



Commentator

April 2017

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

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2017	Check our online calendar (http://lwvmidhudson.org/calendar.html) for updates.	
<i>Our general meetings are open to all. Family and friends welcome!</i>		
March		
28	1:45-3:30 PM	Book Club Meeting Club at Enzo's Pizzeria, Boices Lane, Lake Katrine.
28	7:15 PM	Showing of <i>Electoral Dysfunction</i> at the Rosendale Theatre, 408 Main St, Rosendale, NY 12472. Includes post-film discussion on the Electoral College with Prof Joel Lefkowitz of SUNY New Paltz Department of Political Science & International Relations. Free event made possible by The Mid-Hudson Region League of Women Voters.
April		
4	5:30-7:30pm	Changing New York State Restrictive Voting Laws committee Panera's, Ulster Avenue, Kingston
4	5:30 PM	Materials Management (Solid Waste) Study Committee at the Main Course Restaurant, 175 Main Street, New Paltz, NY 12561. For more information, contact Kathy OConnor at (845) 757-2247 or oconnor.kraye@gmail.com .
13	4:00-6:00 PM	Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's, 167 Apple Hill Rd, Hurley, NY 12443.
17	8:30-9:00 AM	Kingston Community Radio, WGHQ 920 AM LWV On Air. Go to http://www.mykcr.org to listen on your computer. Call 845-331-9255 to ask a question or make a comment.
25		Lobby Day, Albany - Contact President Jolanda Jansen at prez@lwvmidhudson.org for more information.
May		
24	5:30-7:30 PM	Annual Meeting at Deyo Hall, 6 Broadhead Avenue, New Paltz (located off Route 32, not on SUNY Campus).



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Prez Sez

Is it me, or has time gone into hyper drive? At the time of this writing, the repeal and replace Obamacare has failed. However I feel neither happiness nor relief. Our own New York Republicans would have voted for it. Ulster County Citizens are spending a tremendous amount of energy trying to reach and influence our local Congressional representative. Thank you all for all of your efforts. Now do some self care. Do something enjoyable. We are in this for the long haul and need to take care of ourselves.

Our League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region Facebook Page has become much more active. Long time member Cindy Lanzetta and relatively new member Kate Hymes are regularly posting new information. We are also using the page to let you know about events organized by other local organizations. If you are not yet on Facebook, this is a good time to join. It can be a wonderful resource.

Looking forward to seeing many of you on Tuesday March 28 in Rosendale for the viewing of Electoral Dysfunction.

Rolanda Jansen

Monthly Board meeting minutes and more can be found at: <http://lwvmidhudson.org/Committees.html>

Membership News**League Dues
Join now and
save!**

At last year's Annual Meeting a proposal to raise our annual dues was approved, effective June 1, 2017. The new rates will be: \$60 individual and \$90 household. Student dues stay the same. Dues will be at the current rate and run to May 31, 2018 for new members joining before June 1st.

Fifteen new and prospective members attended a league orientation at Deyo Hall on March 11. Dare Thompson highlighted the history and structure of the League of Women Voters. We began our session by giving all participants an opportunity to introduce themselves and share the reason for their interest in the league. This served as a logical segue to showcase the many opportunities and layers of involvement offered as a league member and how one can best utilize his/her time and talents in our organization. We are a volunteer group and while we have a serious agenda, we want our members to feel welcome and comfortable, and yes, we need to share a few laughs in what many of us regard as unsettling times. Besides gaining new members, the real success of this gathering was the wonderful exchange of ideas between all who attended. The clear message is that there is a willingness to collaborate, partner, and support each other as we work to promote and preserve a progressive agenda.

Jean McGarry

VOTER SERVICE**What Voter
Service has done
and What We're
Doing****Changing Restrictive New York State Voting Laws**

The work for changing restrictive voting laws in New York State has begun. Twelve individuals have signed up to serve on this committee. Thanks to new member Gai Galitzine who has graciously agreed to organize this group as they begin this important mission. We all realize that our historically low voter turnout in New York State is a result of our restrictive election laws. States that allow easier access to voting have higher voter turnout. Governor Cuomo and Attorney General Schneiderman both recognize this and both have offered their separate proposals on how voter laws should be changed. The current energy and interest is palpable. There is no better time to roll up our sleeves and see that these changes that would engage more New Yorkers in the voting process will come to fruition. So proud that our league is seizing the moment.

Jean McGarry

Naturalization

Thanks to Linda Hackett, Nora Scherer, and Daisy Tyler for representing the league at the Naturalization Ceremony on March 10. League members greeted the new citizens and distributed voter registration forms and the league publication First Vote. Fifty percent of the new citizens were from Spanish speaking countries. Welcoming these new citizens in their native language and having available voter registration forms written in Spanish soothed their transition as they became American citizens. Daisy Tyler, a naturalized citizen, now fluent in English, certainly appreciates this added service the league provides

Moderating Guidelines

Guidelines for moderating and sponsorship of candidates' events by the League are on our website at <http://lwvmidhudson.org/Moderating.html> or from the [Home](#) page and the [Elections](#) page.

