



## Mid-Hudson Region Commentator July/August, 2007

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*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 LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region covers the Mid-Ulster County area and the Dutchess County area. We belong to the LWV of New York State and the LWV of the US.

### CALENDAR

#### AUGUST

7	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki's
24	6 to 8 pm	Goods for the yard sale accepted
26	9 am to 3 pm	At Emilie Hauser's
29, 31	6 to 8 pm	63 Highland Avenue, Kingston

#### SEPTEMBER

1	9 am to 3 pm	Accepting goods for yard sale (see page 3 )
2	9 am to noon	Accepting goods
4	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Jacki's
5	6 to 8 pm	Last date for accepting yard sale items
8	9 am to 3 pm	Yard sale (see page 3 )
9	9 am to 3 pm	Yard sale
15,16		Rain dates for the yard sale
18	6 to 8:30 pm	Kickoff Salad supper at Unitarian Universalist church

**Vote today -- Primary Day!**

#### OCTOBER

2	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Jacki's
18	12:30 to 3:30	Card party at Kingston Area Library
27	TBA	General Meeting under care of Voter Services

#### Non-Partisan Statement

The League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region is a nonpartisan organization which does not support or oppose candidates for public office but does encourage its members as individuals to participate actively in the political process. The League acts on those issues the membership chooses for study and action. Board members will use discretion in any political activity and determine ... that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the LWV.

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Prez Sez...

Greetings,

As I write this, my house is in shambles since we are in the middle of “projects” and I have not started to pack for our vacation that begins tomorrow. This has been pretty much the scenario of our league board this summer. Every one has been coming and going and so involved in summer activities. One would think that the Mid-Hudson League has come to a screeching halt this summer. Not so!

The board met for the annual planning meeting in July and an ambitious agenda was planned for the upcoming year. Of greatest importance is informing the public about our local candidates this November. We have elected to publish our own local voters’ guide this year rather than distributing the state voter guide. As we did two years ago, we will send out questionnaires to candidates and post their responses on our website. We are also committed to expanding our observer corps to better inform county residents about the decision making of our public officials.

In addition, the program committee has begun to schedule informative meetings for the fall. The two new local studies passed at the annual meeting are in the organizational stages. Finance continues to find new and creative ways to fundraise for our league.

Bottom line - it has been a busy but productive summer for our league. But, we need more league-power. Please. Can you give one night a month to observe a public meeting? Would you be willing to moderate (training provided) or be a

timekeeper at debates? Would you be willing to work on a fundraiser? Would you be interested in serving on one of our local studies? Give it some thought... and give me a call!

That’s all folks! I’m off for a little *R ‘n R* and will be rarin’ to go when I return.

Jean

Kudos for Pamphlet

Our pamphlet “The Ulster County Charter—Vote Yes” received an Outstanding Publication Award at the NYS LWV convention. Thanks and Cheers to Cindy Bell and Tom Kadgen!

Kickoff Salad Supper

There will be a salad supper at the Unitarian Universalist Church on September 18<sup>th</sup> to kick off this year’s programs and priorities. Bring a salad dish or something that can be added to a big green salad, and bring a friend to share ideas and good food. Potential members are always welcome.

Fund Raising Party

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:30 to 3:30, there will be a card and game party at the Kingston Area Library to raise funds for the League. Admission is \$12.00 if you register in advance or \$15.00 if you pay at the door. Cards (even poker) and Scrabble will be available, and members may bring other games they would like to play. There will be finger-food desserts to eat before or during play.

## **YARD SALE TO BENEFIT THE LEAGUE**

Sat. and Sun. Sept 8-9, 9 am to 3 pm

Rain Date Sept 15 and 16.

63 Highland Avenue

Kingston, NY

Emilie Hauser, publications chair, has offered her yard and garage for a yard sale to benefit the League. This will be smaller than in the past: storage space is a 25 X 25 garage.

