

# Commentator for October, 2005

The League of Women Voters of Mid-Hudson Region

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## Mission Statement:

*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.*

## CALENDAR

OCTOBER		
1	8:30 to 6:30	Bus trip to Museum of Natural History, Ames parking lot in Kingston
11	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's
18	7:00 to 9:00	General Meeting, Barbara Bartoletti speaking at Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Sawkill Road
NOVEMBER		
1	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's
8	All day	<b>Election Day – Go Vote</b>
19	10 to noon	General Meeting on Housing and Transportation, Kingston City Hall
DECEMBER		
6	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's
18	2:00 to 4:00	Holiday Gathering at Jacki Moriarty's

### **The Prez Sez...**

Happy Fall! I am writing this a day before our Membership Mixer but I am sure it will be a great hit. Marcia Merrins is such an inspiration. There are a lot of things going on this fall. I hope you will be able to attend our general meeting in October to hear Barbara Bartoletti speak. She is a great speaker. I am also excited about going to NYC on the bus trip. If you were unable to go this time but are interested in future trips could you let Lee Ridgway know so we can plan other trips. Thanks so much and Happy Halloween!

Chris

### **Voter Information**

Do you want information concerning our county elections? As mentioned last month, this year the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region will be posting a VOTERS GUIDE on our web page. All of the county legislators in Ulster and Dutchess counties have received a letter with pertinent questions (see last month's *Commentator*). If a candidate declines to answer the questions, this will be noted also. Encourage candidates to answer the questions. For information you will receive nowhere else, look on the web <http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org>, and click on "elections" when you view the main menu. Our thanks to Jim McGarry for a job well done.

*Facts for Voters* is being distributed to our communities in two parts this year.

### **Local Government Observers**

Nothing compares with actually attending a meeting of one of our local elected boards (school board, Common Council, County Legislature). Sign up to attend one of these meetings. We will go as observers and report to our membership. Call Elizabeth Askue, 338-1667, to get more information.

### **Criminal Justice Council Created**

The LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region has promoted the formation of a Criminal Justice Council as a result of our study of the criminal justice system in Ulster County. The County Legislature adopted this idea in the spring and has now appointed 19 of the 21 members who will form this Justice Council. The make-up of the council comprises decision makers from the following agencies: Public Defender, District Attorney, Corrections (Jail), Youth Bureau, Probation, County Court, Mental Health, Sheriff's Department, Department of Social Services, Drug Court, community Corrections, and Alternative Sentencing. In addition, there will be seven civilian representatives: Richard Barnhart, Catherine McCaffrey, Roger Rascoe, Eve Waltermaurer PhD., David Singer, Patrick Sheehan, Thomas P. Kadgen (an LWV member). The final appointments are awaiting nominations from the Magistrates Association and the Bar Association.

At the recent legislative session, Minority Leader Donald Davidson thanked the LWV for all of the work that went into introducing and advocating for this initiative, which he said was long needed.

**The Criminal Justice/Public Safety/DWI committee should appoint a Council chair early in October.**

## **Voting Machine Selection**

In case you missed it, the following letter appeared in both the Kingston Freeman and the Poughkeepsie Journal. Additional efforts you can make are to contact your Board of Elections and keep the pressure on.

Dear Editor,

The League of Women Voters of New York State has endorsed the use of paper ballot precinct based **optical scan** voting systems because they best meet League criteria of security, accuracy, recountability and accessibility.

Optical scan voting systems have been used in the U. S. in elections for twenty years and were used in 46% of counties, 36% of precincts, and by 35% of registered voters in the 2004 election, according to Election Data Services. In the future, seven states will use optical scan exclusively and thirty-seven will use it as part of mixed systems of voting to meet HAVA (Help America Vote Act) requirements. The technology is tested and proven, contrary to that of DREs (direct recording electronic systems) which lack transparency, and are not fully equipped and certified with disabled accessibility and voter verification features.

