



Commentator

APRIL 2015

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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| WE WELCOME THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT ALL EVENTS! | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| 2015 | | |
| April | | |
| 3 – 5 | Fri.-Sun. | Happy Passover and Easter! |
| 13 | Mon. 7:15 PM | Board Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine. 845-382-6989 for directions. ALL welcome. |
| 14 | Tues. 1:45 PM | Book Discussion of Robert D. Putnam's OUR KIDS: The American Dream in Crisis . Enzo's Ristorante & Pizza, 207 Boices Lane, Kingston. Call Enzo's at 845-383-3696 for directions. |
| 14 | Tues. 5:30 PM | Materials Management Study Committee, Gateway Diner, 379 Rt. 9W, Highland (just north of Mid-Hudson Bridge, across from Burger King). |
| 22 | Wed. | Earth Day! |
| MAY | | |
| | | Board Meeting date TBD. Call 845-340-2003 to confirm. |
| 12 | Tues. 5:30 PM | Materials Management Study Committee, Gateway Diner, 379 Rt. 9W, Highland (just north of Mid-Hudson Bridge, across from Burger King). |
| 16 | Sat. 10:15 AM | A discussion on America's income inequality with Joel Diamond, professor emeritus of government at Dutchess Community College. <i>Why is this such a hard topic to nail down and why's it even harder to address?</i> Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting, 249 Hooker Ave. (just west of Grand), POK. 845-340-2003 for directions. |
| 17 - 20 | Sun.- Wed. | Kingston HS junior, Phoebe Clark of Port Ewen, joins 61 other high schoolers at LWVNYS's Students Inside Albany program. Have a great time, Phoebe! |
| 19 | Tues. 1:45 PM | Book Discussion of Malcolm Gladwell's The Outliers: The Story of Success (2008). Enzo's Ristorante & Pizza, 207 Boices Lane, Kingston. Call Enzo's at 845-383-3696 for directions. |
| 27 | Wed. 5:30 PM | Deyo Hall (on Broadhead, just off Rt 32 in the Historic Huguenot District). LWV-MHR ANNUAL MEETING . Supper, business meeting at 6:30, program at 7. Details in the next Commentator. Meanwhile SAVE THE DATE! |
| JUNE | | |
| 5-7 | Fri-Sun | STATE LWV CONVENTION . Details at www.lwvny.org . |

PREZ SEZ...

Two things made me particularly happy this past month. One is that I got to help defeat a personal enemy: **styrofoam!** I hate the stuff. For starters, it doesn't do a very good job of keeping food from spilling in the car and it's even more useless for storage at home. You have to transfer your food to a more air-tight container. Then when you throw it away, it takes up half your trash can. And in the waste stream it's almost indestructible. That annoying container, used for only minutes, will still be in the landfill hundreds of years from now. Even worse, testing with animals suggests that styrofoam is toxic - and we use it for food storage!

But in 2016 (sooner for some restaurants) we will start to see it disappear in our beautiful county! Yay! Legislation carefully crafted by legislator **Tracey Bartels**, a League member, would ban styrofoam in most restaurants, and at this month's meeting of the legislature her work carried the day. As I said when I testified in favor of the ban, styrofoam is such an obnoxious part of our waste stream, it's probably just a matter of time before it's banned everywhere, so let's be smart and get ahead of the curve. **Thank you, Ulster, for being smart! Dutchess, will you be next?**

I'm also happy because our **book group** (see info elsewhere) allows for some great discussions with some very thoughtful and lively people on deeply important topics - recently the growth in both **incarceration and income inequality**. At our last meeting we were joined by **Joel Diamond**, a retired government professor who's done extensive reading and thinking about inequality and who really gave our brains a work-out. We're delighted that he's willing to go beyond our book group in sharing his knowledge and insights. It will happen on Sat. AM, May 16th, at Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting. Save the date!

Meanwhile our book group is sticking with this topic for its next book: Robert Putnam's **OUR KIDS: The American Dream in Crisis**, just out and already a bestseller. We'll discuss it among ourselves on April 14th and again with Professor Diamond on May 16th. Many of us have read an excellent article by Jill Lepore in the New Yorker on this book and others and you might want to check it out at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/03/16/richer-and-poorer>

Happy spring, everyone!

Dave

**MEMBERSHIP
NEWS**

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

**Up Close And
Personal**

Want to get to know those who represent you? It's something every citizen should do, and we make it easy - maybe even fun.

