY. An excerpt is printed below.

Smart growth creates livable, economically viable and environmentally valuable communities with a high quality of life – communities in which people want to live and work. And smart growth makes good business sense.

Business leaders are increasingly looking at a community's quality-of-life as a major factor in deciding where to locate their operations.

Another way we can reduce suburban sprawl is to help preserve our working farms. New York loses approximately 25,000 acres of farmland each year. A number of programs exist to help conserve farmland. Unfortunately, many farmers are not aware of the programs available to help them conserve land and improve environmental stewardship. We should work with groups like FarmNet and the American farmland trust to help farmers identify these financial incentives so that we can save their farms, rather than losing them to suburban sprawl.

The League will be looking for opportunities to provide the governor with further education on sprawl and land use issues. It looks as if we'll find a sympathetic ear.

Raising Fun and Funds at Convention



The **Big League Raffle** will be part of convention festivities in May. All LWVNYS members will receive tickets to sell, and once again, raffle profits will be split between the state and local Leagues. Your local League will receive a percentage of the total proceeds of sales made by your League's members. We have found that many Leagues like being able to have a raffle without the hassle of setting it up. It's a win-win. If your League hasn't tried it before, make 2007 the year you seize this opportunity to add cash to your League's treasury. Need more tickets? Contact LWVNYS Administrative Assistant Stephanie Lopez (Stephanie@lwvny.org) or 518-465-4162.

Convention visitors and delegates alike are eager shoppers, so it's a great opportunity for local Leagues to sell their wares. The very popular **Silent Auction** has been a real showcase for local Leagues as well. It's the perfect opportunity to spread the word about the unique products and services of your community. We depend upon you and your imagination. We rely heavily on your donations to make the auction a success once again. Let your local League president know that you have just the thing to tempt the most discerning consumer.

Advertise to the League!

LWVNYS is now offering members and associates the opportunity to place business card ads (17/8" x 3 1/8") in the New York State *Voter*, a publication that reaches more than 7,000 homes, four times a year. To take advantage of this opportunity, send your business card to the League office along with your check made out to LWVNYS.

PLEASE NOTE: Postal regulations for presorted mail prohibit or restrict certain advertisements. The *Voter* may not carry ads for a credit, debit, or charge cards or similar financial instruments or account; for certain types of travel arrangements; and insurance policies. Please contact (518-465-4162) the League office for complete details or if you have questions.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Enclosed in my business card and a check made out to LWVNYS for:

____ \$50 (ad in one issue of the NYS Voter)

____ \$100 (ad in 2 issues of the NYS Voter)

____ \$150 (ad in 4 issues of the NYS Voter)

E-mail lwvny@lwvny.org. Please put "Voter advertising" in the subject line or send this form to:

League of Women Voters of New York State

62 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207.

Questions? 518-465-4162 or via FAX: 518-465-0812

Can We Kill the Death Penalty?

By Ann Brandon, Off-board Death Penalty Specialist

After our victories at national convention, which won a new national League position opposing the death penalty, we now return to New York State where two men were exonerated in 2006 because DNA evidence showed them to be innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted. Douglas Warney, freed in May, had served 10 years in prison for a Rochester murder he did not commit. Jeffrey Deskovic served 17 years in prison for a Peekskill murder and rape he did not commit, and was freed in September. These men were not sentenced to death, but the cases again show the flaws in our criminal justice system.

Three big questions loom:

1. Governor Spitzer says he can support the death penalty under certain circumstances. What will this mean for the next legislative session?
2. In September, 2006, Governor Pataki appointed Eugene Pigott, Jr., from Buffalo, to replace George Bundy Smith on the Court of Appeals. The terms of three members of the seven-member Court of Appeals will expire in 2007. One defendant, John Taylor, is still on death row. His appeal is expected to be heard in the spring of 2007. How will new members of the court affect the outcome of his case?
3. Are there legislators who can be persuaded that the death penalty is an outmoded punishment that New Yorkers no longer want or can afford?

With these unknown quantities, we must continue to be vigilant in our opposition and rally public support in favor of abolition.

