



Commentator

FEBRUARY 2014

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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CALENDAR		
2014		
FEBRUARY		
3	Mon 10 – 2	LWVNYS Advocacy Training Day in Albany Details at www.lwvny.org . Carpooling encouraged. Register with LWVNYS or Dare Thompson (845-236-3074, darethompson@gmail.com).
4	Tues. 7:15 PM	LWV MHR Board Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989
6	Thurs. 10:30 AM	Resource Development Committee Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989
7	Fri. 10:00 AM	Shared Services Study Committee , home of Ellie Charwat, 7 Creek Bend Road, Poughkeepsie, 845-462-7061, echarwat@yahoo.com Guest: Cynthia Ruiz , Dutchess County Transit Administrator
11	Tues. 1:30 – 3 pm	Meeting of the study group for the update of the LWVUS position on AGRICULTURE . Home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989. (See article elsewhere in this newsletter.)
11	Tues. 5:30 PM	LWV Materials Management (Solid Waste) Study Committee , Gateway Diner Rt 9W just north of the Mid-Hudson Bridge, Highland. For info or to confirm: Cindy Lanzetta, 845-236-7288 or packback56@yahoo.com
15	Sat. 10:30 AM	Frustrated with government and just want to “throw the bums out”? Not so fast! Hear Richard Born of Vassar College explain why most academics oppose TERM LIMITS . Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting, 249 Hooker Ave. (at Whittier, just west of Grand), Poughkeepsie. Questions? 845-340-2003.
17	Mon. 8:30 - 9 AM	Listen to LWV members on Kingston Community Radio on WGHQ, AM 920. Go to www.mykcr.org to listen to it on your computer. Call 845-331-1004 to ask a question or make a comment. We are guests every 3 rd Monday of the month from 8:30 – 9 pm.
MARCH		
1	Sat. 10 – 4	Regional Meeting of local LWVs in Albany at McKnownville Church, 1565 Western Ave., Albany – at end of Northway and Exit 24 of Thruway. Learn from state LWV and your fellow local leagues about Vote 411, other Voter Service work, Membership and Leadership Development, Fundraising, Being More Visible, Advocacy. Carpooling and registration: darethompson@gmail.com or 845-340-2003

PREZ SEZ...

You'll see from this Commentator that we are very busy with the LWVUS update of our national position on Agriculture, and we encourage you to jump in and participate as your time allows.

The deadline for reaching consensus is April 18 so we are focusing most of our committee work on Agriculture, but just to get you thinking ahead to our next two study topics, both statewide, we will have a meeting on Ballot Access with our Ulster County Election Commissioners soon (after having to cancel such a meeting due to snow) and we are planning a meeting on term limits on February 15. Let us know if these events provoke you to pursue these issues further.

Meanwhile we have good study and action groups going on Materials Management (aka Solid Waste) and - in Dutchess - on Shared Services. The MM committee is pursuing product stewardship, particularly with paint, and the next meeting on the Shared Services Committee, on Feb. 7, will feature a visit from Cynthia Ruiz, the Dutchess County transit administrator.

Most League members find that the informal and interesting discussion and the friendships that develop in study groups are what "makes" the League for them, so give them a try.

Also please consider joining in a car ride to Albany on Feb. 3 (Advocacy) or March 1 (Voter Service and general League training). These are great learning opportunities but they are also a lot of fun. See details elsewhere.

I hope to see you at any of the above! And don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

Dave

(darethompson@gmail.com, 845-236-3074)

**MEMBERSHIP
NEWS**

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

**PROGRAM
NEWS****OPPORTUNITIES IN ALBANY**

A day spent with the state LWV folks is always an adventure.

Monday, **February 3**, 10 am - 2 pm

ADVOCACY TRAINING DAY (formerly called Lobby Day)

Only \$10, which includes lunch!

Learn more about the League's positions and what we expect for action this legislative session. LWVNYS staff, Barbara Bartoletti (our unpaid lobbyist), and the state League issue specialists will present information on the current status of legislation in their areas. Attendees will be able to observe either the Senate or Assembly from the Galleries and attend committee meetings scheduled for that day. If members wish, they can schedule meetings with their own

legislators.

Notify us **IMMEDIATELY if you'd like to go. We need to register you!**

Contact Dare at darethompson@gmail.com or 845-236-3074.

Saturday, **March 1**, 10 am - 4 pm

REGIONAL MEETING

Join League members from throughout the region and attend a variety of helpful workshops. (Some run concurrently and you'll have to choose.)

Vote 411 (introduction): Where do I start?

