



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE MID-HUDSON REGION

55th Annual Meeting May 27, 2015

The League of Women Voters,
a nonpartisan political organization,
encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government,
works to increase understanding of major public policy issues,
and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters of Mid-Hudson region
P.O. Box 3564
Kingston, NY 12402

<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org>

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Order of Events

5:30 - 6:30 Dinner with introduction of Students Inside Albany (past and present), long-time members, and new members.

6:30 - 7:00 Business Meeting

- Announce secretary for the evening
- Review of committees and other opportunities to get involved
- Member Action Items

7:00 Discussion on Strengthening Voter and Candidate Participation
with Stuart Shinske and Geddy Sveikauskas

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Long Time Members (50+ Years)

Rhoda Gellen
Anita Kantor
Viola Opdahl



New Members 2014-15

Valerie Faverio
Samantha Flax
Ethan Hunt
Flora Jones
Ann Kanter
Lee Kyriacou
Patricia Lunior
Karen Markisenis
Anita Merr
Barbara Phillips
Doreen Sangaline
Merrill Sunderland
Kathleen Taylor
Daisy Tyler
Diana Zuckerman

Students Inside Albany

Ethan is a junior at Kingston H.S. whom some of you may remember was our SIA last year! He is currently an intern in Assemblyman Cahill's office.

Phoebe is from Port Ewen and also a junior at Kingston H.S. She participates in Mock Trial and plans to go to law school after getting a B.S. in biology, a subject she loves. She also paints, draws, and plays guitar and works at the Town of Esopus Library. Down the line she sees a future in politics!

Member Action Items

- Board-recommended continuation of the Materials Management Study
- Board-recommended continuation of the Shared Services in Dutchess County Study
- Board-recommended study of proposed changes to Ulster County Charter
- Budget Proposal for 2015-16
- Election, or re-election, of Board members and nomination of committee members

LWVMHR Nominating Slate for 2015-2017

Treasurer: Dorothy Winrow

Vice- president: Anne Needham

Directors:

Cynthia Bell

Jean McGarry

Irene McInnis

Jacki Moriarty

Doug Thompson

Daisy Tyler

Nominating Committee 2015-16:

Lee Ridgway

Jim McGarry

Dare Thompson

Continuing On Board 2014-16

President: Jolanda Jansen

Secretary: Soyal Smalls

Directors:

Margaret Sellers

Esther Sticklely

Not Continuing: Shirley Kobran, Cindy Lanzetta, Lee Ridgway, and Dare Thompson

Submitted by 2014-15 Nominating Committee: Cindy Lanzetta (Chairperson), Jean McGarry, Jim McGarry, Jacki Moriarty, Soyal Smalls

Topic of the Night

In 2014 fewer than a third of the eligible New Yorkers voted, despite a high profile governor race. The discussion will cover the reasons for voter apathy and possibilities for fixing the situation. This is vital for communities because voters tend to be more engaged in their communities, more likely than non-voters to volunteer, contact elected officials and stay informed about local affairs.

About Tonight's Speakers

Stuart Shinske has been executive editor and director of content and audience development of the Poughkeepsie Journal and PoughkeepsieJournal.com since 2006, and has worked at the Journal for 20 years overall. Shinske oversees all news operations at the newspaper, its websites, other digital products, books and magazines.

In three of the last four years, the Journal was named the best news operation in New York State in its circulation category by the New York Associated Press, which honored the Journal with its Newspaper of Distinction award. In 2015, the New York State News Publishers Association announced the Journal had won the most awards in its circulation category for the fourth straight year - and had the second-most honors of any newsroom of any size in the state.

The Journal's parent company, Gannett Co., Inc., in 2010 named Shinske a President's Ring winner, honoring him as one of the top executives in the company for his innovation, management and product development. He is a panelist on WAMC Northeast Public Radio's "The Media Project" and "The Roundtable." In addition, he has worked for USA Today and The New York Times Company.

