



State News

The League of Women Voters of New York State

August 2009

President's Message

It has been a busy three months since the excitement of the convention, and we all have been multi-tasking nonstop, both to ameliorate the League's financial problems and to implement a full and diverse program for the upcoming year. As an incoming President I would like to share my goals, which include bridging the divide between state and local Leagues, putting us all on a better financial footing, and bringing a new level of dynamism to League operations. For more concrete information, see pp. 2-6 of the August SBR. I welcome and need your input. Feel free to call me at 518-426-3711 or e-mail me at betsey@lwvny.org.

Election Season 2009

Election season 2009 is around the corner with Primary Day on September 15th and Election Day on November 3rd. Voter's Guide Part I is now available and provides general info on voting requirements and info on the new voting machines; Part II will include info on the proposed constitutional amendment and judicial elections and will be available in September. To order Voter's Guides, Part I, Part II, and the *Your Right To Vote* series (with voting info for special populations such as college students, homeless individuals and others), contact the office.

Youth Leadership Initiative

The League is planning to develop its own youth leadership initiative to replace the LeaderSpark program in NYS. It will contain modules on civic education, financial education, and leadership skills. The modular approach will provide greater flexibility, allowing local Leagues to tailor the program to the needs of all the state's diverse students and also enabling more Leagues to participate.

Free State Board Reports

The State Board Report is published six times a year and provides vital information on all activities and actions of the State Board. To sign up for your free electronic version of the SBR, contact Stephanie at Stephanie@lwvny.org.

Government Consolidation/ Shared Services Study

We are pleased to announce Noreen Fisher, former Mayor of the Village of Scarsdale and member of the Scarsdale League as chair of the government consolidation / shared services committee. More information will follow shortly.

Financial Update

The generous donations of local Leagues and individual League members enabled us to reduce the 2008-2009 deficit to approximately \$3,000. Our heart-felt thanks to all for their incredible generosity.

In looking at League budgets longitudinally, it becomes apparent that the largest decrease in income over the past decade has been in the area of corporate support and foundation grants. To avoid future shortfalls, we are now actively engaged in seeking outside sources of income. The NYS Bar Association has published the *Your Right To Vote* series of specialized Voters Guides, and CSEA will print the revised *Welcome to the League* shortly. We have applied for a mock election grant from the Election Assistance Commission, which, if funded, would provide approximately \$75,000 over a 2 year period to develop a series of lesson plans for use in Participation in Government classes. We are also in the process of soliciting corporate / foundation sponsorship for governmental consolidation/shared services forums and the new youth development leadership initiative.

Vote 18: A Civic Engagement Program for Students

Vote 18 is a fun, fast-paced interactive game taught at high schools during one class period. It teaches students the history of voting, makes it relevant in their lives, and engages them in the world of politics. For information on how your local league can sponsor a Vote 18 program, or to receive training in the Vote 18 program, contact the League office.

Check Out Our New Website

Our website has undergone exciting new changes - and everything mentioned in State News is also available on the website. Send us your local league photos and announcements and we'll include them. More changes to follow.

Capitol Beat – The Saga Continues

The stalemate that paralyzed the New York Senate ended on July 9th when Senator Espada who had defected to the Republicans returned to the Democrat caucus giving them the majority they needed to control the chamber. The new leadership arrangement appears to be Espada as majority leader, John Sampson as leader of the democratic caucus and Malcolm Smith as Senate president pro tem.

In a surprise move, on July 8th Governor Paterson appointed Richard Ravitch as lieutenant governor. His legal authority to make this appointment was immediately challenged and is the subject of an ongoing court battle that is expected to end up in New York's highest court.

Before leaving on July 17th the Senate passed a number of bills that were time sensitive and adopted senate rules changes that the League views as a step forward in making the Senate more open and accountable. However, these rules also codify an inequitable distribution of both resources and member items between the majority and minority parties. For more details see the rules reform press release put out by the League and its reform coalition partners on July 16th.

The Senate returned for one day on August 6th to deal with New York City school issues and pass Mayoral control.

The state legislature is expected to return sometime during this summer or fall to deal with the burgeoning state deficit.

In the meantime please use the Stick with Reform press release sent on July 16th to continue to press for action on our Albany reform priorities. The press release is located the League's website as http://lwvny.org/press/statement_SenateRulesChanges071609.pdf. If you have any questions, you can call the office or e-mail Sally Robinson at robintwins@gmail.com.