Your items can be brought over on:

Fri. Aug. 24, 6 – 8 pm

Sun. Aug. 26, 9 am to 3 pm

Wed. Aug 29, 6 – 8 pm

Fri. Aug 30, 6 – 8 pm

Sat. Sept 1, 9 am to 3 pm

Sun. Sept. 2: 9 am to 12 noon

Wed. Sept 5, 6 – 8 pm

**No donations accepted after Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Call Emilie at 338-4820 to arrange other times for drop-off. Call Cindy Bell at 336-5763 or Jacki Moriarty at 331-3418 to arrange pickup of large items.

Directions: Highland Ave. is two streets up East Chester Street from Broadway (where Burger King is). From E. Chester St, turn right (east) on Highland and go two blocks to dead end, # 63 – a log house with detached garage with green doors.

### **WANTED: GOOD SALABLE ITEMS FOR YARD SALE**

Appliances in good working order

Jewelry

Household décor

Clean linens

Books (children, crafts, cookbooks in good condition only)

CDs: music or literature

Sporting goods

Tools

Clean furniture

Current collectibles

Household goods

Toys, puzzles and games

### **PLEASE DO NOT BRING**

Outdated electronics: computers, monitors, televisions, radios

Outdated electric appliances

Clothing

Exercise equipment

Books (except as above)

Any broken, chipped, non-functional or outdated items.

## **LET'S MAXIMIZE THE SMALL SELLING SPACE WITH GOOD MERCHANDISE TO GET THE GREATEST DOLLAR VALUE.**

Volunteers are needed from now until after the yard sale to help recruit other volunteers, price, setup, sell, and cleanup and dispose of unsold items. Call Emilie to volunteer to help. 338-4820

## Charter Transition

Cindy Bell And Renee Sachs of the League's Charter Transition Support Committee conducted an interview with Lucille Pattison. It centered on the challenges of transition and implementation of the 1967 Dutchess County Charter. Mrs. Pattison noted that a major transition problem for Dutchess County was that at the time the charter was adopted the governing body was the Board of Supervisors. They had not made a transition to a County Legislature. Thus not only was a county executive created but a new type of legislature was set up. Supervisors had to learn to function as legislators and adjust to a loss of power. Many chose to leave county government. Here she interjected that a clear division of duties is essential in the administrative code.

The first four county executives each served for one term. Mrs. Pattison served for thirteen years. She was the first female county executive in NYS and the second in the nation. She felt the Dutchess and Orange County Charters created the most powerful executives in the state. She stated flatly that she felt for a charter to function successfully a harmonious atmosphere must be created not only within the political parties but also between the parties.

The executive must be able to work with both the majority and minority legislative leadership as fully as possible. One technique that she found successful was encouraging her staff to socialize with the legislators after meetings. This fostered a milieu of comity and cooperation which ultimately led to enhanced governing. She felt that it was not only

important to understand the definition of a legislator but to deal with it creatively, keeping the executive on his/her toes by challenging him/her. She saw her background as a legislator as an asset which afforded her valuable insights. Still she found that the adjustment to a new role for legislators was an early difficulty.

In the executive branch she noted key county positions: The executive whose power is bolstered by the veto, (which must be exercised judiciously), the ability to make appointments and sign all contracts and to initiate ideas for policy. Other positions of critical importance in her view are the County Attorney who settles disputes, the Commissioner of Personnel who sets the tone for county employees and the Commissioner of Finance who runs the daily fiscal affairs of the county. Mrs. Pattison emphasized that the executive must fill these offices with care. In her administration qualification took precedence over party and references were checked very carefully.

When questioned about UC's ability to benefit from its newly adopted charter form of government, she opined that a county executive is regarded very seriously in Albany. The executives are a tight-knit group and have their own association which includes the mayor of NYC. With a smile, she concluded that the county executive needs not only a firm hand but a soft hand.

## Legislative Notes

### **Vote by Mail Meeting Notes 7/20/07**

A memo written by the BOE Democrat Deputy Commissioner Stuart Fraser which stated that he felt that Voting by Mail would require a NYS Constitutional amendment based on views of two state government attorneys was read. He further stated that he felt it dishonest that this committee did not bring up this possibility when presenting the concept to the legislature. He outlined several reasons that an amendment would be necessary and concluded by calling Vote by Mail a 'scheme' without hope of implementation even though he personally supports the concept. The UC Attorney, Josh Koplovitz, believes that an amendment may *not* be necessary.

