



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* Jan./Feb., 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

February

6 7:15 to 9:15 Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's

March

5 7:15 to 9:15 Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's

10 10:30 to 12:00 General meeting at Kingston Area Library, topic Education:
 What about report cards for schools?

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 in advance from the local and/or state board that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the League of Women Voters.

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Prez Sez...

Greetings and Happy New Year,

It has not taken long for league members to jump in with both feet and get the ball rolling in 2007. The agenda for the upcoming year is ambitious and demanding. The Finance Committee is seeking creative ways to secure financial support for the league and is gearing up for the annual membership and friends fundraising drives. The Charter Committee continues in its effort to oversee the implementation and success of a new form of government in Ulster County. New ideas for local studies are being considered. As usual, the Program Committee has lined up informative meetings for the coming months.

As with so many organizations, we unintentionally tend to rely on a core of individuals who seem to always step up to the plate. Perhaps you have wanted to get more involved in the league but have never been asked. Don't be shy! We welcome new ideas and new energy. Make it your New Year's resolution to give me a call to find a meaningful and rewarding role in the league. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jean

Holiday Gathering

The holiday gathering at the Moriartys' was a tremendous success. Many came, enjoyed the warm friendly atmosphere, the great food and the stimulating company. Thanks to the Moriarty family and all who made it such a good time.

Local Study Proposals

Each year at the annual meeting, the LWV members decide what local studies should be carried out for the year (sometimes continuing for several years). Examples of past studies are criminal justice and the Ulster County Charter. We have participated locally in state studies such as financing education and HAVA.

It is time to start considering studies for the 2007-2008 League year. We need your help! It is that time of year when the League is looking for your ideas for our local study or studies for the next year. Ours is a grassroots organization where all members have the opportunity to participate. So we are encouraging you to look around and see if there is some issue in our community that the League should study with a view to action. Could it be the merger of Kingston and Benedictine hospitals and the impact on women's health? Or some aspect of economic development in our area? All ideas are welcome. Please call Emily Johnson at 338-3554.

Proposals will go before the board of directors and will be published to the membership as board-approved or not approved. If they are not, they are still presented at the annual meeting but require a 2/3 majority to be approved.

A suggestion already made for a local study is how to maintain healthcare accessibility for Ulster County women in view of the proposed merger or elimination of one of our local hospitals in 2008.

League Finances

The Finance Committee has determined that there will not be a yard sale this summer, leaving us with the need to raise much more money other ways. Before the end of January, a letter requesting a donation will be sent to all members, and we hope that you will respond as generously as you can. Contributions can be made to the LWVNY Education Fund, which we can use for our educational purposes such as public informational meetings, and these contributions are tax-deductible. Donations made directly to the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region can be used for advocacy and are not tax-deductible.

Any other fund-raising ideas will be welcomed by Margaret Sellers and the Finance Committee.

Observer Corps: Elections

Concern is growing on The Board of Elections and Efficiency and Reform Committee that NYS has not yet certified a single voting machine for HAVA.

At last month's meeting they decided to look into what Oregon had done to meet HAVA requirements. Oregon has gone to a mailed voting system; whereby all votes are cast through the mail and counted somewhat like absentee ballots. It is said that Oregon's voter participation rose drastically.

It is not known whether or not this option available us. –Tom Kadgen

Observer Corps: Criminal Justice

The County decided to hire part time lawyers instead of the much more costly

practice of paying for court appointed lawyers and parole violation defense counsels. This will save the county quite a bit of money. Kudos to Public Defender Andrew Kossover for making this possible.

Alternative Sentencing and Community Corrections programs have been consolidated with the Department of Probation. This merger will go a long way in reducing administrative costs.

The Legislature has initiated a Reentry Task Force aimed at helping discharged prisoners adapt to freedom and reduce recidivism. The Task Force will be led by Legislator Distel.

The opening of the new jail continues in its strict adherence to Murphy's Law. Ulster County has the dubious distinction in NYS for "what not to do" when constructing a new jail.

And special Kudos to Patrick Sheehan, a member of The Criminal Justice Council who has found someone interested in leasing out the old jail. This will save the County an enormous amount of money in not having to rip it down, as well as bringing quite a few jobs with it into the county.

--Tom Kadgen, Observer

T hanks to T om Kadgen for his perseverance in observing local government.

Meet our Member: Irene McInnis

Talking to Irene leaves one with the feeling of just having conversed with an enthusiastic, intelligent and dynamic individual who projects the kind of personality sought after in a classroom teacher.

Irene is the American child of German immigrants who has been bilingual since early childhood. She tells the remarkable story of her parents' meeting with verve. Her father had been living in America for 5 years and had become a naturalized citizen. In 1933, he returned to Germany for a visit with family who lived in a small farming village in the southern area of the country. Her mother's family was extremely poor, emanating from a rural area which had alternative identities as German or Polish depending on the era to which one is referring.