We hope that the Ulster County Board of Elections will consider this recommendation when they make their critical decision on replacing the current lever voting machines with new voting systems as prescribed by law.

Sincerely,

Christine Henning, President  
LWV Mid-Hudson Region  
Karen Goertzel, Voter Service  
LWV Mid-Hudson Region

## **League Day at the UN**

### **Briefings on the Status of Democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan**

Wednesday, November 16 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at UN headquarters in New York City (46<sup>th</sup> St. and First Ave.).

Registration deadline is Wednesday, November 9th. Registrations should be sent to:

United Nations Briefings  
LWVNYS  
35 Maiden Lane  
Albany, NY 12207

with a payment of \$50. for members, \$70 for non-members for the briefing. Checks should be made out to the LWVNYS.

. You need to be there at 9AM to go through the UN security procedure. The briefings will go from 10AM to 12:45 PM.

There is also an optional lunch buffet for \$32.50 and an optional tour of the UN for \$11.50. The tour starts at 2:30, so there is ample time for lunch.

For more information, call 518-462-4162.

Everyone who has attended one of these briefings has been very impressed and has found it well worth the time and effort. Since seating is limited, you should register as soon as possible.

Computer-oriented people can go to the members-only section of the web site [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org) and go to the September, 2005 SBR. Pages 105-107 contain the information and a registration form. You may have to go to pages 109-111, as the SBR doesn't quite have its counts organized. Non-computer people can call the LWV at 518-462-4162 for forms or other information. See also page 8.

### **Barbara Bartoletti**

Barbara Bartoletti has been the Legislative Director for the League of Women Voters of New York State since 1988 and lectures statewide on advocacy/issues and citizen participation in government. She also does political commentary for *Channel 9 News* in the Capital Region and writes a column for the *Post Standard* newspaper in Syracuse, New York. Barbara has also presented at conferences and led workshop training in advocacy, media relations, and coalition building in Russia and Armenia. Her community involvement extends to organizations such as the Council of Community Services, Family Planning Advocates of New York State, League of Women Voters of Albany County, Center for Women in Government, and Public Schools for the 21st Century (PS21).

Readers will know Barbara's column "Inside Albany," which reports on the actions and inaction of the state legislators and some of their political maneuvering. Her insightful reporting and witty presentation give members a good picture of what's going on at the state level, and what the state League is lobbying for.

Always an interesting and dynamic speaker, as well as a very well-informed lobbyist, Barbara is invaluable to local leagues in helping them understand what to do and how to do it to influence our state government.

This year, there are many challenges for the state: new voting requirements and machines, the effects of Hurricane Katrina on energy supplies, response to the human needs of evacuees, and how to establish equitable school funding.



### **General Meeting October 18**

October 18<sup>th</sup> will be our next general meeting. The topic will be "Issues and Advocacy, and our speaker will be Barbara Bartoletti, the Legislative Director for the League of Women Voters of New York State.

You will have an opportunity to hear what the issues are on the state level, and what League stands are on them. You will hear about recent achievements of the league's and efforts that are continuing.

Another part of the meeting will be devoted to more local concerns, such as county-wide initiatives and proposals. Both parts of the meeting should do much to help us all be informed citizens.

The meeting starts at 7:00 PM and ends at 9:00 PM. The church is on Sawkill Road in Kingston. From Washington Avenue in Kingston, turn on to Sawkill Road between the Mobil and Citgo gas stations. The church is on the right. From the thruway, Washington Avenue is the second exit from the traffic circle. Turn left on Sawkill Road. See the website for detailed directions.