This memo was distributed to all county legislators, who nonetheless voted overwhelmingly in favor of Resolutions #265 & 269 dated July 11, giving the committee permission to continue its work and supporting the use of the Vote By Mail system in the races of Legislative Districts 7 & 8, where all candidates are in favor of using the system for the 2007 primary vote. [Note: Only one of these two districts will be holding a primary as one candidate has dropped out of the race. A pilot in one district is a viable option.-VBM meeting of 7/25]

Susan Zimet reported that she had spoken at length with Barbara Bartoletti, who stated that she felt a pilot program is permissible under HAVA rules based on the fact that sixteen other states are now using some form of Vote by Mail and it may be legally implemented with the support of the county government.

The final topic of discussion centered on condensation of the presentation materials in a tri-fold brochure for distribution at events. Past and upcoming public relations and the success of same were also covered. [The tri-fold brochure is available and gives very basic information on the Vote By Mail system. Contact Cindy Bell for a copy at 336.5763 or [CBell1000@aol.com](mailto:CBell1000@aol.com).]

### **Blue Ribbon Health Care Services Advisory Panel 7/19/07**

Ron Lipp made a presentation on Dutchess Health 2000 and explained the history of the organization and the contributions to improved health it has made.

The committee reviewed its subcommittee assignments. The subcommittees will report on August 13 to the full committee.

The merger of Kingston and Benedictine Hospitals was discussed and status was presented. Thomas Dee and Michael Kaminski believe they can meet the requirements of the Berger Commission on time.

### **Health Committee 7/12/07**

All members of the committee were present. The committee approved a recommendation that the county medical examiner not be required to approve all cremations. A public hearing must be held to complete the change in process.

Local funeral homes are concerned about the way autopsies are being done and request changes to facilitate the preparation of bodies after autopsy. The Medical Examiner will look into this.

The committee passed a resolution to create a more uniform no smoking policy on property owned or leased to the county and accessible to the public.

The committee recommended to the Purchasing Department that they request on RFP from Coffee Systems in Ulster Park to provide healthy vending options, and that the proceeds of the vending system (estimated \$25 to \$30 thousand) be used to expand the services of the UC Care-a-Van to the general public.

The committee approved a motion for a temporary employee for Mental Health and a motion supporting the development of a program to train teens to run their own program to show younger children that there can be fun without alcohol.

There will be budget hearings for Health, Mental Health, and Golden Hill Health-Related Facility in August.

The Health Department will oversee beach testing at County Park and Kingston City Beach.

### **Human Development Committee 7/30**

Commissioner Rodriguez asked for approval to cover the costs of 5 additional Child Protective Services staff people. DSS would file an application with the state for funds to cover the cost, select the staff and spend the money by March 8, 2008 (to include it in the 2007 budget). A resolution was passed for two new hires, for which the funding exists. The motion to hire 5 new employees was tabled as it is not clear whether the positions would be funded by the state in 2008. There will be further discussion at the 8/14 meeting.

The ACCESS program was discussed. The legislature has resolved that the program should continue for at least one year, but Mr. Rodriguez felt that the results of the state audit needed to be reviewed first.

There will be a presentation on the DSS budget on 8/22 in the Legislative Chambers.

### **Highlights of LWV Board Planning**

Board member responsibilities need to be more flexible, and tasks will be shared between portfolios. Task allocations will evolve gradually.

We will not order voters' guides from the state this year, but will feature local candidates and issues on our web-site.

Margaret Sellers will coordinate the Observer Corps starting this fall. More members are needed for full coverage.

We will plan a moderator training class for interested members.

Local study meetings need to be better publicized, perhaps on the web-site. Followup on previous studies needs to be done.

The Program Committee needs a chairman, and more fundraising events need to be planned.

What about a Speakers Program for community presentations?

### **Advertiser News**

One of our advertisers, the Northeast Center for Special Care, has been designated as an approved provider of specialty rehabilitation services for US military personnel. It has received a 2007 Innovative Practices Award for its Fine and Performing Arts Program.