Irene's mother, Elisabeth, worked as a servant for a wealthy family in Germany. One day she was bicycling with a friend in the countryside when a rainstorm came upon them and they were forced to seek shelter in a nearby home, which turned out to be Irene's father's family residence. It was during her father's brief home visit that Elisabeth and Fidel Hugger met. Ten days later they were engaged and he returned to the U.S.

It took three years for Irene's mother to emigrate because of the political situation in Germany. As an interesting sideline, Elisabeth was the only one of the household staff who was not forced to join the Hitler Youth Movement because of her emigrant status. Elisabeth arrived in 1936 and two days later she and Fidel Hugger

married. Irene, an only child, was born eight years later

The family moved to a non-working farm in Sawkill where the climate was similar to Elisabeth's home. Her father built a grocery store by renovating already existing structures on the property. It was somewhat of a general store known as the "Village Store" which her parents ran. All was lost in a fire 50 years ago.

Eventually, Irene's dad got a job as a butcher with the Bull Market in Kingston.

Irene attended a one-room school in Sawkill for three years. In the 4th grade she took the bus to St. Ursula's Academy in Kingston. She excelled and became very interested in business subjects. After graduation she elected to attend a business school in New York City. After completing the course, she became a medical secretary and returned to this area, working at local medical offices and an insurance agency. She then made the decision to go to college.

She returned to Manhattan, working days as a secretary first at NYU and then Pace College and attending courses at night. She married in 1966 and received an associate degree in business in 1968. Her husband worked as a service technician for Xerox, which opened a new branch in the Poughkeepsie area. The family relocated and bought a home in Sawkill. The McInnises had two daughters, Megan and Elisabeth.

Irene then worked for a local orthopedic office. Her mother had died in 1971 and her father now lives on her property in his own home. He helped in taking care of the girls while Irene was at work or school.

Irene's next academic venture was completing her bachelor's degree in German and Education at SUNY, New Paltz. Five years later she received her Master's degree there in business education.

There followed a succession of teaching posts, first at Krissler Business Institute in Poughkeepsie, then Business Education at J. Watson Bailey Junior High in Kingston.

As Irene puts it, her 9th grade daughter gave her advice on handling 9th-graders and six years later, when her younger daughter went to Kingston High, she began her teaching career there.

Irene was "excessed" a few times at the high school, and the first time taught at the old Ulster County jail education program for incarcerated youths, then the in-school suspension program at Kingston High, and then at Kinderhook where she taught German for three years. During this period Irene and her husband separated.

At Kingston High Irene was also a four-year class advisor, honor society advisor and manager of the school store. She was honored for her work championing the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program with high school age mentors.

When asked what brought her to join the League, Irene said that she and Jean McGarry were friends and colleagues at Kingston High School. She followed the League's activities and was impressed by LWV presenters at KHS.

She retired from teaching in June 2006, freeing up some of her time and allowing her to become an active League member. She enjoys volunteer work and among other things was President and member of

the board of Junior Achievement for many years. At this point "volunteering" involves being available as "Super Grandma" to her 6 and 8 year-old grandsons who live in Stone Ridge with Mom Megan and Dad Chris Smailer, both of whom are architects.

Irene's younger daughter Elisabeth, who is engaged to be married, works as a career counselor at the University of Wisconsin.

**T hanks to Renee S achs for
her profiles on members and
advertisers!**

Charter Transition Comm.

Now that the charter has been passed, a great deal needs to be done to implement it in a detailed way. A new committee, called the charter transition commission, will be working to make the new charter into a complete plan for the new form of county government. The new group will have to write a new administrative code spelling out the reporting structure and the duties of appointees in detail. This work will be started as soon as possible, because there are a great many decisions to be made. We understand that Gary Bischoff will chair the commission and that he will suggest a number of people, both legislators and others, to be appointed by the Legislature.

The League feels that this transition work is vital to the operation of the charter and intends to maintain a committee to observe and study the efforts.

We know that there are people who are not entirely comfortable with the new charter, and one way to change it undercover is by the implementation. The League committee which studied the charter is planning to continue through the implementation phase, and we expect to hold educational meetings as necessary. Heading this committee is Cindy Bell, and interested members are invited to get in touch with Cindy. We should have one or more observers at the commission meetings when they start taking place. Presumably they will meet once a month.

Observer Corps Appeal

Being an observer is not necessarily a huge commitment of time or energy to the League, and is a very satisfying way to keep the League informed and active and visible. Each week the Freeman prints the list of governmental meetings for the week for the area, so you can decide what meeting you would like to attend, and tell Gloria Plasker of your intention. It's often more fun to go with a friend or fellow member, and if anything significant occurs, please write it up for the *Commentator*.

There are already some people going to some meetings, and Gloria can put you in touch with them. It is important to get a badge and wear it to the meetings to show that the League is taking an interest.

