



State News

The League of Women Voters of New York State

September 2009

President's Message

It is with sadness we note the deaths of Marion Sinek, LWVNYS President from 1985 to 1989, and Ruth Shur, LWVNYS board member from 1977 to 1989. Marion knew that all politics was local, and said, upon becoming New Castle Town Supervisor, "I like to think that I worked my up to local government." Ruth's husband Walt says she frequently told people that, although she left college to marry, she earned a Ph.D. in government from the League. These amazing women served as inspirations to so many of us in the League and we will greatly miss their contributions and friendships.

Board Travels & Training

LWVNYS President Betsey Swan is speaking at the LWV of Tompkins County fall kickoff and then visiting with other area Leagues, including LWV Broome/Tioga, Cortland, Chemung, Steuben and Cooperstown. She is also meeting with the Management Team of the LWV NYC. **League Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti** will speak at the Cooperstown Area League's October 17, 2009 luncheon at the Otesaga in Cooperstown, NY. Members of other Leagues are invited to her talk. See p. 19 of the September SBR, available at the League's website, for details. **Voter Services Director Maggie Moehringer** will train members of local Leagues in moderating candidate forums. **Membership Director Georgia DeGregorio** and her regional membership coordinators are available to do board training and training for growth in membership. Contact the state office to arrange a training session.

Voter Services and Guides

The 2009 Voter's Guide Part I has been distributed and Part II is being shipped to local leagues this week; additional copies are available from the state office. The five voter's guides for special populations printed by the New York State Bar Association and the newest version of *Welcome to the League*, printed by CSEA, both at no cost to the League are available for distribution from the state office.

Reform New York

2010 Legislative Priorities Update

Given widespread dissatisfaction of league members with this summer's stalemate in the New York Senate, the **State Issues Committee** and the Issues Specialists decided to focus the 2010 Legislative Agenda on making the State Legislature cleaner and more competitive through emphasizing campaign finance, redistricting and other good government legislative and election reforms. The legislative packet will be given to local leagues in January 2010 as usual but will be re-formatted and focused on these issues. The other areas in which the League has positions will continue to be listed on the Legislative Agenda, and we will continue to take action on issues covered by these positions as they arise.

Youth Programs

It's time for local Leagues to begin preparations for the 10th Annual *Students Inside Albany* Conference to be held April 11-14, 2010. Our goal this year is to have a student representative from every local League in New York State. Look in the SBR for more information on how to find and select students.

We have been notified that the League did not receive the federal \$75,000 mock election grant from the Election Assistance Commission for development of the new youth curriculum. We will continue to develop the curriculum, entitled *Pathways to Civic Engagement*, and will reapply to the EAC, or to other funders, at a later date.

Amicus Brief Filed

This month the League joined a broad coalition of 30 public interest organizations and private law firms in filing an amicus brief, prepared by the Brennan Center for Justice and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison. This matter involves interpretation of the federal civil rights fee-shifting statute, which permits successful plaintiffs in federal civil rights litigation to recover their attorney's fees, in the belief that, without such fee shifting, many potential litigants could not afford to redress violations of their civil rights in court.

State Study Gears Up

With the advent of fall, we are gearing up for the governmental consolidation/shared services study. Local League presidents should call the state office with the names and contact information of their study chairs.

The initial study schedule is as follows:

- Sept: Preliminary bibliography to local Leagues described below;
- Nov: Full bibliography and written materials for local Leagues;
- Dec: Consensus questions developed by committee;
- Jan: Consensus questions go out after approval by State Board;
- Jan to Apr: Local Leagues have meetings and prepare answers to consensus questions;
- Apr/May: Committee reviews input from local Leagues and prepares a draft position for State Board approval at May board meeting.

The following websites contain valuable information about government consolidation/shared services: www.nyslocalgov.com (a good overall explanation of the State initiatives); <http://www.nytowns.org/core/contentmanager/uploads/GovernmentEfficiencyTheCaseForLocalControl.pdf> (a publication of the Association of Towns); and www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/publications.htm#SharedServices (a good site with several additional reports).

Take a look. A more detailed bibliography will follow in November. For more information, contact study chair Noreen Fisher at NQFisher@gmail.com or see the September SBR.

Emails Wanted

Currently the state League has e-mail addresses for less than one-third of its members. Given the state League's decision to dispense with the printed Voter, it is essential that members send us their e-mail addresses, so that we may distribute the reconfigured Voter to them electronically. We use e-mail addresses for League purposes and do not share them with outside organizations. Don't miss the electronic boat. Send us your e-mail address today.