

## Court's Gender Fairness Committee Celebrates Women's History Month

"It's 2020 and you have been elected the first female president of the United States. 75 Senators and 200 members of the House of Representatives are women. What differences, if any, do you think this will make in laws that are enacted and priorities that you will follow in domestic and foreign policy?"

This was the topic sent to about 200 high schools in the 9<sup>th</sup> JD who were asked to participate in the District's annual essay contest celebrating Women's History Month. The 11-year-old contest is the brainchild of the Committee to Promote Gender Fairness in the Courts, chaired by NYS Court of Claims Judge Terry Jane Ruderman. The committee received over 100 submissions. The winners were honored and read their essays at a breakfast on April 29<sup>th</sup> in the Appellate Division's Courtroom.

In the freshman/sophomore category, Lynda Ademola, from North Rockland High School, won First Prize and Rebecca Abraham, from Clarkstown South High School, won Second Prize. In the junior/senior category, Victor Alves, from Blind Brook High School, won First Prize and Makena Drutnam, also from Blind Brook, won Second Prize.



The essays were creative and thoughtful. As Chief Executive, Lynda stood for increased spending for education, allowing undocumented immigrants to have a path toward citizenship, and avoiding unnecessary war. However, in her essay, she noted that the other elected women in Congress had the opposite opinions which pointed out that even under a female led government, there would be the same differences of opinion and the same problems as before.

Victor, as a woman president, would appoint liberal judges, end the war on terror, decrease military spending, and increase aid to the cities and for health care. He would push for adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment and build more schools, saying he would "hold high the moral values that define our American identity."

Photo, l to r caption - Rebecca Abraham, Lynda Ademola, Hon. Terry Jane Ruderman, Victor Alves

The breakfast was attended by over 50 members of the judiciary and representatives from the following contributing organizations: White Plains Bar Association, Westchester County Bar Foundation, Westchester County Bar Association, Columbian Lawyers Association of Westchester, Westchester Woman's Bar, New Rochelle Bar, Women's Bar Association of Orange and Sullivan Counties, Yonkers Lawyers Association, Justice Brandeis Westchester Law Society and the Port Chester-Rye Bar Association. The generosity of these organizations enabled the Committee to award cash prizes of \$500 to the first place winners and \$300 to the those who placed second. The winners also received certificates from the committee.

Essay Contest sub-committee members are: Jane Aoyama-Martin, Executive Director of the Pace Women's Justice Center; Diane Balistreri, Director of the Westchester County Office for Women; Dolores Gebhardt; Committee Co-Chair and Family Court Magistrate Allen Hochberg; Professor Janet Johnson; Susan Kaufman, Court Attorney Referee; Mary Kelly, Joan Miller Cohn, Pace Women's Justice Center Westchester Division Director; Stephanie Roebuck, and Supreme Court Justice Charles Wood.

Other committee members who were in attendance were Administrative Judge Alan Scheinkman, Supreme Court Justice Lester Adler, Court of Claims Judge Thomas Scuccimarra, and Westchester County Attorney Robert Meehan. Also attending were Justices Francis Nicolai, John Lacava, and Richard Molea.

Court of Claims staff who made the event possible are: Debbie Sellas, Suzy Hickson, George Jacob, and Jennifer Levy.