Alternatives To Incarceration—Moving Forward

By Debra Merryweather, Off-Board Alternatives to Incarceration Specialist

According to various groups who follow drug law implementation, many drug offenders convicted under the Rockefeller Drug Laws are still languishing behind bars in spite of the implementation of the 2004 Rockefeller Drug Reform Act. The legislation provides guidelines for release consideration for such drug prisoners, however, according to the Center for Community Alternatives and the State Organizing and Policy Project of the Drug Policy Alliance, inmates for whom immediate relief was expected are still behind bars without sentencing review dates scheduled.

In the last session, the NYS Assembly passed legislation (A08098A), which had called for the mandatory establishment of drug courts in all NYS counties. These courts are expected to result in mandatory drug treatment and decreased prison sentencing for non-violent drug offenders while saving \$123 million in corrections costs.

It seems that, overall, New York is headed in the direction hoped for by the League, although, there are wide disparities based on race and economic class in how drug offenders are handled initially when entering the system. A series of articles in the *New York Times* (September 2006), entitled, "The Broken Bench," highlighted the differences in approach to offenders in the initial entry points of the criminal justice system. Consistent and equitable application of the law is crucial in the initial stages of criminal proceedings.

Economic class is always a factor in the handling of criminal cases initially. In order to try a more holistic approach in stopping drug trafficking in their communities, police departments in High Point, N.C., and Newburgh, N.Y., are enlisting the cooperation of families, church groups and business leaders to pressure street level drug peddlers to cease their activities before arrest warrants are signed. These are often for drug sellers for whom warrants are written up and ready to be signed. Such programs, designed to keep offenders out of jail, encourage them to find alternative employment and assist poorer neighborhoods fight their quality of life and economic problems have proven so far, successful. It is hoped that more energy could be devoted to such measures in New York State. The League reaffirms its commitment to alternatives to incarceration for non-violent drug offenders and encourages our elected officials to consider the criminal process from start to finish when seeking those alternatives.

Share Your Speaker's Notes!

By Joan Elliot, LWVNYS Director of Citizen Education

Why reinvent the wheel? When you need information in a format that will allow you to speak to your community's burning issues (maybe open burning of trash?), wouldn't it be nice to tap a database of information, speech outlines or notes that you can grab and go with?

We would like to see that you can. If you have made presentations on any League or community topic of interest, please let us know. We need to know what topics in your community have brought out the masses so that we can compile notes on useful and timely topics.

You may respond to Executive Director Kris Hansen at the state League office or e-mail me at isladecalma@msn.com.



Local League News

The LWV Orleans County sponsored a presentation: "Better Government: Avoiding Conflict of Interest" in early February at Albion High School. The guest speaker was Mr. James Magavern, Esq., senior partner of Magavern, Magavern, and Grimm, LLP, of Buffalo, NY. He concentrates in the areas of health, corporate, and state and local government law.

Kay Maxwell, immediate past president of LWVUS, was the featured speaker at LWV Saratoga's "Sundae Social on Thursday," a very successful orientation to the LWV for new, prospective and experienced members. Maxwell filled her speech with colorful illustrations of the League's past, the vital need for the League today, and a view of future. Chairs of all the board committees had up to two minutes to explain what their com-

Rita Tanski arranged a forum about Keeping Port Washington/Manhasset Green for LWV Port Washington/Manhasset. Included were experts representing four environmental groups. They presented actions people could take individually and also planning issues requiring governmental action.

Howard Weitzman, the Nassau County Comptroller addressed LWV Great Neck on the role that special taxing districts (e.g. fire, water, sewer) play in increasing local taxes and contributing to inefficient, multiple layers of government with little voter input.

LWV Syracuse was presented with the Onondaga Citizens League's Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award. LWV President Roberta Millert accepted the award, which



LWV Saratoga Membership Committee Janice Burns, Patty Garrett, and Ann Magnuson with Chair Kelly Reidy and Kay Maxwell.

mittee does and the help that they need. Volunteers recruited from last year's LeaderSpark graduates served the sundaes.

Jane Schmitt, Natural Resources Chair LWV Rochester/Metro, ordered (and got) a crisp fall day for a Genesee River Cruise to the confluence with the Barge Canal, complete with a speaker outlining the progress being made to clean up the river, tasty lunches and beautiful scenery. Thirty-two attendees enjoyed this October League Day.