Electoral Dysfunction

February 13th 2017

Contact: Georgette Mattel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE ROSENDALE THEATRE TO HOST A FREE MOVIE AND DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR ELECTORAL COLLEGE

On Tuesday, March 28th at 7:15 PM, The Rosendale Theatre will show the film "Electoral Dysfunction" with a post-film discussion on the Electoral College by Prof Joel Lefkowitz of SUNY New Paltz Department of Political Science & International Relations. This is a free event; made possible by the *League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region*, who are sponsoring the film.

After making the eye-opening discovery that the right to vote is missing from the Constitution, Emmy-winning political humorist Mo Rocca sets out on a road trip to see how voting works — and doesn't work — in America. A Correspondent for CBS News and veteran of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, Mo heads to Indiana, home to some of the nation's strictest election laws, and meets one Democrat and one Republican who take him inside their efforts to get out every vote. As he progresses on his road trip, Mo investigates the debate over Voter ID laws and voter fraud; explores the origins and present-day impact of the Electoral College; critiques ballots with renowned designer Todd Oldham; and examines the case of a former felon sentenced to ten years in prison — for the crime of voting. He also meets reformers who are working to make America's voting system fairer and more transparent.

Described as "fascinating, fun, frightening, [and] enlightening" by NPR's WBEZ Radio and by *The New York Times* as a film that "lives up to its title, exploring problems of nationwide accessibility and fairness," ELECTORAL DYSFUNCTION has won numerous awards, including the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award, the ABA's highest honor for media projects that foster public understanding of the law. The film was produced, directed, and written by David Deschamps, Leslie D. Farrell, and Bennett Singer, whose collective credits include multiple Emmy, Peabody, and duPont-Columbia Awards.

The film had a dual premiere at the 2012 Republican and Democratic National Conventions and was broadcast nationally on PBS; its cable premiere took place in the Fall of 2016 on the Pivot Network. Four short videos adapted from the film were featured in *The New York Times* Op-Docs series; a companion book, written by Victoria Bassetti and praised for being "delightfully provocative" by *Publishers Weekly*, was published by The New Press.

The Rosendale Theatre Collective is a not-for-profit, volunteer run, center for film and all the

performing arts and education, dedicated to enhancing the cultural life and economic vitality of Rosendale and Ulster County.

For more information, visit the Rosendale Theater website at <http://rosendaletheatre.org>

Rosendale Theatre

408 Main Street, Rosendale, NY

www.rosendaletheatre.org

Phone: 845-658-8989

SELECTED REVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS

“A timely look at an important issue that’s getting more hotly contested every month...”

—*Hollywood Reporter*

“*Electoral Dysfunction* pulls off an admirable trick ... It treats Democrats and Republicans respectfully, and its humor, with the comic Mo Rocca as guide, is closer to Garrison Keillor than to Michael Moore ... This lighthearted, colorful, nonpartisan documentary ... lives up to its title, exploring problems of nationwide accessibility and fairness.”

—David DeWitt, *The New York Times*

“Eye-opening and highly entertaining ... If you have any sort of investment in this country, we recommend seeing *Electoral Dysfunction*.” —Mindy Bond, *Flavorpill*

“Engrossing and eye-opening ... the movie has a charged, electric feel to it. *Electoral Dysfunction* is utter catnip for politicians and documentary film fans, but its attractive presentation and easygoing nature also make this important and instructive movie approachable for level-headed audiences of various political stripes.” —Brent Simon, Past President of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association

“Fascinating, fun, frightening [and] enlightening” *WBEZ Radio Chicago/NPR*

“An irreverent look at voting ... funny and insightful.” —*WTSP-TV Tampa*

“*Electoral Dysfunction* has a bit of everything — comedy, tragedy, farce. It’s educational, amusing and sometimes appalling...” —*Montreal Gazette*

“A stunning investigative work leading to a disquieting statement about the disparities of the American electoral system ... a survival guide for the American getting ready to vote.”

—*Panorama-Cinema*

“Rocca wryly, yet respectfully, follows the hard-driving efforts of Jennings County Democrat Mike Marshall and Ripley County Republican Dee Dee Benkie as the engaging opponents pull out the stops to help ensure their party’s win. It’s a generally fair and balanced snapshot of Tip O’Neill’s assertion, ‘All politics is local.’ ... But it’s the shocking, follow-up news of Marshall’s 2011 grand jury indictment on 45 felony counts allegedly related to his voter registration work (he claims innocence and political witch-hunting) that hammers home America’s red-blue rancor and closes the film on a vital note of gravitas.” —Gary Goldstein, *Los Angeles Times*

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

Constitutional Convention

On March 4, approximately 20 individuals met at the Kingston Public Library to learn about the Constitutional Convention. Every twenty years, New Yorkers are faced with the ballot question of whether New York should hold a convention to amend the state constitution. At the meeting, Jennifer Clark gave a background on the process. Dare Thompson discussed how it could affect the criminal justice process and the judiciary. Kathy OConnor informed members about the constitutional protections for the environment and suggested that there would be both pros and cons to holding a convention. Jolanda Jansen presented on ethics, suggesting areas of law that could be changed only

through a convention. On the issue of education, Jean McGarry and Nora Scherer gave a number of areas of concern, including union rights and pensions, that are currently protected in the constitution and which could be affected by a convention. Lastly, Daisy Tyler finished the presentation with a summary of the important points.

