



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* October, 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		
OCTOBER		
13		Cindy appeared on Jodi McTeague show
27	11:00 to 12:30	Open Meeting with DA candidates at City Hall
NOVEMBER		
6	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Jacki's
		Election Day – Go Vote
13	7:15 to 9:00	Finance Committee, Margaret Sellers
17	9:30 to noon	Brunch and “Women as Leaders” meeting at Ulster Savings Bank
28	10 to 3:30	LWV Briefing Day at the UN
DECEMBER		
4	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria's
9	2:00 to 4:00	Holiday gathering at Jacki's

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,

I think of many adjectives when I want to describe the League of Women Voters. Dedicated, informed, non-partisan, ambitious, committed, and FLEXIBLE. Yes, flexible. The past month can attest to that. It seemed that our league members were besieged by illness, family commitments and even personal tragedy. To this end, we had to make some adjustments.

Our card party fundraiser scheduled for October 18 is postponed. Some of our key observer corps members have not been able to attend their regular meetings. Our candidate questionnaires have been mailed but unfortunately, only to Ulster County hopefuls. Candidates were told they had up to November 3rd to send back their questionnaires to appear on our website. Of course, the more diligent candidates will want to insure that their thoughts and solutions for best serving Ulster County will be available to constituents well before three days to the election.

And then there was the very successful "Not having another League of Women Voters Yard Sale" yard sale. Thanks to Emily Hauser who volunteered to have a yard sale at her house with all proceeds being given to the League. With that announcement, there was a scurry of activity with members cleaning out their closets,

attics and basements to donate to the cause. A big thank-you to all the individuals who came to price and work.

We succeed as a group not only because we are dedicated, informed, and all the other adjectives that come to mind when describing our league. We succeed because we are a cohesive and caring group of individuals who are willing to step up to the plate as needed. Sometimes we need to just take a moment to say, "We are great!" Thanks everyone for all your efforts.

Jean

Push For Children's Health Care

This may be too late for you to act on, but this is such an important issue that it should not get lost.

The House is scheduled for a veto override vote for Thursday, October 18 on the State Children's Health Insurance Program. While the Senate provided a veto-proof vote, the House was just 25 votes shy of a guaranteed override. States like Texas, California and Florida had the largest group of Members who voted no, and yet, are the three states with the largest numbers of uninsured children in the country with 1,410,000, 1,370,000 and 658,000 respectively.

Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper and write to your congressperson. Support the bipartisan coalition of eight states

(including NY) that are bringing litigation against the Bush Administration to challenge their adoption of rules that effectively bar states from expanding their SCHIP programs to meet the needs of uninsured children.

Charter Transition Process

One of the important projects of this year has been our involvement in the development and approval of a new county charter. Work is now proceeding on the implementation of the charter and transition to the new charter.

The Charter Transition Team of the County Legislature held a special meeting on October 1. The speaker was Mark Thomas, former County Executive of Chautauqua County who served two four year terms from 1998-2005. His political career began as a Town Councilman and Town Supervisor. Chautauqua County government (like Dutchess County) was transformed from a Board of Supervisors to a County Legislature after adopting a county charter. Mr Thomas stated that the Chautauqua County Charter underwent a revision during his second term as Executive. A conflict had arisen with the office of comptroller which he felt was unresponsive to both the Executive and the Legislature, creating difficulty in "following the money". The

comptroller's functions were changed in the revised charter as based on the Erie County model.

Mr Thomas felt strongly that well defined checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches are critical for a well functioning charter and administrative code. He stated that where authority is vested is vital. Another point of emphasis was that appointments to key county boards should be made solely by elected officials because "they are responsible to the voters".

Other comments included the fact that in 2005 Chautauqua's budget was \$250 million, somewhat similar to Ulster County's. Mark Thomas stated that one of his challenges as Executive was dealing with the "silo mentality" where Departments refused to share both equipment and human resources. This has been changed, resulting in cost savings. The Chautauqua legislators learned to exchange day-to-day oversight of Departments for an evaluation model based on meeting goals and performance measures which they set.