Geddy Sveikauskas is the founder and publisher of Ulster Publishing which publishes four weekly newspapers in Woodstock, Saugerties, Kingston, and New Paltz and the region-wide weekly guide to the arts, entertainment and adventures, *Almanac Weekly*. It also publishes web-only publications including *Hudson Valley Business Review*.

Having moved to Woodstock from NYC in 1968, Geddy (as he's called by all) felt his town "could use a newspaper that covered what it was like to live there, and not just its meetings." (Paul Smart, "Local Luminary," Chronogram, September 2012). In 1972 a Woodstock "second-homer" from Greenwich Village was looking to finance "something newsy" and Geddy saw his chance. The Woodstock Times took shape in his living room, and the rest, as they say, is history.

His papers continue to reflect the belief he shared with Paul Smart in the Chronogram interview, namely "the need for one-to-one communication where a reader can feel 'This is important and it's written for me.'"

President's Report

Good-bye and Hello!

I am leaving the co-presidency of our wonderful LWV-MHR to become president of the state LWV, but this is still my home league, so you've not seen the last of me. (Or of my husband, Doug, who's now going on the board. He's been a member since men were allowed in during the '70s).

Cheers to Jolanda Jansen who has agreed to take on the presidency alone and to all those who will back her up, including her daughter Soyal Smalls, our secretary. They are from Poughkeepsie, so representation from both sides of the Hudson is now well-established.

Cheers also to our other board members this year: VP Anne Needham, Treasurer Dorothy Winrow, Shirley Kobran, Lee Ridgway, Margaret Sellers, and Esther Stickley. Like me, Lee and Shirley are leaving the board at the end of May, but I know they too will stay involved, and it's great that we're not losing any others!

It's great too that in addition to Doug, Cindy Bell, Irene McInnis, Jean McGarry, Jacki Moriarty, and Daisy Tyler will be joining the new board.

A new source of support this year is SPONSORS. Please notice the page included here and use their services! Their support allows us to focus on our mission instead of on fundraising activities. If your business or one you know and love might join us next year as a sponsor, please let us know!

As I depart (sort of) I send a shout out to all our members, with special appreciation for those who've been here 50+ years and those who just joined us. Ultimately, it's your support that makes us strong. The need for good government watch-dogs has never been more needed, so don't ever hesitate to be proud and loud!

Voter Service

As we wrap up our league year, at "press time" many of our members are answering the call to serve as moderators and timekeepers in school board elections in Wappinger Falls, New Paltz and Greenville in Green County. This past fall, our league served as timekeepers for the Gibson/Eldridge forum sponsored by the Ulster Chamber of Commerce. To better serve the community, we need to increase our pool of moderators and timekeepers. A training session in the fall is slated for all interested members.

National Voter Registration Day was a great success this past September. We focused on SUNY Ulster and the Kingston Area Library. The enthusiasm of so many young people made us realize that this is where we need to concentrate our effort and so we set up another voter drive at SUNY Dutchess a week later. Again, we had fantastic results. How great it would be if we had enough volunteers to include SUNY New Paltz and Marist College with a long range plan of

expanding registration to Vassar and Bard Colleges. This is where the action is, where the excitement is. National Voter Registration Day is scheduled for September 22. Please plan to be part of this rewarding day.

The Naturalization ceremonies, held four times in Ulster County, are inspiring enough for you to want to wave a flag and sing out "God Bless America!" If you have read the Commentator this past year, you would know that our members have had some emotional moments while handing out voter registration material to new citizens. Will we ever forget the women who fell to her knees before us and symbolically kissed her new land? Doug Thompson is working on expanding voter registration at naturalization ceremonies in Dutchess County. First time volunteers will always be paired with someone who has experience. Try it. You'll like it!

Voter Service is truly the "face" of the league. Our reputation is built on serving the electorate by providing voting information as well as providing opportunities to inform citizens of candidate and ballot issues. We did a commendable job this year but we can do better- with your help.