Elsie Wager, LWV Broome-Tioga and past president of LWVNYS, reports that one of Broome-Tioga's new members, Cheryl Papa, was the subject of a feature article in the local *Sun-Bulletin* which focused on Cheryl's efforts in getting out the vote. The paper noted, "A member of the League of Women Voters, she'll hand out fliers until the back seat of her gray Toyota Camry is empty, or until she has encouraged everyone in Greater Binghamton to get out and vote."

Joanne Dittes Yepsen, a Saratoga County Supervisor and a member of that LWV, spoke to the LWV of Geneva on "The Elected Official's Role in Open Government" at their November Lunch with the League.

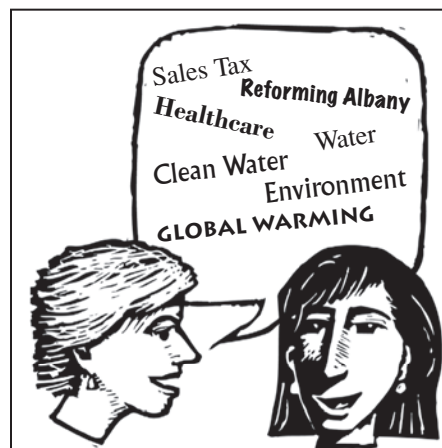


Mary Fox and Sheila Crespi, LWV New Castle, prepared and served a sumptuous brunch for eight, which had been purchased by Barbara and Jay Levy at their League's fund-raiser.

will be displayed in their new office. LWV Syracuse has a new mailing address (P.O. Box 11866, Syracuse, NY 13218), phone (315-448-7199) and fax.

The LWVs of Hamptons, Huntington, Nassau County, and Suffolk County have joined with nine other petitioners to get DEC to uphold the 1986 Moratorium on the drilling of new wells in the Lloyd Aquifer. The concern is that new wells will allow salt infiltration and destroy drinking water.

Anne Huberman, co-chair of the local government committee for LWV Buffalo/



Clean Energy & Wind (Chautauqua, East Nassau); Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations and Water Quality (Chautauqua); Conflicts of Interest in the FDA (Bronxville); Councilmanic Districts (Great Neck, Port Washington-Manhasset, Westbury); Domestic Violence (Somers); Eating Locally (Plattsburgh); Environmental Literacy for Children (New Castle); Environmental Protection (Port Washington-Manhasset); Fiscal Crisis in Erie County Government (Buffalo/Niagara); Getting Elected in Today's America (Great Neck); Global Warming (Scarsdale); Homeland Security at the County Level (Chautauqua); Immigration (Bronxville, Schenectady); Lloyd Aquifer (LWV's on Long Island); Open Government (Geneva); Sales Tax distribution Formulas (Buffalo/Niagara); Special Tax Districts (Great Neck); Stormwater Pollution (Albany); Underground Railroad in the North Country (Plattsburgh); Universal Healthcare (Albany, Broome-Tioga, Somers); Waterfront Development (Buffalo/Niagara); Water Quality in Long Island Sound (Smithtown); Women as Leaders (Mid-Hudson).

By Barbara Thomas, LWVNYS Membership Outreach Director

Gold Stars and Bouquets

Helga Schroeter was Schenectady's 2006 recipient of the Jefferson Award for Public Service presented by the *Times-Union* Newspaper, St. Peter's Health Care Services and News Channel 13. Helga is a past president of LWV Schenectady and of the Schenectady Interfaith Committee, was a Schenectady County Human Rights Commissioner and serves LWVNYS as Court Restructuring Specialist.

Barbara Shope was honored by LWV Broome-Tioga at the Women of Achievement Dinner. She was cited for the terrific job she has done as their Voter Service chair for the past four years.

Cathy Lewis received LWV Schenectady's Susan B. Anthony Award in recognition of her long time membership in the LWV, her service to the community as a member of the Schenectady City Council and as President of the YWCA and for the fund-raising skills she donated to local non-profits.

Marion Porterfield, LWV Schenectady, was given the Community Service Award by Law, Order and Justice (LOJ) for serving as Weed and Seed Coordinator and for getting LOJ's Community Accountability Board off the ground.