If you are already attending a board or session, let Gloria know that too. And if you want to contribute observations on what you see and hear, we would be delighted to receive them. Being a League member means that we want to be informed and that we want others to be informed too. We have a proud history of eventually making a difference. —Lee Ridgway

Thanks to our hardworking
study groups and committees
for all their efforts toward
making a difference.

Board of Directors

A reminder of who the Board of Directors comprises. You can call any one for information or to give comments

President	Jean McGarry 336-6622
1st Vice-President	Jacki Moriarty 331-3418
2nd Vice-President	Elizabeth Askue 338-1667
3rd Vice-President	Gloria Plasker 338-8079
Secretary	Lee Ridgway 339-4927
Treasurer	Dare Thompson 236-3074
Commentator Editor	Emily Johnson 338-3554
Finance Director	Margaret Sellers 339-3180
Membership	Shirley Kobran 382-6989
Public Relations	Esther Stickley 331-2919
Voters Service	Cindy Bell 336-5763
OFF BOARD: Publications:	Emilie Hauser
Web master:	Jim Mc Garry
Dutchess Unit:	Ellie Charwat

NYS Alternatives to Incarceration

Locally our Balancing Justice Study explored some of the alternatives to incarceration, but this is a report on what has been happening on the state level.

Many drug offenders convicted under the Rockefeller drug laws are still behind bars. Legislation enacted in 2005 gives guidelines for release consideration for such drug prisoners, however, according to the Center for Community Alternatives and the State Organizing and Policy Project of the Drug Policy Alliance, inmates for whom immediate relief was expected are still behind bars without sentencing review dates scheduled. See www.communityalternatives.org for more information about the legislation and where the guidelines are not clear.

New legislation passed by the Assembly calls for the mandatory establishment of drug courts in all NYS counties. The establishment of such courts is expected to result in mandatory drug treatment, decreased prison sentencing for nonviolent drug offenders and a savings of \$123 million in corrections costs. This law includes a new Drug Kingpin law for which mandatory minimum sentencing is required and has a separate provision for those whose drug trafficking is accompanied by firearms.

The LWV reaffirms its commitment to alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent drug offenders and encourages our elected officials to consider the criminal process from start to finish when seeking those alternatives.

HAVA

Getting new voting machines as is required by federal law is turning out to be a complicated and slow process for New York State. On the plus side, New York State has set out more stringent requirements than most other states, so that certifying voting machines for use in the state has been a more difficult process. In fact, two proposed machines have been withdrawn from consideration far the time being. On the negative side, certifying machines for use in NYS has been a more difficult process and has therefore taken longer.

Criteria for voting machines include a paper trail ability, secure and stable code, the number of voters a machine can service, the reliability of the machine, and of course the cost of the machine. Both direct recording and optical scan equipment has been being tested, and the first round of certification was to have been completed by January 15. Once this is/was done, the local boards of elections were to do their own exploration of the choices to determine which machine(s) would be most suitable to their counties. This is also a serious process, weighing the various pros and cons of each type against the needs and budget of each county.

Once this has been done, and the deadline is March 15 (which will not in all likelihood be met), the election workers need to be trained on the care and use of the machines and the details of reporting

and verifying results. It is almost impossible to have this done by Primary elections, and there is more and more doubt that it can be done in time for the general election.

How did this happen? Many factors went into the quandary we are now in, and blame can be shared many ways, including blame to the manufacturers for not providing all the information when it was needed.

The League has been working on the HAVA issue for a long time and continues to track progress at state and county levels. Our dream of safe, reliable, easy to use voting machines is still in the making, and the states that have adopted new machines are finding some unexpected difficulties with them. Security and accuracy are still being pursued, and perhaps New York will reap some advantage from other localities' problems.

In any case, don't be surprised to see the old lever machines at your polling places this year. At least, Ulster County has made provision for special machines for the handicapped at the Board of Election headquarters.

Membership News

We are sad to report the recent death of Michael Corey, a member and the husband of Emilie Hauser.

Renee Sachs is still somewhat discommoded by her knee, which was operated on and is still healing.

I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2007

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (eve) _____

(day) _____

Email: _____

I/We enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) _____

Household Membership (\$65) _____

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (tax deductible:)

(Send a separate check which MUST be payable to NYSLWV Ed Fund) \$ _____

If this is a Household Membership, please include the name and email address of additional member(s) _____

Check here if you prefer NOT to be contacted about local LWV meetings ____

Will read *Commentator* on website ____ or Please mail *Commentator* ____

**(Complete the above form and return it to us with your check at
PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)**

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please send this slip with his/her name and address to: Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, NY 12449.

We will send out information as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Your name: _____

Do you have any comments about the League or our programs? Shirley would like to hear them too.

Be sure to visit our Advertiser's Page at

<http://lwny-bulletins.org/Capital Region/Mid-Hudson-2006-10-ads.pdf>