Submitted by Jean McGarry

Observer Corps

The Observer Corps has continued its work of monitoring and reporting on the Ulster County Legislature this year even though its efforts have been diminished by personal issues that have beset its ranks. City of Kingston and Town of Marlborough meetings were also attended without report.

Under legislative discussion are changes to the Ulster County Charter that would involve term limits, length of term, and staggering terms. Issues of both executive and legislative governance, including rules, practices, the budget, and the role of the chairman continue to be considered. It is recommended that the LWVMHR continue to be informed about possible changes in these areas and make recommendations in keeping with our traditional work in this area. The UC Legislature is also considering waste and recycling and the role of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency. This is monitored through our Materials Management Committee as well as the Observer Corps. The UC Legislature formed the Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission which includes a representative of the LWVMHR named as a member of the Commission. "Rails and Trails" is also still an issue. Audio recordings of the UC legislative committees are available shortly after the committee meeting. Agendas are available on line. The monthly legislative session is available in live video and then stored on the County web site.

More observers are needed to cover all the legislative committees. You are most welcome to join us! We provide training and other support.

Submitted by Victor Melville and Margaret Sellers

Materials Management

The Materials Management Committee has had a busy year since the League's last Annual Meeting. It was shortly thereafter, at the League's prompting, that the Dutchess County Legislature passed a letter of support for proposed legislation at the State level to set up a program of Paint Stewardship. Combined with Ulster County's resolution of support, this will help to ensure the industry's aid in collecting and recycling paint products. Our committee hopes to encourage local leagues in other counties to build grassroots support to move this legislation forward.

We continue to monitor the Solid Waste Management Plans for Dutchess and Ulster Counties. We meet annually with Dutchess County Solid Waste Deputy Commissioner, Lindsay Carille, to discuss successes and challenges. In Ulster County our members have been appointed to a special legislative committee to look at solid waste disposal. We are following negotiations about town transfer stations, with the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency and the town supervisors. We supported the Ulster County ban on the use of disposable polystyrene containers for fast food.

Perhaps the most exciting development, this past year is the Hudson Valley interest in composting. Our members attended the Hudson Valley Regional Composting Seminar in February and then the Organics Summit at Marist College in March. Dutchess County has been awarded a grant to do a feasibility study for composting and Ulster County continues to blaze the way with their first class system. We are especially proud that League member Sarah Womer is starting up her own business to collect organics from residents and commercial businesses in Beacon – with bikes!

The Materials Management Committee will continue to be a resource to the Hudson Valley by monitoring and promoting environmental stewardship and the right use of our resources. We meet the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm, at the Gateway Diner in Highland. We welcome any newcomers. Just bring a reusable container for your leftovers!

Submitted by Cindy Lanzetta, Chairperson

Shared Services

The Shared Services Committee in Dutchess County welcomed new members Marianna Martin, David Gill, Ann Kanter and Merrill Sunderland. We continued to track the shared services grants given by Dutchess County government to municipalities.

We also made a presentation in June to the Town of Poughkeepsie Town Board, met with a City of Poughkeepsie bus transportation committee and with NY State Bridge Authority director Joe Ruggiero to discuss emergency ambulance services. We inquired of the County about the effectiveness of its consortium for workman's compensation.

Gina Klein, Jolanda Jansen and Soyal Smalls refined our Power Point presentation for community groups. We will be making presentations in June to the Poughkeepsie-Arlington Rotary Club and the Town of Poughkeepsie Democratic Committee. We are lining up other organizations for the fall.

Submitted by Ellie Charwat, Chairperson

Book Group

Our meetings are held Tuesday afternoon at Enzo's Pizza either the second or third of the month, depending on members' schedules. We post the date and book in the Commentator calendar.

Income inequality was the thread through several books. SUNY Professor Emeritus Joel Diemond facilitated the March discussion of Capital in the 21st Century by Thomas Piketty and Our Kids by Robert Putnam. (Professor Diemond was also featured speaker at our May 16th discussion on that topic at the Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting House).