We are starting to schedule office visits with those who represent us in Albany and there are 11 (!) such people from our large area. If you'd like to go with us when we visit your Assembly(wo)man or Senator, just let us know at 845-340-2003.

We also have people going regularly to Ulster County and City of Kingston meetings and you're most welcome to join them. They'll help you sort out what roles the various people play, what their issues might be, and generally explain what's happening. It's best to go to the caucus meetings before the legislatures' more formal meetings, since that's where so much critical discussion happens. Again, just let us know at 845-340-2003.

WARNING: These visits can become addictive!

GOT AN ISSUE?**It's Easy to Get Involved.**

You may not see on the calendar an event related to a topic you're interested in. but that doesn't mean there's no opportunity for one. Here are some issues we know others are particularly interested in right now. If you are too, let us know so we can include you. Call 845-340-2003.

The SHARED SERVICES Committee in Dutchess Co. works to get towns and the County to work more cooperatively and efficiently. Because Ellie Charwat, the chairperson, is away, there is no meeting scheduled, but a date will be set soon. Let us know if you'd like to be included.

PRISON REFORM - Many of us have read the book THE NEW JIM CROW about the expanding numbers of people being incarcerated, particularly minorities. We're outraged both by the racism ("legalized discrimination") and the fact that we have significantly more people in prison than any other developed country. It's a big topic, and we welcome your help tackling it.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - Climate change, clean air and water, and other environmental issues - including solid waste (aka materials management) which is talked about elsewhere in this newsletter - are a priority for a lot of League members, particularly ours. A recent specific concern is the pharmaceuticals and cosmetics that are damaging our rivers and streams.

GOOD GOVERNMENT and VOTER SERVICE - These are what the League is best known for and opportunities to help with these abound!

SOMETHING ELSE on your mind? It may just not be listed here. Let us discuss how the League might address the issues YOU care about.

VOTER SERVICE**Moderating Guidelines**

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

Voter Registration and Organ Donor Registration

The LWVNYS has recently announced an innovative partnership with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD). NYAD's mission is to increase organ, eye and tissue donation in New York State to insure a transplant for every New Yorker in need. In 2009, NYS became the first state to include an organ and tissue donor enrollment section on voter registration forms. Since inception, over 160,00 individuals have enrolled in the donor registry via voter registration forms but this still only accounts for 15% of all enrollees. With this partnership, the hope is that we can increase both voter registrations and organ and tissue donor registrations together.

The LWVMHR will be participating in this program. Stipends will be given to local Leagues (approximately \$100-200), training will be provided for free, Voter Guides will be available for free or reduced cost, and other brochures and public relations materials will be available. Jean McGarry will be heading this endeavor with our local league. Please contact her at jfmcg@hvc.rr.com if you are interested in being a part of this campaign.

(For the full article on the Organ Donation with Voter Registration, see LWVNYS State Board Updates: February 2015)

Naturalization

On March 6, League members Daisy Tyler and Jean McGarry welcomed and congratulated 50 new citizens. As we handed out voter registration information, imagine our surprise when one woman dropped to her knees and symbolically kissed the land of her new country. What a powerful reminder to all of us who take our voting rights for granted. Come and join us in June.

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

Materials Management Committee Meeting Minutes

On March 5th, Cindy Lanzetta, Sarah Womer and Jolanda Jansen attended the NYS Summit on Organics Management at Marist College. The summit was created by NYSAR(3) in collaboration with the Environmental Finance Center of Syracuse University, the Hudson Valley Regional Council, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Casella Organics and the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. The day-long program was well attended and focused on Community Based Composting. Notes and slides from the program can be accessed at:

[New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling :: NYS Summit on Organics Management.](http://www.nysar3.org/page/nys-summit-on-organics-management-100.html)

(<http://www.nysar3.org/page/nys-summit-on-organics-management-100.html>)



On March 10th, the League Materials Management Committee met. Most of the meeting focused on the proposed legislation in the Ulster County Legislature to regulate Polystyrene Foam (Styrofoam) in the food industry. The Materials Management Committee wrote a letter of support. At the public hearing on March 17th, Co-President Dare Thompson encouraged the Legislature to pass the resolution, which they did.

By discouraging the use of non-biodegradable material in the food waste stream, Materials Management believes the County is on track to encourage the composting of organic material. This will save the costs of trucking it to a landfill and help limit greenhouse gas. Compost is also a beneficial material that can be used to enrich soils.

