League of Women Voters of Westchester County
The Running & Winning Workshop

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The League of Women Voters of Westchester County Running & Winning Workshop for high school girls will take place on April 19, 2018 at the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester. The American Association of University Women Westchester and the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester are co-sponsors.

This workshop is designed to give young women in high school the opportunity to explore public service as a career. During the session, participants will talk with local women office holders, learn about women’s political history, explore their own leadership abilities and develop their teamwork skills.

BACKGROUND

For the past 90 years, the League of Women Voters has encouraged all citizens to become better informed and more active in their government. Its goals include rebuilding civic participation and enhancing diversity of representation. The Running & Winning Workshop is an effective means to meets these aims.

Women now make up only 21 percent of the US Senate and 19.3 percent of the House. While these are records for Washington, they fall extremely short of matching the general population that is female. And though New York State has one woman U.S. Senator, and 9 Representatives, women are chronically underrepresented in political office in New York State and across the country. There are only 6 women governors and 12 Lieutenant Governors. In 2017, women held less than 28 percent of state legislative seats.

There is an urgent need for more women to run for and be elected to public office. One way to reach greater representational parity for women is to develop leadership potential in our young women, and that is exactly the goal of Running & Winning.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Running & Winning Workshop brings together students from the high schools in Westchester County for an active political experience. Working in small groups with students from other schools, they will talk with local female elected officials, learning about their experiences in seeking and holding public office. Afterwards, to provide practical application, the girls will take on roles of a campaign team (candidate,
campaign manager, etc.), design a slogan, and write and deliver a meaningful campaign speech on a pre-selected issue.

Objectives:

• Encourage young women to consider politics as a possible arena for their talents and to see themselves as leaders.
• Introduce the concept of networking and provide the opportunity to network with women officeholders and girls from other backgrounds.
• Use interactive role-playing and team learning to reinforce abilities and self-worth.

Targets:

• Participants will be female high school juniors and seniors recruited from all Westchester County high schools.
• All elected female officials at the federal, state and local levels will be invited to participate.

Methodology:

• Trained facilitators will guide the small groups in speaking with the politicians and the officials will relate their personal experiences in seeking and holding public office.
• The girls will explore a variety of ways they might contribute to the political system.
• In the “campaign” exercise, the facilitators also will involve the girls in role-playing and cooperative learning to develop a position on an issue of local interest, devise a related slogan and make a poster, then write and deliver a campaign speech.

Outcomes:

• By the end of the day these young women will have enhanced self-esteem and more confidence in their leadership skills.
• Participants will gain an understanding and appreciation of public service. They will see politics as a possible career, whether as an elected official or as part of a campaign team.
• Students will learn the value of networking and initiate contacts with peers and elected officials throughout Westchester County.