Previously we read Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich, her story of life in the minimum wage world and The Price of Inequality by Joseph E. Stiglitz on the plight of American workers.

In February we discussed the horrifying situation of young black men in our prison system when we read The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander.

Upcoming readings will include:

Outliers, The Story of Success by Malcom Gladwell which explores the many facets that create a thriving person.

Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal by Aviva Chomsky an overview the system that excludes and exploits immigrants.

The Village Effect by Susan Pinker. The human need for face to face contact in our computer mediated world is the focus of this book.

And finally, we will cheer ourselves up with a book about fulfillment in social involvement, The Soul of a Citizen by Paul Loeb.

We will be choosing a new round of books this summer. Come join us and help choose. Read the book, or the reviews if you are pressed for time. (Or skip the whole thing and come for our discussion.) Watch the calendar for the time and date and meeting place.

Submitted by Anne Needham

State Level Studies

Ballot Access

The state BALLOT ACCESS study was about making it easier for candidates to get on the ballot and taught us more about alternative voting methods, "fusion voting" (candidates endorsed by more than one party), and the Wilson-Pakula law that forces candidates to get approval from a party's leaders before running a candidate under that party's name.

Our own consensus here at LWV-MHR was at Kingston City Hall on a cold December day with at least ten hardy souls participating. We turned out to be more open to change than many participating members elsewhere in the state. We were disappointed that not enough other leagues agreed that primaries should be opened to voters not enrolled in a party. But we were happy that enough others agreed that fusion voting should continue whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed.

Term Limits

Twelve of us sat around a table at Poughkeepsie's Adriance Library on a recent snowy Saturday and failed utterly to get to the League Holy Grail – Consensus. If, as in other organizations majority ruled, our five proponents of term limits might have taken the day. They mounted an impressive case: horrifying tales of arrogance, corruption and slick dealing in our state government. With a campaign finance reform in limbo, redistricting on hold till decade's end and only a severely watered down ethics reform law on the books, nothing was left but term limits as a solution for broken government, they said.

And what of the lonely two who were passionately committed to elections as being the only democratic form of term limits? First, they presented the philosophy: We are the League of Women Voters. We must do nothing to inhibit the voters' rights to select legislators. Second, there was the record of mixed success in places which have attempted term limits: Women and minorities did not do statistically better as candidates and voter turnout actually declined in some term limit areas.

The Undecideds had it easy. In New York State there is practically no chance of the Legislature agreeing to fire itself. States that enacted Term Limits had systems of voter referendums. We do not. However, while hiding behind realpolitik and breathing a sigh of relief, the Undecideds complimented both sides on really wonderful presentations. In addition to the 12 members, the meeting was attended by a potential member and also by the chair of the Dutchess County legislature who has just declared his candidacy for mayor of Poughkeepsie.

The non-members, though adding insights, did not participate in the actual consensus. All in all, we could not agree. But we gave and received lots of information!

Submitted by Anne Needham

Addendum: We reported to LWVNYS that we had failed to reach any consensus, and ultimately that was the result once all the participating local leagues had reported - no consensus. This means that the state's current position in opposition to term limits will remain unchanged.

Submitted by Dare Thompson

Concurrence: The Constitutional Convention

By May 30 we will participate in a concurrence on the selection of delegates to a state Constitutional Convention. A conference call on the topic was called for May 21 and as we indicated in the last Commentator, we are welcoming individual members to review the materials on the state website, www.lwvny.org, near the bottom of the homepage and submit their opinions by the deadline.

