

The Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy Committee

presents

A Progress Report for Progressive Women

Summer-Fall 2007

YESTERDAY TODAY

New York's Democratic Women: A Legacy of National Leadership



By Dr. Allida Black
Director, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers
George Washington University

New York women won the right to vote in 1917, three years before the Nineteenth Amendment made female suffrage the law of the land – thanks to dozens of women who, following in the footsteps of Rochester's Susan B. Anthony, traveled the state for years, lobbying legislators in Albany, organizing demonstrations, and raising funds for social justice organizations. That same year, Harriet May Mills from Syracuse, the president of the New York Woman Suffrage Party, organized and chaired the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee.

As Al Smith prepared to run for governor in 1918, he turned to New York City's noted reformer Belle Moskowitz for advice. He knew he needed the women's vote but had no idea how to secure women's support. He had agreed to speak at a luncheon of the Women's

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Suffragist parade, NYC, 1912.

Eleanor's Legacy: Training, Funding, and Electing Women

Campaign Grants

Our Campaign Grants program raises the money necessary to get pro-choice Democratic women elected to state and local office. Since its founding in 2001 Eleanor's Legacy has awarded \$565,000 in Grants to 600 candidates, 284 of whom have won their races.

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Annual Fall Campaign Luncheon.

TOMORROW

Why We Need More Women in Government



By Nora Bredes
Director, Susan B. Anthony Center for Women's Leadership

In April 1992, my first month as a Suffolk County legislator, a woman named Kathy Germaine was stalked, then shot and killed in her office by her estranged husband. She left two teen-aged boys. The newspaper reported how days before her murder, Kathy had petitioned the family court for help and was denied. There were tragic missteps; the system failed her.

This story is too familiar. In every class, race, nation and religion, women are brutalized by men who claim to love them. The difference this time in Suffolk County was the will to do something about it. The five women on the legislature – nearly 30% of the body - held hearings, grilled judges, drafted new legislation, won consensus and changed the system.

When women serve in government in numbers large enough to form a "critical mass," we change the way government works, forcing it to better reflect our life experiences.

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Suffragist parade. 1914.

University Club and was worried about winning them over. "If you are smart," Moskowitz told him, "to this bunch of women, you will make the same speech you would make to a bunch of businessmen." Her counsel proved so astute that she became Smith's closest advisor and, in 1928, was one of seven New York members of the Democratic National Committee.

Other New York women quickly dedicated themselves to the state party. Nancy Cook not only traveled the state county by county, encouraging women to register and speak out; she also ensured that the women's division office had staff and a feasible budget. She recruited and trained women, including the indefatigable Eleanor Roosevelt, who drafted women-oriented campaign materials, organized campaign rallies, addressed community groups, canvassed precincts, and registered women to vote.

Today's New York women stand on the shoulders of giants, whose strong hearts and courageous spirits inspire us to carry on their hard work.



Three suffragists casting votes in New York City. 1917.

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Campaign Schools

Working in partnership with EMILY's List, Eleanor's Legacy hosts regional Campaign Schools for pro-choice Democratic women interested in running for office or in working on a campaign. The Campaign Schools equip women with the skills they need to run and win and the confidence to take that first step on to the campaign trail. This program is a project of the Agnes Varis Campaign Institute. Since 2003, Eleanor's Legacy has trained over 400 women at Campaign Schools across the state!

Annual Fall Campaign Luncheon

The Annual Fall Campaign Luncheon raises tens of thousands of dollars to support pro-choice Democratic women candidates in New York State. Each year over 1,000 Democratic men and women from nearly every county in the state gather at the ERLC Luncheon. This year's Luncheon will be held on Monday, October 15 in New York City.

Distinguished Lecture Series

Our non-partisan sister organization, the Eleanor Roosevelt Conference Committee, funds an ongoing lecture series that provides New York women with opportunities to hear from some of the most outstanding progressive women in the state and the nation. Past lecturers include Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Carol Bellamy, and Donna Brazile.



New York's First Lady, Silda Wall Spitzer.



Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton with ERLC's Secretary Martha Baker (left) and ERLC Board Member Dr. Allida Black.



Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins.

www.eleanorslegacy.com

Women Lead City Councils Across NY State

Women now head city councils in four of New York State's largest cities. Below are profiles of these women, who are leading their cities and the state of New York towards a brighter future.

Christine C. Quinn, Speaker, New York City Council

Elected in 2006 by her peers on the New York City Council, Christine Quinn is the first woman, openly gay, and Irish-American speaker of the City Council. She brings a new perspective to the challenge of making government accessible and responsive. Her hands-on approach to dealing with the issues critical to improving the quality of life in all five boroughs and her commitment to streamlining the annual budget process has earned Speaker Quinn recognition as one of most powerful and influential New Yorkers.



Lois J. Giess, President, Rochester City Council

Lois Giess understands that to be an effective legislator requires dedication and collaboration. Known among her colleagues as the “quintessential citizen-legislator,” Council President Giess has served on the City Council since 1985, when she was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Tom Ryan when he became mayor of Rochester, and she was first elected council president in 1994. Lois has made it a priority to mentor other women and champion their greater participation and representation in politics.

Bethaida “Bea” Gonzalez, President, Syracuse Common Council

Elected first in 2001 and re-elected in 2005, Bea Gonzalez is the first Latina to serve as president of the Syracuse Common Council. Also a full-time dean at Syracuse University, Council President Gonzalez is a leader on education issues and advocacy on behalf of the community of color. She has served on the Syracuse school board and is the founding member of both the Onondaga Latino Caucus and the Association of Neighbors Concerned for Latino Advancement, and is a Director of Eleanor’s Legacy.



Shawn Morris, President, Albany Common Council

Since joining the Albany Common Council in 1993 and being elected president of the Council in 2005, Shawn Morris has focused on increasing transparency and accountability in government. Whether by improving city parks, cataloging the city’s building stock, or opening up the budget and finances to public review, Council President Morris is making our state’s capital a vibrant and accessible community in which to live.



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President's Message When Women Get Serious, Women Get Results

If you take a look around this state, you'll see a new generation of Democratic women leaders on the rise. In Brooklyn and the Hudson Valley, there are two new Democratic congresswomen. In Nassau, Tompkins, and St. Lawrence Counties, Democratic women occupy the District Attorney's office. The city councils of Albany, Rochester, Syracuse, and New York City are led by Democratic women. And there is a new chairwoman of the New York State Democratic party.

We are making progress electing women. Now we need to get women engaged at every level of politics, because when women vote, Democrats win!

In 2006, we initiated a GOTV program in Andrea Stewart-Cousins' victorious race in the 35th Senate District, targeting women voters and turning out 11,000 more women voters than is typical in a non-presidential election year.

And, in partnership with Silda Wall Spitzer, now New York's First Lady, we produced a highly celebrated television and Internet advertisement aimed at getting young women excited about voting!

Eleanor's Legacy is building a coalition of women leaders from across New York State to share best practices from 2006 and develop strategies for success in 2007 and beyond.

And we are so proud that one of our own, New York's Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, who recently won re-election with 67 per cent of the vote, is a front-running candidate for president of the United States.

When progressive women work together, there is no limit to what we can achieve. We have demonstrated that women can run and win. In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, it is now very much "up to the women" to keep New York State moving forward.

Many thanks,



Judith Hope, President

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TOMORROW

"More women" is a goal effectively advanced by the Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy and desperately needed across New York State. Since 1992, the Suffolk county legislature has lost women – down now to just 3 (16%).

At the Center for Women's Leadership I direct at the University of Rochester, we've completed our third survey of women's participation in county legislatures in New York. Since 2002, women's share of county legislature seats across the state has gone from 16.6% to 17.4%, a mere .8% increase. More telling, 37 counties have three or fewer women serving. Only 6 counties have a healthy critical mass (30% or more) of women; 6 counties have no women at all.

The hope that more women will shift our politics for the better, coupled with these sad statistics, makes a thriving Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy Committee vital. Ours is the only statewide organization in any party with the skills, strategy, resources and passion to inspire more women to run, win and lead. For those of us who believe not only in Eleanor's legacy, but in Kathy Germaine's, it's an enterprise we must heartily embrace.

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