Jewelry Expressions is now in the Hudson Valley Mall. Other changes will be reflected in the ads in next month's *Commentator*.

## Notable Publications

Emilie Hauser, the Publications Chair, has looked at the books available through the state and national Leagues and brings the following to your attention. If you want to order one, call Emilie and arrange it.

***Citizens Building Communities: The ABCs of Public Dialogue*** by Matt Leighninger with editor Shirley Tabata Ponomareff, 2005, League of Women Voters.

This short, 14 page, guidebook is a perfect start for anyone who wants to get citizens involved in an issue or policy decision or in the development of a plan. Organizations that can use this booklet are the League, civic groups, nonprofits, school districts, religious organizations, municipalities and neighborhood associations. Guidance is given on describing the issue to be addressed, what will be achieved by the process, who to involve and what will motivate people to get involved. The public dialogue process ranges from informing the community, involving them in recommendations to actually taking action. The methods presented are chosen because they can engage large numbers of people, they are an open process using a "diverse critical mass" of citizens.

The various formats are described succinctly, along with the types of goals that can be achieved with each format and whether the format is stand-alone or is best combined with other formats. Large group formats include informational, decision-making, visioning and action forums. Smaller group formats, often used in conjunction with the larger group formats, include democratic small-group meetings, focus groups and structure

conversations. Online formats such as listservs are also discussed.

All these methods can result in "productive discussions of important issues." A list of resources points the reader to sources of more detailed information.

My experience with public dialogue was in the visioning process for the Rondout area of Kingston. It can be used for developing a five-year plan for a library or school district, creating or updating a master plan, addressing criminal justice or economic development.

Public dialogue seems well suited to address the many aspects of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The success of public dialogues is in getting people together to create new solutions by bringing new ideas forward and utilizing the knowledge and energy of the community.

***Impact On Issues 2006-2008: A Guide to Public Policy Positions***, 2007, League of Women Voters.

This is a "must read" reference for anyone involved with the League. Official statements of position are given in all program areas: representative government, international relations, natural resources and social policy. To give perspective to the positions, past actions and achievements are described, as well as links between positions. Policy positions adopted by the 2006 LWVUS convention are also presented. This document can be borrowed from Publications, or ordered from the LWVUS.

***Women in Action: Rebel Reformers 1920-1980***, by Elisabeth Israels Perry, 1995, League of Women Voters.

*Women in Action* was an educational program of the LWV carried out in 1995 to

celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment and the League of Women Voters. There was a traveling exhibition, for which this book was a companion, and a series of presentations by women's history scholars at the exhibit sites. There has been progress in the women's rights and other social programs in the intervening decades, but this volume shows the roots and history of the various movements after women gained the right to vote, including social welfare, rights for women, civil rights, labor and economy and peace and international affairs. Many of the women involved in these movements came up from the grass roots, few held positions of power. This book shows women's contribution to important movements in six decades after suffrage.

One of the stories presented takes place in my own hometown of Flint, MI, during the sit-down strike by United Auto Workers in 1936-37. To support the men, women, led by a striker's wife, spontaneously joined the picket line, resulting in the withdrawal of the police and the stop to the violence. During the 44-day strike against General Motors, women supported the men. They supplied food and set up a speakers' bureau and formed the Women's Emergency Brigade. The Brigade armed themselves with sharpened two by fours in the picket line outside the occupied General Motors plant.

#### In Memoriam

Laura Rethier, a longtime League member and former Board Member died on July 17, 2007. Laura was editor of the *Commentator* at one time. She was a very modest, self-effacing woman who was very principled and often wrote literate and

cogent letters to the Freeman when a subject demanded her attention. She had a quiet sense of humor and a sparkle in her eye when she related a wry anecdote. She loved her home at Les Pommiers Resort and Cannery and worked her garden as long as she could. The last time I saw Laura was at a medical office where she had taken a neighbor. In a typical selfless gesture Laura donated her body as an anatomical gift to Albany Medical College. Our condolences to her family. –  
Renee Sachs