Some of his problems were solved by instituting a cabinet model where he assigned specific functions (eg negotiation) to someone who was particularly skilled at it. He chose cabinet members on the basis of their leadership potential rather than the size of their departments. Chautauqua budgets are submitted to the

legislature by department heads and the unified legislature negotiates with their executive. The budget is filed in early September and the Legislators run for office on their budget.

Mark Thomas is a Democrat and the Republicans had been the majority party for 16 years. When he was elected the Democrats carried the legislature also and held it through his tenure. He said he found it important to be inclusive of the minority party both through dialogue and transparency in government. He also used conflict resolution techniques.

Mr. Thomas currently serves as the Western District Director of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. This position reflects his original professional training and previous experience.

--- Renee Sachs

Jail Investigation Committee

The Special Committee wrapped up its work last night. They intend to forward their recommendations to Chairman Donaldson for referral to the relevant legislative committees.

The recommendations raise important local issues. They involve significant policy changes in Capital projects, Vendor selection, and Criminal Justice (recommendations that we have been pushing for years.

It is urgent that these recommendations be considered and

kept from falling through the cracks during their upcoming election and the charter transition.

The League needs to consider what action it would be appropriate for us to take at this point.

--- Tom Kadgen

Candidate Questionnaires

As a first step in getting our voters' guide up and running online, Jim McGarry has sent out the questionnaires to all the candidates and will be putting their responses up on our website as they come in. Be sure to look at the questions and answers and tell all your friends about the website so they too can look at the results.

Observer Corps Again

Just a reminder: we have a group of people who attend legislative full and committee meetings on a regular basis. We have found it very informative. Although we are only there as observers, we feel the reports in the *Commentator* have kept us up to date on legislative matters.

Currently, we have people attending Ways and Means, Charter Transition, Human Development, Health, Vote by Mail, Efficiency and Reform, the full legislature meetings, Mental Health Community Services, and other county meetings.

People also attend Common Council and School Board meetings regularly. We need more volunteers: we do not cover all the committees we should have an interest in, it is helpful to have more than one person attend meetings to compare impressions, and it gives backup if someone is unable to attend their meeting. It also adds visibility and credibility to the League.

If you wish to be part of the corps, call Margaret Sellers at 339-3180. You can always find the legislative schedule on the county website.

Nursing Home Study

At our annual meeting, we decided on a study of the county nursing home. The study was worded: "Should the County replace, renovate and maintain a nursing home facility?"

The study group has met a number of times and has looked at what nursing homes provide, what services are needed, what balance is needed between home care and nursing home care, and what revenue differences there are or would be with a change in mission. We developed a number of questions to ask the director of Golden Hill about the present and future of the facility and will provide a summary of the interview we had in the next *Commentator*.

The first question was "Do you foresee a change in the mission from its historic wording "*to care for poor and indigent elderly county residents regardless of ability to pay*" to include all county residents?"

Other questions covered the physical aspects of the plant, demographic data, financial support, employment practices, and predicted future needs.

LWV Day at the UN November 28

This year the format of the briefing at the UN has changed. The subject of the day is "Briefings on the Effects of War on Women Around the World." The program will take place from 1:00 to 3:30, making it easier for us upstaters to get there for it. From 10:00 to 11:00, there will be an optional tour of the UN, which will cost \$12.00. From 11:30 to 12:30 there is an optional lunch buffet in the delegates' dining room (cost \$35.00).

The program itself will take place in the Library Auditorium, and will cost \$63.00 for LWV members, or \$73.00 for non-members.

Happily, there is a discounted fee of \$100.00 for people who want to do the tour, the lunch, and the briefing.

More information is available from the LWV state office at (518) 465-4162 and updates about the forum can be found on www.lwvny.org. The deadline for registrations is November 10th. A registration form appears in the November State Board Report which is on the state website if that is convenient for you.

In the past we have had a group of people go down in a carpool; if you are interested in carpooling, let one of the board members know. If you would like to drive a carpool, please let a board member know as soon as possible!

