

## Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* January, 2008

Jean McGarry, President	(845)336-6622
Betty Chin, Membership	(845)331-2572
Lee Ridgway, Newsletter	(845)339-4927

*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

<b>5</b>	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria's
<b>5</b>		Primary Day!
<b>23</b>	10:00 AM to 12 noon	Golden Hill Health Related Facility: <b>To Be or Not to Be.</b> Local Study group will review their findings on the Ulster County Nursing Home. Bring your ideas for future local programs. Meeting will be held at 10AM, Kingston City Hall, Council Chambers.

#### MARCH

<b>4</b>	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria's
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#### APRIL

<b>26</b>	10:00 AM to 12 noon	Panel discussion with community leaders on the future of the Golden Hill Health Care Facility. Meeting to be held in the Kingston City Hall Council Chambers from 10AM until noon.
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#### JUNE

<b>8</b>	1:00 to 4 PM	Luncheon at Wiltwyck Country Club
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#### 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.

PO Box 3564, Kingston NY 12402  
Telephone (845) 340-2003

Website: <http://midhudson.ny.lwnet.org> E-mail: [info@midhudson.ny.lwnet.org](mailto:info@midhudson.ny.lwnet.org)

## **Prez Sez...**

Greetings,

Welcome to 2008. As I sit and write Prez Sez, it is another “snow day.” For those of you who may be feeling the winter doldrums or cabin fever, you need only to look ahead to February and beyond.

I have been so impressed by the work of the committee on the Nursing Home Study. These individuals have met with county employees and officials to get credible information and statistics. The last I heard each member was poring over a recently delivered 300 page report. For their efforts, two public meetings are planned to allow the committee to report on their findings. The first is February 23<sup>rd</sup> and a follow up meeting with a panel of community leaders will be held on Saturday, April 26 at Kingston City Hall from 10-12.

Our new County Charter goes in effect next January 1<sup>st</sup>. To that end, our Charter Transition Committee attends meetings to monitor its progress and keep us informed. As we get closer to the implementation of this new form of government, the Charter Transition Committee will host a program to inform the public on the transition progress.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> our League will be co-sponsoring a trip to Albany with the AAUW to hear Gloria Steinem speak on pay equity. This is a “not-to miss” opportunity. Circle the date now.

It is truly an honor for me to invite you to our first annual honoree luncheon and fundraiser to be held on June 8<sup>th</sup>. If any of you know these three dynamos - Elizabeth Askew, Shirley Kobran and Emily Johnson - you will want to be there to recognize them for all their many years of contributing to our league and to the community.

Hope I’ve cheered you up. See you soon.

Jean

## **Charter Update**

This November we will be voting for our first County Executive and County Comptroller to join with the legislature to administer and oversee county government.

The Charter Transition Team of the County\* continues with its work on the Administrative Code. To date, they have completed their work for the Legislature and Executive branches and are now finishing up on the powers and duties for the office of Comptroller.

The intent of the Charter is to separate the administrative from the legislative functions of governing. Under the Charter, departmental management will come under the management of the elected Executive. The Executive will control and be responsible for how effective and how efficient each department runs. The Charter also creates the office of Comptroller who will be responsible to monitor and report on how costly, efficient and effective each of our numerous departments are. The Legislature will then be able to concentrate on enacting legislation that will enhance the lives of our residents.

The main problem with the present form of county government is that our part-time Legislators, who for the most part are committed to containing property taxes, cannot contend with full-time department heads, committed to increasing their budgets.

It is imperative that our first Executive and Comptroller be both dynamic and competent. We need an Executive who will make constructive changes without increased spending. We need a Comptroller who is able to detect inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. We

need quality people that will run our government like a business.

If the New Hampshire primary is any indicator of voter interest, we can expect a record number of voters at the polls in this year's election. I believe that we as local members of the LWV must not let the presidential election (as important as it is) overshadow the importance of our choosing a qualified Executive and Comptroller.

This year more than ever, we must do what we can to ensure that the voters have enough information available to them in order to support the candidates that best represent their interests.