### **First Membership Mixer**

The approximately seventy members of the LWV and their guests who attended the first ever membership mixer at the Wiltwyck Golf Club on September 15<sup>th</sup> all left smiling despite the threatening weather. And they had reason to: the delicious food was plentiful, the welcoming drinks were bountiful, and the camaraderie was wonderful. As for the program, the remarks by the president of the New York State League were masterful. Ms. Merrins recounted what the League is and does in her informal and humorous manner. She emphasized what the League does for members in terms of making them feel involved and useful, and what the members do for the League and for the government. Being part of the League is personally fulfilling and socially useful. Ms. Merrins also gave a critique of the two types of voting machines which by law (Help America Vote Act) must replace our old lever machines by Election Day 2006. Failure to comply could result in the forfeiture of some of the federal funds provided to effect the change. In New York State, each county Board of Elections must select either a paper-based optical scanner or an ATM-style machine (DRE). The League of Women Voters unequivocally favors the optical scanners which are simpler, cheaper to maintain, and provide easier verification in the event that a recount is needed. Ms. Merrins urged people to keep the pressure on the Board of Elections. On page 3 of this issue, you will see a copy of a letter that our league wrote to local newspapers urging adoption of optical scan machines. Members may want to use this as a model for their communications.

Mention must be made of the intrepid souls for Dutchess County who defied not only the weather, which turned out to be a non-issue) and arrived despite a 45-minute backup on the Mid-Hudson Bridge. We were also honored by the co-presidents of the Saugerties League of Women Voters, and by Martha Kennedy, the Vice-President for Membership of the NYS LWV. Ms. Kennedy accompanied Ms. Merrins. The mixer was a success and attracted a number of non-members who we hope will become members soon. Thanks go to the Program Committee for a job well-done in a very short time. Ms. Merrins brought enthusiasm and expertise and we look forward to seeing her again.

### **Yard Sale Results**

Not all of the results are in from the yard sale as yet. Sunday was completely rained out, so there are many things still in the basement. Some will go to other yard sales, some may go to Katrina relief, and some may wait for next year's yard sale (assuming we have one). Lee Cane's calling for donations and baked goods has always brought in easy money (easy for those who don't make the calls!) and people were generous this year. Before expenses, we took in about \$2000 (in one day!). Thanks to all who worked so hard on the sale.

## **Financing Education**

There is a statewide study to update the league position on financing education, in which all local leagues are encouraged to participate. The state league will provide a central library on its website for references, study questions and the list of contact people from local leagues who are involved with the study. Materials such as centrally prepared DVDs will be used to facilitate research of the study questions.

So far, there have been three meetings to set the scope of the study and to explore its feasibility within the one-year time frame. Leaders have been chosen for the three elements of the study: gambling (Nancy Kleintop of Rochester), charter schools (Lee Tektowski of Buffalo and Betsey Swan of Albany) and School Taxpayer Relief Program (STAR) (Marian Bott of NYC.) Joan Johnson (Syracuse), Lenore Banks (Buffalo/Niagara), Joan Photiadis (Buffalo/ Niagara), Lorraine Newman (East Nassau), Barbara Bartoletti (Renssalaer), Joan Elliott (Schenectady), Carol Oestrich (Broome/ Tioga) and Pat McGowan Webb (Albany) have joined the statewide team.

Regional meetings will be held for interested leagues to learn more and decide on participation in the study.

The League supported the plaintiffs in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity law suit, and supports widening the CFE remedy to the whole state, not just New York City. The current study will address the question of who will pay for a more equitable education system, looking at potential revenue sources, evaluating them with respect to the volume of revenues generated, fairness from the standpoint of the relationship the revenue measure has the ability to pay, stability, and impact on the business climate. Charter

school impact on school finance, gambling revenues as a source of financing, and the impact of STAR will also be looked at.

LWVNY will send out bibliographies of the areas of studies, and plans to make videos of interviews with experts and panel discussions for local distribution. There will also be a booklet to assist in the consensus process.

Our league has not yet undertaken to participate in the study, but if there are people interested in being part of it, please let Chris Henning know (339-0509). Obviously, it is of great importance to our future to have good schools, supported in an equitable and affordable manner. Our local study pointed out the need for better communication between the educational authorities and the general community.

For more information about the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the litigation, there is a website, [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org) which has a history, a summary of the relief ordered by the court, and other background and status information.