Submitted by Dare Thompson

National and State Positions, In Review

With yet another snow storm looming, a brave group of 18 Ulster and Dutchess League members gathered at the Olympic Diner in Kingston on February 21 to discuss all the positions the LWV has reached over the past few decades and the action we've taken on them. Attendees were Nancy Beard, Sam Flax, Jolanda Jansen, Tom Kadgen, Shirley Kobran, Kim McEvoy, Jean McGarry, Anita Merr, Jacki Moriarty, Anne Needham, Margaret Sellers, Soyal Smalls, Esther Stickley, Harriett Straus, Merrill Sunderland, Dare and Doug Thompson, and Dorothy Winrow.

There were three goals for the meeting: 1) to see if we want to recommend that the state league add or drop any positions at its Convention in June, 2) to see if there might be local items we would like to adopt at our annual meeting in May, and 3) to see what positions we'd like to learn more about and/or take action on right away.

Goal 1: we agreed that the positions we currently have at the state and national level provide us with a sufficient platform for most work we'd like to do. Goal 2: no local items were suggested but we know that there is interest among members not present in studying term limits at the county level. Goal 3: there were was a lot of interest in doing more soon about several of our positions.

Two outstanding items were all the new (and possibly unregulated) toxins that go into our watersheds and mass incarceration, particularly one major cause for this - mandatory drug sentencing. We also talked about the problems of racial profiling, lack of legal services for indigents, and the need for more alternatives to incarceration. There was rightful concern about voter turn-out and the need for early voting and no-excuse absentee voting. While we know that the health system is probably too unsettled right now to make action appropriate, members were directed to CommonwealthFund.org for the latest and best info on how the Affordable Care Act is working across the country. We continue to support the LWVNYS's push to get the whole Women's Equality

Act passed - including the reproductive rights plank. And education equity is always a concern - particularly the need to get rid of the "gap elimination act" which is really hurting small city schools like Kingston.

This just scratches the surface of our lively discussion. If you don't see a topic mentioned here that you're all worked up about, let us know! The board will be talking more about possible local studies at its March and April board meetings so speak up NOW by calling 845-340-2003 or writing info@lwvmidhudson.org. We represent you!

Submitted by Dare Thompson

Other Member Activities

Other reports describe so much of what we've done this year, but here's more!

Our 2014 Annual Meeting was held at the New Paltz Community Center and featured Election Commissioners Tom Turco (R) and Vic Work (D) from Ulster and Marco Caviglia (D) and Deputy Commissioner Chris Baiano (R) from Dutchess. We grilled them on all sorts of voting issues but particularly those related to the LWVNYS Ballot Access study described elsewhere in this folder.

We planned to send two delegates to the LWVUS Convention in Dallas last June but only co-president Dare Thompson was ultimately able to go. She busily posted pictures and comments about the speakers and discussions to our Facebook page. There was a competition for president with the Florida president challenging the incumbent, Elisabeth MacNamara, and that added both excitement and tension to the proceedings. MacNamara ultimately won. A highlight was an appearance by Attorney General Eric Holder who spoke without notes but whose speech to us was immediately posted on the Justice Department website giving our name.

Our September members-plus "salad supper" in the Town of Esopus Library featured our LWVNYS education finance specialist, Marian Bott, and Kingston Superintendent Paul Padalino. They expected to speak separately but ended up teaming up in a very lively discussion, particularly about NY's inadequate funding of small cities and other poorer districts.

In October we held a forum at Deyo Hall, on Historic Huguenot Street in New Paltz, to educate voters about the amendment on redistricting that would be on the ballot. SUNY New Paltz professor (and "good government guru") Gerald Benjamin spoke against it and Dick Dadey, the executive director of Citizens Union spoke in favor of it. Since they are good friends and usually allies, it was especially helpful to hear them debate it.