\* The Charter Transition Team is a sub-committee of The Efficiency and Reform Committee that is charged with developing The Administrative Code and harmonizing the language of the Charter without substantive changes. Gary Bischoff chairs both the Efficiency & Reform Committee and The Charter Transition Team. Our own League oversight and action enterprise is called The Charter Transition Support Committee and is chaired by Thomas Kadgen.

### **Voters Service**

Our Committee has reconvened to work on educating the public about upcoming changes in county government through the creation of an Administrative Code and choosing an Executive to lead the county into the future. We are in the very early stages of planning several educational forums to outline the various aspects of these changes as well as an equal number of candidate events to introduce citizens to the people running for the office of Executive. We intend to hold these events in four different locations throughout the county are working with the LWV Saugerties on the events to be held there. We need people to handle the logistics of these events (arrangements, refreshments, etc.) and people willing to speak on the subject of the charter on the radio and at meetings of other organizations, as well as people to help formulate the format. Please email Tom Kadgen [kadgen@earthlink.net](mailto:kadgen@earthlink.net), Renee Sachs at [reneesachs@hvc.rr.com](mailto:reneesachs@hvc.rr.com) or Cindy Bell at [CBell1000@aol.com](mailto:CBell1000@aol.com) to join us.

### **National LWV Position on Health Care**

**GOALS:** The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement

of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

**BASIC LEVEL OF QUALITY CARE:** Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care, and mental health care. Dental, vision, and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

**FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION:** The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League. The League supports administration of the U.S. health care system either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state and/or regional government agencies.

The League is opposed to a strictly private market-based model of financing the health care system. The League also is opposed to the administration of the health care system solely by the private sector or

the states.

### Nursing Home Study

The UC Blue Ribbon Healthcare Services Advisory Panel has met periodically since July 2007. It is a sub-committee of the Health Committee, which is chaired by Legislator Robert Parete.

The panel has been charged with handling the topic: *The Potential Future Appearance of the County Nursing Home.*

Members of the panel are: Steve Kelley, Ellenville Regional Hospital; Anthony Marmo, Northeast Center For Special Care; Francoise Dunefsky, Gateway Community Industries; Dr. Peter Roberts, local physician; and Sheree Cross, Director, Golden Hill Health Care Center.

Initially, the committee requested an extensive array of material from the county. This was done so that the panel could better understand what the Center's present situation was as it pertained to

- \* its financial status
- \* what improvements might be needed
  - \* how to streamline care, maintain high quality services, and meet its mission
  - \* studies done to date on what to do with the facility
  - \* any and all demographic information on the population served, etc.

In subsequent meetings the panel has discussed many of the above subjects, as well as the source of the Center's funds and how it is financed, the condition of the

physical plant, the demographics of the Center, and the services provided by the Center.

Throughout these meetings, Sheree Cross, the Center's Director, has served as resource person to the panel.

At the most recent meeting, held on January 8, 2008, at the Center, the panel members continued their discussions specifically on the studies which had been done some 3 ½ years ago regarding

- \* the condition of the pipes (some repair work has been done in the past two years and nothing catastrophic has occurred in the last 5 years)

- \* the process that would be necessary if certain structural changes to the center were instituted

- \* expansion (the 17 acres outside the Center are mainly stone)

- \* financial reimbursements, etc.

The majority of this meeting was devoted to a very comprehensive tour of the Center, including the maintenance area (very clean and well maintained), the very large kitchen, the viewing of a sampling of rooms (with residents' permission) the dining and activity areas, and administrative offices. A very interesting and informative hour and a half!

The next meeting of the Blue Ribbon Panel will be on Tuesday, January 22, 2008, at the Ulster County Office Building, Conference Room A on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, at 6:00 PM.

The agenda will include a review of the work done so far and discussion of new material to be provided.

Lee Cane, Observer Corps

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR  
for the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting at 10AM  
in the Council Chambers at Kingston  
City Hall for more info on the League's  
study of the Golden Hill Center.  
If you are interested in joining our study  
group, call Jacki Moriarty at 331-3418.**

#### **Privacy for Citizens**

The Bush Administration has been pushing Congress to grant immunity to phone companies who permitted illegal surveillance of phone calls. Initially it seemed the legislation would pass but one senator said he would block the bill. Phone calls came from all over the country and other senators joined in. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid pulled the bill from consideration.