Consensus on STAR and ways to finance the CFE remedy is scheduled for April 2006. Consensus on charter schools and the appropriateness of gambling proceeds to fund education is scheduled for November, 2006.

Our local study on gambling resulted in a consensus that gambling was not a healthy or effective way to provide financial stability and that the social harm outweighed any benefits. In the light of the state's financial woes and the need to spend a great deal more money on schools, this study needs to be revisited and updated, which we can do as part of the state study.

Please sign up!

### **Logging on to National LWV Web Site**

First you need a personal username and password, which is a three-step process.

**Step One Pre-Register:** go to <http://www.lwv.org/PreRegister> and fill out the form. If the League has your email address, only fill in the first three fields. If it doesn't, fill in all six fields. *NOTE: Do Not Hit the "Enter" key. Use the "Tab" key or use your mouse to move to the next field. When finished, hit "Submit."*

An email will be sent to you that will contain your temporary or initial password. *If you don't receive it within 10 minutes, check your spam folder.*

### **Step Two Login and set your password.:**

Follow the link in the email to the [LWV Online System](#) page and complete your registration and set your own personal password. You will need the email address and the initial password in the email. The system **IS** case-sensitive, so it is ***easiest to cut and paste the password directly from the email into the field.***

### **Step Three Login to the lwv.org website.**

When you log in to the LWV Online System, look to the left of the page. You will see a navigation menu. The second item from the bottom is "Change Password." Click here and paste the password from the email into the "current" field and then enter your chosen password in the fields below. **Your new password should be 8 characters long.** Remember to hit "submit."

### **A Reminder About our Board**

The board of directors for this league consists of the officers and the directors with portfolios. The board usually meets on the first Tuesday evening of each month (see *Commentator* for exact date and place). Board meetings are open to any members who wish to come.

#### **Officers:**

President Christine Henning (339-0509).

There are three vice-presidents. According to the bylaws, they are responsible for local projects, state LWV liaison and national LWV liaison. In practice, they also have other responsibilities.

Vice-President Cindy Bell (336-5763).

Vice-President Gloria Plasker (338-8079).

She is also chair of the Program Committee.

Vice-President Elizabeth Askue (338-1667).

She also heads the observer corps.

The last two officers are:

Secretary Lee Ridgway (339-4927).

Treasurer Jean McGarry (336-6622).

#### **Directors with Portfolios:**

Lee Cane (338-0706) Finance

Emily Johnson (338-3554) Newsletter

Shirley Kobran (382-6989) Membership

Jacki Moriarty (331-3418) Public Relations.

Voter Service has no director at this time.

Jill Hudler (657-8141) is handling requests for moderators, and Susan Hirsch (338-6179) is doing other Voter Service work.

Publications is being done by Emilie Hauser as an off-board member.

#### **Other Contacts:**

Jim McGarry (336-6622) webmaster. He is assisted by John Moriarty (331-3418). Jill Gormley (331-0817) is developing an online newsletter .

Dutchess Unit president Ellie Charwat, (462-7061) for any matters involving Dutchess County.

**League of Women Voters of New York State, UN Day Registration**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Register for Briefing Member \$50.\_\_\_\_, Non-member \$70.\_\_\_\_ Student \$20.\_\_\_\_  
Register for Lunch Buffet \$32.50\_\_\_\_ Tour of UN \$11.50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(check payable to LWVNY Mail to LWVNYS, 35 Maiden Lane, Albany, NY 12207  
For credit card registration call 518-465-4162 Registration deadline 11/9/05

**LWV of Mid-Hudson Region Membership Application or Renewal to 6/30/06**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Member (\$50)\_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership (\$65)\_\_\_\_\_ Extra contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_Please call about local LWV meetings or \_\_\_\_Please do not call.**

**Mail with check to:**

**Treasurer, LWV of Mid-Hudson Region, P.O. Box 3564, Kingston, NY 12402**

**If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please provide name and address below and send this slip to:**

**Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, NY 12449**

**We will send information out as quickly as possible.**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_ **e-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your name** \_\_\_\_\_