Ulster County has established a Solid Waste Management Improvement Committee that has begun to meet. This committee will advise the Legislature on ways to manage materials and waste in a prudent manner. We are pleased that the League of Women Voters has been invited to be an important part of this Committee and its work.

In April, the Materials Management Committee hopes to meet with Lindsay Carille, Deputy Commissioner of the Dutchess Co. Division of Solid Waste Management, and discuss developments in that county. Please join us at our next meeting on April 14th, 5:30 pm, at the Gateway Diner, Rt. 9W, in Highland. (Bring a reusable container for your leftovers!)

Cindy Lanzetta

2015 BOOK GROUP SELECTIONS

UPDATES

We continue to meet on Tuesdays at 1:45 at Enzo's Pizza, 207 Boices Lane, Kingston. An updated schedule follows. We may make further adjustments, but we're committed to these books if you want to read ahead. But you don't have to have read the book to sit in!

Please confirm dates and times at 845-340-2004 or www.lwvmidhudson.org.

April 14

Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis, Robert D. Putnam, 2015

The author of the classic *Bowling Alone* has written a very readable book on inequality that is being reviewed just about everywhere and is flying off the shelves. See a lengthy interview on PBS at <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/author/robert-putnam/>

*This is a follow-up to our reading of other books on income inequality – Ehrenreich's **Nickel and Dime**, Stiglitz's **The Price of Inequality**, and parts of Piketty's **Capital**. See more in this month's Prez Sez.*

May 19**Outliers: The Story of Success**, Malcolm Gladwell, 2008

According to Gladwell, if we want to understand how some people thrive, we should spend more time looking *around* them -- at such things as their family, their birthplace, or even their birth date.

June 16**Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal**, Aviva Chomsky, 2014

Immigrant rights activist Aviva Chomsky shows how "illegality" and "undocumentedness" are concepts that were created to exclude and exploit. Blending history with human drama, Chomsky explores what it means to be undocumented in a legal, social, economic and historical context.

July 21**The Village Effect**, Susan Pinker, 2014

An exploration of the powerful effects of face-to-face contact in our increasingly computer-mediated world. Pinker's witty and informative book reveals the complex picture of these interactions.

August 18**Soul of a Citizen**, Paul Loeb, 1999

A book of inspiration and integrity, *Soul of a Citizen* is an antidote to the twin scourges of modern life--powerlessness and cynicism. Loeb tells moving stories of ordinary Americans who have found unexpected fulfillment in social involvement.

ULSTER COUNTY OBSERVER CORP

Audio recordings, addenda and minutes of Legislative Committee meetings can be found at <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/legislature/committeesinfo/index.html>

Become A Member Of Our Observer Corps

Get to know your local government in a personal way! Strengthen local democracy by adding "sunlight" to the legislative process and publishing what you observe in our Commentator! You may observe your town or city board meetings you prefer. *We will guide you, so you do not need to be an expert to get started.* Call Margaret Sellers at 339-3180 with your questions.

**Energy and
Environment
Committee****Mar. 4, 2015, 6:06 – 8:19 PM**

Committee Members: **Peter Loughran, Chairman, Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr., Deputy Chairman, Richard A. Parete, Hector Rodriguez, Mary Wawro (absent)**

Also present: Legislators John Parete, Chairman, Manna Jo Greene and Tracey Bartels.

Meeting called to order by Peter Loughran, Chairman.

Minutes from the Dec.8, 2014 and Feb. 4, 2015 meetings were approved.

Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency Report: Charlie Landi, UCRRR board member, discussed recent activities and issues of the agency. Results of a recent audit were good, but the RRA wants a better process for cash transactions. He discussed with the committee on-going issues with some towns regarding roll-off container misuse and a box replacement plan (purchasing now on hold).

Resolutions for Mar.17, 2015:

Resolution No. 42 and Resolution No. 43 establishing environmental remediation reserve account and fund were adopted, as amended, and referred to the Ways and Means Committee.

Resolution No. 98 regarding an appropriation for the UC Soil and Water Conservation District was adopted following a discussion favorable of the operations of the district, but that an audit is recommended to assure “best practices” bookkeeping.

Resolution No. 108 regarding appointing members to the Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission was approved following a discussion of the appointment process with the commission co-chairs, Carl Chipman and Hector Rodriguez.

Resolution No. 109 and Resolution No. 132 regarding setting a public hearing and adopting an UC Green Fleet Policy were postponed for a Special Meeting. [Subsequently scheduled for Mar. 26, 2015.]

Resolution No. 129 adopting a local law regulating use of polystyrene foam disposable food services ware was adopted, as amended.