This is another example of what grass roots input can do. Keep aware of issues and speak out.

#### **Save Postage Dollars**

You can save postage and paper by receiving your newsletters electronically. As more people go online, it will become more cost-effective, time-saving, and convenient. All you need is to be able to accept Word files or pdf files. Let Jim McGarry know if you would accept this alternative at [lwmhr@hvc.rr.com](mailto:lwmhr@hvc.rr.com).

#### **League Basics Available Online**

The LWVUS has replaced our basic operating publication *In League* by a new online document called *League Basics*. This tool helps League leaders understand the basic aspects of running our organization.

#### **Selection of the President**

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system—from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

**Sunday, June 8, 1 pm, Wiltwyck  
Country Club**

Plan to join us at a special luncheon celebrating decades of exceptional service by **Elizabeth Askue, Emily Johnson, and Shirley Kobran**, long-time League volunteers, board members, and shining examples.

Internationally renowned composer, musician, author, and satirist Peter Schickele ("discoverer" of P. D. Q. Bach) will share some remarks about growing up with another dedicated League volunteer - his mother.

Watch for more details in future newsletters, but mark your calendar now and start rounding up your friends! It should be a happy party.

## **Gloria Steinem Visit: A Reminder**

Gloria Steinem is coming to Albany April 2 for a day on pay equity. Watch the state league website for details as they become available.

## **Pay Equity Issue**

League work in the area of pay equity, or equal pay for jobs of comparable worth, stemmed from member concern over the feminization of poverty. The League played a key role at the national level through its work with the broad-based National Committee on Pay Equity in the 1980's. In 1986 the LWVEF participated in an *amicus* brief before the U.S. Supreme Court in the pay equity case, *Bazemore v. Friday*. The Court ruled that a state agency may be held liable for disparities in salaries between blacks and whites, even if the disparities were caused by racial discrimination that occurred before the 1964 Civil Rights Act. State and local Leagues also have endorsed legislative efforts to undertake job evaluation studies or to implement pay equity for public employees.

## **Immigration**

### **One State Takes a Stand on Legal Immigration\***

While most of the attention is focused on the problems of mass illegal immigration, the nation's bloated and ineffective legal immigration system is equally in need of an overhaul. Rather than "legal immigration," a more accurate term for the current policy ought to be "government mandated immigration." And like most government mandates, it has become an expensive and self-perpetuating program

that has little relevance to the national interest.

One of the biggest issues related to government mandated immigration is the growing public cost of providing services and benefits to people who have been granted entry to the United States based on a policy of extended family reunification, or chain migration. Family-based immigrants, who constitute the vast majority of the government mandated immigration flow, are admitted irrespective of their skills and education, or their sponsor's ability to take care of their needs.

One state, Connecticut, has had enough. Burdened with escalating costs for services and benefits for government mandated immigrants, Connecticut's Department of Social Services has decided to bill the immigrants' sponsors, rather than force everyone else in the state to pay. Immigrants who settle in this country to join family members must be sponsored by their petitioning relatives who sign declarations which commit them, not the public, to be responsible for the needs of the people they bring here. Such sponsorship commitments are routinely ignored by both the sponsors and the government while immigrants who are unable to make it on their own wind up relying on a variety of government programs and services.

The growing burden on state and local government illustrates the need for key reforms to our legal immigration policies. These reforms include:

- \* Ending family chain migration. Extended family immigration is the driving force behind ever-higher levels of legal immigration. Family-based immigration must be limited to the nuclear family, i.e., spouses and unmarried minor children.
- \* Merit-based immigration. The individual qualifications of a prospective immigrant to succeed in the United States—not having a relative here—should be the primary basis for admission.
- \* Enforcement of sponsorship commitments. The federal government must assess the financial ability of a sponsor to honor a sponsorship agreement; require the sponsors to purchase health insurance policies for those for whom they petition; and compel sponsors to cover costs for services provided to the immigrants they bring to this country, rather than turning to the taxpayers.

Connecticut is demonstrating that state and local governments have the ability to act on their own to protect the public interest.

\*Source: Population Press, Summer 2007