Niagara, developed materials to educate county legislators and the public on the consequences of some proposed changes in the sales tax distribution formula and advocated for the LWV Buffalo/Niagara's position.

LWV Smithtown President Sondra Irvine welcomed Professor Larry Swanson before his talk on "Summertime Hypoxia" in Smithtown Bay. This LWV is very concerned with the effects of dredging and the health of Long Island Sound and Sondra and Joyce Rosenthal are LWV members on the Nissequogue Study Group.

Eating locally—within 100 miles of home—grown organic foods was touted as being one way to have a positive impact on the environment, the economy, personal health, and political and social structures at LWV Plattsburgh's December Friday Forum. The issue was addressed by Beth Spaugh, a soil scientist and an organic farmer who sells her crops through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) group and the local farmers' market.

LWV Chautauqua formed a new Fair Campaign Practices Committee this fall, with Shirley Coon as chair. LWV Syracuse reinstated a Fair Campaign Practices committee, thanks to the hard work of Barbara Olum and Jane Mallan.

Joanne Tobiesen coordinates LWV Schenectady's Working Group on Girls, which recently arranged a screening of the film *Lilja 4 Ever*, at the public library. The film deals with human trafficking and its affect on girls.

LWV New York City has received a generous grant from the New York community Trust to teach a six-session seminar, "How to Run For Public Office," at the many campuses of the Community Colleges of CUNY on in

NYC. The course curriculum is being developed by LWV members. Many of the course materials will become available at a special Web site, still to be developed.

LWV Albany heard from Mark Hustin, the Deputy Director and Counsel for the NYS Commission on Healthcare Facilities for the 21st Century, at its holiday luncheon just days after the Commission's report (which called for many hospital and nursing home closings and mergers) was made public.

Edith Szold, LWV Bronxville's Health Issues Chair, is usually educating others about the uninsured, or helping people decide what Medicare Prescription plan to sign up for, or conflicts of interest in the FDA, but she actually had to cancel a health issues meeting because of her own health issue: a broken leg.

Sheila Crespi and the Local Planning Committee of LWV New Castle presented detailed comments on the items necessary to be included in the DEIS for the development of the Reader's Digest Property in Chappaqua.

Jean McGarry, president of LWV Mid-Hudson, testified in favor of the Ulster County Charter that was ultimately adopted by the voters at this fall's election. Once it was slated to go onto the ballot the LWV was active in promoting the issue.

LWV of the Greater Five Towns held an afternoon tea with their Town of Hempstead Council Members to discuss issues and establish relationships. They also had a lunch (on a different day) with Barbara Bartoletti (LWVNYS Legislative Director) who provided insight into the way Albany does business.

In Memoriam

The death of Alice Ann Walker in September was reported by Linda Eberly, President, LWV of Cortland County. Alice was an inspired and inspiring leader who was active in community groups both before and after her retirement from SUNY-Cortland as associate professor emerita. She contributed her well-researched ideas and amazing organizational skills to the Youth Board, AVV, Zonta International, YWCA, Volunteer Family Counseling, Ladies Literary Club, and the Elizabeth Brewster House, as well serving as President of the LWV Cortland for many years. All who knew her will miss Alice's leadership and clear sense of reason, as well as her special personality and charming laugh of amusement.

LWV Oneonta President Kay Stuligross has been supported in the loss of her husband Jack Stuligross by the entire Otsego County community. Jack attended Oneonta City Council meetings as well as meetings of the Otsego County Board of Representatives to do what all good League members do. When, under privilege of the floor, Jack spoke strongly against the County's redistricting decisions, Kay sat quietly by his side. The chairman pointed at Kay and asked, "Did you have something to do with this?" Kay calmly responded, "No, I have absolutely no control over him." They were a team extraordinaire, traveling world wide and bringing their experiences home to share; they were active in attacking community problems with solutions. Their most recent joint venture was working to form a free health care clinic in Oneonta.

LWV Bronxville mourns the loss of longtime member Alice S. Ilchman. Alice had served as president of Sarah Lawrence College for nearly 20 years, had directed the Peace Corps training program for India, and had taught at the University of California at Berkeley and at Wellesley.