Old Business:

1. Climate Smart Committee – Update next meeting.
2. Solid Waste Disposal Improvement Commission – Update next meeting.

Following the committee business, the committee briefly discussed a concern about representatives of the County Executive participation and asserted opinions at the meetings.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 3-27-15

**Economic
Development,
Tourism, Housing,
Planning & Transit
Committee**

Mar. 11, 2015, 7:30 – 8:53 PM

Committee Members: **Thomas J. Briggs, Chairman, James F. Maloney, Deputy Chairman, Chris Allen, Lynn Archer, Tracey Bartels, Herbert Litts, III, Mary Beth Maio**

Meeting called to order by Deputy Chairman Maloney, and approval of Feb. 3, 2015 meeting minutes.

Suzanne Holt, director, Office of Business Services discussed daily activities of the office, marketing and education programs that involve the EDA and FocusMedia. They want to hire consultant Peter Fairweather for a business targeting effort. The committee discussed the business retention and expansion efforts across the county.

Steve Rice, Chairman, Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee, distributed their annual report and briefly discussed the contents.

Resolutions for Mar. 17, 2015:

Resolution No. 96 regarding dissolving the UC Railroad Advisory Committee and creating the U&D Railroad Corridor Advisory Committee was postponed for one month to get the best committee and buy-in with the goal to focus on the future of the corridor.

Resolution No. 113 supporting the placement of video lottery terminals at the Hudson Valley Resort and the Pine Grove Ranch in the town of Rochester was adopted following requests of support by Pine Grove owner David O’Halloran and HV Resort owner Eliot Spitzer (not the former governor). Comp debit cards issued by the sites being proposed for use in Ulster County. Carl Chipman, Supervisor, town of Rochester, emphasized community building. The committee discussed the social concerns about gambling. Legislation has been introduced in Albany by Assemblyman Kevin Cahill.

Resolution No. 118 approving a contract regarding the UC economic Development Alliance

was postponed pending further understating of the contract.

All other resolutions were approved.

New Business: Legislator Hector Rodriguez (not a committee member) announced he has a draft resolution pertaining to an update of the Ulster Tomorrow project.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 3-27-15

**Laws and Rules,
Governmental
Services Committee**

Mar. 16, 2015, 6:09 – 7:33 PM

Committee Members: **Richard A. Parete, Chairman, Kevin A. Roberts, Deputy Chairman, David B. Donaldson, Kenneth J. Ronk, Manna Jo Greene**

Also Present: **Legislators John Parete, Chairman, Lynn Archer, Tracey Bartels, and Peter Loughran,**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Richard Parete.

Minutes from February 10, 2015 meeting approved.

Resolutions for March 17, 2015

Resolution No. 453 of 2014 - Establishing A Policy For The Attendance Of Conferences And Educational Training By Officers And Employees Of Ulster County. No action.

Resolution No. 37 - Amending The Rules Of Order Of The Ulster County Legislature. Approved, as amended.

Resolution No. 110 - Amending The Rules Of Order Of The Ulster County Legislature Regarding Voting In Committee By Ex-Officio Committee Members. Not approved, following a discussion by Legislator Loughran supporting the resolution and his concern about too much power ex-officio.

Resolution No. 111 - Appointing Members to the Periodic Compensation Review Committee. Approved.

Resolution No. 112 - Re-Appointing Vice Chairman David B. Donaldson As The Ulster County Legislature's Member To Serve On The County Jury Board. Approved.

Resolution No. 129 - Adopting Proposed Local Law No. 12 of 2014, A Local Law Regulating The Use Of Polystyrene Foam Disposable Food Service Ware By Food Service Establishments In Ulster County.

Proposed Local Law No. 12 of 2014, A Local Law Regulating The Use Of Polystyrene Foam Disposable Food Service Ware By Food Service Establishments In Ulster County. Approved.

Resolution No. 130 - Adopting Proposed Local Law No. 16 of 2014, A Local Law Establishing An Automatic Re-Canvassing Procedure In And For The County Of Ulster, State Of New York.

Proposed Local Law No. 16 of 2014, A Local Law Establishing An Automatic Re-Canvassing Procedure In And For The County Of Ulster, State Of New York. Approved, following a discussion led by Legislator Bartels regarding honoring voter intent.

Following the resolutions agenda, Legislators Greene and Ronk discussed a possible Charter revision regarding staggered terms, term length, etc. A rules meeting is planned for April.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 3-27-15