Overall, attendees expressed a lot of concern over who the delegates to the convention would be. Although regular citizens may run, many thought it likely that we would end up with the same representatives we already have in the Senate and Assembly. Jolanda indicated that we should look into this question more and determine how the League could impact the selection process. By the end of the meeting the attendees were divided on whether the League should support or oppose a convention. Eleven attendees voted to oppose, seven voted to support, and one attendee voted to stay neutral. It seemed to boil down to worry that current protections would be eroded versus hope that additional protections could be put in place.

Jennifer Clark

**LWVMHR
Materials
Management
Committee**

Five members of the Committee met March 7th in New Paltz. A topic brought up by Gai Galitzine was the Transition movement throughout the U.S. And we have such a group in Kingston. Focused on strengthening the community, divesting ourselves of dependence on fossil fuels, raising consciousness about food waste, improving the ways we react to circumstances. Check out "TransitionUS.org" or on Facebook "Kingston Transition - NY" This group is also a major part of the "Repair Cafe" organizations in the Hudson Valley.

Organics Summit in Troy NY March 28 and 29. Kathy OConnor and Jolanda Jansen are planning to attend this conference, sponsored by the New York State Association of the 3 "R's." They will attend just the first day, and look forward to hearing Sarah Womer speak about community composting efforts. We thank the LWVMHR for sponsoring our attendance.

We are concerned about the Administration's possible cuts to the funding of the Environmental Protection Agency, and were glad to have had the opportunity to film Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and other local leaders on the subject. Bravo to Jean McGarry and Jacki Moriarity for carrying the LWV banner to support the event. <https://youtu.be/gD3kl3xAAoA>

Paint Stewardship Legislation efforts continue to be in our cross-hairs. Many Committee members are reaching out to local officials and business people, to send letters of support. We'll continue to hope that this is the year for passage.

(submitted by Kathy OConnor)

ULSTER COUNTY OBSERVER CORP

Schedules, Audio recordings, agenda and minutes of Legislative Committee meetings can be found at <http://ulstercountyny.gov/legislature>

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**Laws and Rules,
Governmental
Services Committee**

3/13/2017

Present: all Committee Members with one absent.

The session was video taped.

There were 11 resolutions discussed, several postponed, a couple of relatively minor importance passed and there were some that inspired conversation, heated at times.

Highlights were as follows:

- Proposed local law for the Regulation of Pet Sellers. It was pointed out that this law (30 pages long) could easily be circumvented by those who wanted to and that the whole issue is of questionable importance in the county, since there have been no real incidents of the problems that would be solved by the passing of this law. That said, the resolution was passed by a majority.
- Proposed law Prohibiting Cyber-Bullying In Ulster County. This topic brought a spirited conversation, with one legislator arguing that legal action against young people would create a “pipeline to prison” and unfairly strike those in lower socio-economic strata (this point was not fully explained). It was pointed out that the charge is only a misdemeanor (not a felony) and most will be eligible for youthful offender status, with that record expunged at the age of majority. More than one legislator said that the charge will unfairly victimize the offender with a blot on their record. It was suggested that all county school administrators should concur in writing in order to ensure confidence that the law is appropriate. There are already protections in place for children attending school or school functions. That agreement will be obtained by the final vote of the full legislature.
- The proposed resolution Amending The Rules Of Order To Prohibit Memorializing Resolutions also earned a lively discussion. It was pointed out that in the past, these resolutions were rare, but now appear at the rate of up to 2-3 per month. One member pointed out that the time for discussion and comment them has become onerous and is not what the Legislature has been elected to do as these topics are not county business. It was noted by another that the public comment period provides an opportunity for more interest and discourse with the public. Another member stated that Roberts Rules of Order allows for memorializing resolutions, though this writer was unable to find any evidence on the internet during the exchange. Several members of the public were in attendance and were invited to speak on the matter.
- A late resolution regarding the funding of a director of projects of the intimate partner violence initiative through the district attorney’s office was passed with the caveat that if a project receives two years of funding, the county will have to pick up the tab after that if the project is successful. It was noted that there are no analyses, goals or supporting documents to show the efficacy of the program. Some supporting documentation was given to the Criminal Justice Committee, but a narrative report and statistical analysis had not been done. One of the legislators commented that all such projects should end with a report detailing the process and its successes or failures to present to the legislative body as part of the process with any temporary grant through any county department.

Observer commentary:

It’s been a long time since I sat in on these meetings and I noticed some big changes with the conversations and personal interactions between the legislators themselves and their attitudes towards the other two branches of county government. Some of it made for good theater, but some was so adversarial and rude that I was taken aback. Most of the conversation was civil and professional, but some was just ‘hot dogging’.

On the other hand, the members of the public who spoke were treated with patience and respect by the legislators and that was a real positive note for me.

Cynthia Bell