In mid-November we sent seven people to the United Nations: Co-Presidents Jolanda Jansen and Dare Thompson, Vic Melville and Margaret Sellers, Anne Needham, Merrill Sunderland, and Xiao Dong Zheng Smith. We all got on the LWVNYS bus from Albany at the New Paltz exit, which

allowed us to get to know some other upstate LWV members en route. Read and see pictures about the whole day in the state LWV's November VOTER at

<http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs102/1102704766323/archive/1119218817305.html>

Then just this month at the Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting we followed up on some of our book group discussions on income inequality (described elsewhere) with a presentation/discussion led by Joel Diamond, professor emeritus of government at Dutchess Community College. Although Joel is an encyclopedia of information about the problem, our discussion focused on solutions, particularly on how to get people to understand that we have to restore the American dream for our kids - ALL our kids.

We gather again tonight for fellowship, information, and a desire to work together across our two counties to improve our government. Onward!

Submitted by Dare Thompson

Resource Development

Membership

The newly revived Membership Committee has made it a priority to reach out to prospective members. Every non-member who has attended an event or otherwise shown an interest in the League is contacted.

Then there are the new members: We send a welcoming letter and add a warm invitation to attend our board meetings. Because we know that new members are interested in a fair political process, we also include the State League's Legislative Agenda and the Citizen Lobbyist. We have called and invited them to attend our Annual Meeting so that they can be welcomed.

There is an ongoing project to honor long time members of the Leagues in this area which we hope to make an annual event.

In order extend our reach in the community, we have distributed the Mid-Hudson League's own informational brochure to libraries, farmers markets, the Office of the Aging and other places in the community.

We are planning more outreach for the 2015-16 year.

Submitted by Shirley Kobran, chairperson; Irene McInnis; Anne Needham

Finance

We began the fiscal year, after all bills and obligations were satisfied, with a balance in the MHVFCU. Savings and Checking's accounts, the Education Fund, and the reserve CD held by MHVFCU. On March 17 an audit committee of four members met and reviewed the financial records of the fiscal year 2014-2015 and found them to be accurate.

The current year's budget reflects that all member dues collected are used to pay for our obligations to the National and State Leagues. The balance of our income is used for ordinary operating expenses which include the Commentator, the telephone, web site, postage, rental of meeting space, etc. A large portion of our spending is used for printed educational material and flyers. Donations and contributions from members and non-member supporters make it possible to operate our organization. The current year shows that we are very close to expectations as shown in the approved budget for the current year, 2014-2015.

The Elizabeth Askue Fellowship Fund remains active and was used this year to aid four new members. Keep in mind that this fund is available for any current member, or new member, who would find the present dues a financial difficulty.

During the past year the board of directors voted to make a donation of \$1000 to the major fund raiser of the LWVNYS, and approved that this donation be taken from the reserves held in the CD. In the future we encourage the board to engage in good causes which can be financed with the reserve funds.

It has been announced by the LWVUS that Per Member Payment obligations will be increased in the coming year. Increases are also being considered by the LWNNYS. For this reason, and the fact that our dues have remained the same for many years, we need to consider increasing our dues starting in the fiscal year 2016-2017.

We received gifts in lieu of flowers from friends and family members of MaryEllen Whistance when she died in April at age 96. She had been active in the League earlier in her life and was an equal rights advocate.

Submitted by Dorothy Winrow, Treasurer

Visibility and Public Relations

Our League is visible because we are seen at so many public meetings. The community knows us by our advocacy, moderating – and our League badges!

We keep our media list in good trim and appreciate the visibility that our local media outlets give us. Last year's events have been noted in many of the local newspapers. Radio and television outlets are sent releases. (And we are sometimes even listening when our release is read!) A quick call during certain shows adds a bit more publicity. There are notifications of our doings via Constant Contact, our home page and Facebook.

We discuss League issues every third Monday from 8:30 to 9:00 am on the Gary Bischoff show WKCR AM radio. We are also very visible working on local issues in Ulster and Dutchess counties including naturalization ceremonies, materials management, shared services and observer corps. Our thanks to Jim McGarry, the producer, director and choreographer of The Commentator and our website. And finally, to all the volunteers who write letters, join in petitions under the League name and make telephone calls. It all helps keep us in the public eye.

Submitted by Anne Needham

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