Gloria Steinem Visit

Gloria Steinem is coming to Albany April 2, 2008 to bring attention to pay equity. Sponsored by the NYS Pay Equity Coalition, of which LWV is a member, there will be a legislative event, a luncheon fundraiser, a press event and a town hall meeting. Watch the state league website for details as they become available. But put the date in your calendar now so that it doesn't get lost!

Urban Sprawl and Global Warming

Curbing urban sprawl helps to preserve farmland and open space, protect water quality, provide opportunities for physical activity, reduce pollution from automobile emissions, save infrastructure dollars and help people who can't drive. A recent report **Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change** reports that the key to mitigating climate change is less auto-dependent development. Learn more about this report on <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org>

HAVA – Here We Go Again

After thinking that we had succeeded in legislative implementation of HAVA, we have found more problems. Because of the difficulty of meeting deadlines, the State Board of elections and local elections commissioners developed a proposal to allow uncertified Direct Recording Electronic Voting machines (DREs) to be used as an accessible voting machine using the voter verified paper audit trail as the official ballot.

Several problems make this a poor proposal. First, it would allow uncertified, untested DREs to serve as a ballot marking device, with the vote counting function disabled. Second, disabling the vote-counting function is untried and untested and could cause functional problems. Third, the audit trail cannot be read back or verified by a voter with a disability.

Using an untested, uncertified DRE with no verification of the ballot by the voter goes directly against our requirement that votes be verifiable.

This solution was proposed to meet the requirement that polling places have accessible voting equipment in 2008 when there will not be certified tested machines available. Boards of Election justifiably do not wish to spend money on voting machines that will not meet long-run requirements and will need to be scrapped (as machines are in a number of states

now). The chances are that a DRE that has been tested enough to use as an accessible voting machine can be certified for use in 2009 and beyond.

The League took action. Working with New Yorkers for Verified Voting, we mounted an intensive public campaign and sent out facts and action materials (see the website for pictures). 3,025 activists called or wrote in and there was a press conference on September 19 to call media attention to the issue.

Commissioners met but could not agree on a proposal to take to the federal court judge who is hearing the New York case on HAVA. Local election commissioners through their state association have documented their inability to implement full poll site accessibility in 2008. The court may have to make a decision.

At the annual meeting of New Yorkers for Verified Voting, the election supervisor of Leon County, Florida, spoke and endorsed optical scanners as the best system.

Membership News

Our heartfelt condolences to Vivi Hlavsa on the sudden and untimely death of her husband, Richard. He was fatally injured in an automobile accident on September 20th.

A spate of illness seems to have descended on our League. We are grateful for the successful outcome of double knee replacement surgery on Lee Ridgway, now doing well at home and in physical therapy.

We are happy to have Jacki Moriarty back in town. She unhappily incorporated her illness and surgery while on vacation in Maine. Her recovery is progressing.

Lee Cane's husband Len had surgery in Albany, unfortunately followed by two more visits to the operating room. We hear Len is making progress now and we hope his recuperation continues well. Len has acted as a moderator for numerous League programs.

Help Wanted

The *Commentator* still needs a committee on a permanent basis and there is a range of help needed:

- ?? Mailing the issues—pasting them (instead of stapling), stamping, addressing, and delivering them

to the county office building and the Kingston City Hall.

- ?? Writing or finding interesting material to improve editorial content.
- ?? Being responsible for getting material from one or more particular people (that's nagging once a month).
- ?? Reporting on meetings and events.
- ?? Gathering Observer Corps reports.
- ?? Reporting membership news.

Having been out of service for more than a month, I realize how badly I need a committee to help, and how much you can learn from being part of the group who works on the newsletter.

I want to extend my thanks to Emily Johnson, Renee Sachs, Irene McInnis, Esther Stickley, Emilie Hauser and others who have helped with the newsletter and collecting the ads that help keep us solvent.

This *Commentator* is only as good as its content, and you can help make it The Best!

--- Lee Ridgway

I/we wish to join the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2008

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* ____
(*Update 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: Betty Chin, 69 The Hills Port Ewen, NY 12466
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://lwvny-bulletins.org/Capital Region/Mid-Hudson-2006-10-ads.pdf>