Membership: Attracting and retaining members doesn't "just happen"!

Leadership: League leaders are often made, not born. Are we building our future

Lunch (provided): Networking with League members and share your current local activities and efforts

Vote 411 (experienced): Gripes, Grins & Going Forward

Advocacy and Issues: What's going on in the state legislature now? What issues are hot in *your* community? Share advocacy tips.

Fundraising: Minimal Pain, Maximum Gain

Visibility: Are you a Player? Increase your connections with media, politicians, other groups, and "the Public"

Candidate Forums: Policies, Guidelines and Staying Out of Trouble

We need to REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 21 and we want lots of us there. Let us know if you're interested. Contact Dare Thompson (darethompson@gmail.com) or call the League phone at **845-340-2003** for more information, to register, or to join a carpool.

See www.lwvny.org for information about three regional meetings elsewhere in the state if another time and place would work better for you. This one is closest and the content is more or less the same at each location.

VOTER SERVICE

**Presidential
Commission on
Election
Administration,
Final Report,
January 22, 2014**

Judging from the comments of LWVUS President, Elisabeth MacNamara, and the editorial board of the New York Times, this bi-partisan commission accomplished the impossible. The New York Times hailed it a superb report that could be summarized in one quick sentence: There are many ways to make voting easier in America. President MacNamara expressed her satisfaction in her statement, "Whatever skepticism the League articulated when the commission was formed, was all but swept away by the comprehensive nature of the report and its recommendations."

The League had submitted a five-point reform agenda to the Commission. Much of this agenda was included. Key recommendations were early voting,

online registration, better technology, and more training for poll workers. As stated in the Times editorial piece, the most important idea in the report, endorsed by members of both parties on the panel, is that these are national problems requiring a national solution.

To read the Commission's full report go to: <http://www.supportthevoter.gov/>

Jean McGarry

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.

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

LWVNY Term Limits Study

"Just Throw the Bums Out!""??

Tempting though it may be to take a big broom to our legislature by limiting how long people can serve, how would that actually be done and what might the consequences be?

In preparation for our state TERM LIMITS study, we are holding a meeting and discussion on **Saturday, February 15 at 10:30 AM** at the **Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting House** at 249 Hooker Ave., Poughkeepsie.

Richard Born of Vassar College's Political Science Dept. will explain why most academics oppose term limits as a solution to ineffective legislatures. Congressional elections are Professor Born's particular area of interest and his most recent work analyzes the consequences of the growing partisan homogeneity of the U.S. House districts.

As always with League audiences, we expect a lively Q & A!

Note: the League currently has positions at the state and national level against term limits but many local leagues suggested we look at the state position again, so we will be reaching consensus on that topic later this year or in early 2015.

LWVUS Agriculture Update Study

The Mid-Hudson League is participating in a national LWV study to update the League position on Agriculture that includes the Economic Health of the Agriculture sector, Animal Management, Research and Development, Food Safety and Food Labeling. We have divided the work among several sub-committees which have met and the discussions have been lively and interesting.

We are preparing for a final "consensus meeting" to be held in April where our work will help us all decide as a body how to answer questions such as those detailed below. To most of them we will need to answer "Yes," "No" or "No Consensus." We have begun the discussion and you are encouraged to join in one or all of these discussions.

The next full meeting was on **Tuesday, January 28 at 1:00 at the Esopus Library in Port Ewen**. The following full meeting will be on **Tuesday, February**

11 at 1:30 PM at Shirley Kobran's home in Lake Katrine. Check with Shirley at [845-382-6989](tel:845-382-6989). To see more about the study, who's managing it at the national level, and a long list of resources you can start reviewing, click on this link: <http://lwv.org/member-resources/agriculture-update>

1. The Economic Health of the agriculture sector is of paramount important to all. We all eat. Who should government financial support be directed to? We have learned that the only farms that as a group produce a positive net income for the farmers are the commercial farms, but have also noted that this group is really a collection of large family farms and industrial agricultural interests. Deciding who should get Agricultural Subsidies is difficult. Disaster assistance and crop insurance subsidies help smooth over times of uncontrollable bad weather conditions and prevent bankruptcy. Should farms that supply local and regional markets get help? Should the implementation of best management practices be subsidized? Should commodity crop programs (corn, soybeans, sugar, cotton, and wheat) continue? What about livestock, dairy, fruits, vegetables, nuts, organic, hydroponic and urban farms? Sherret Chase, Helen Chase, Vic Melville, and Margaret Sellers are participating. **To join in, call 845-340-2003 for the next meeting time and place.**

2. Which approaches to Animal Management should government achieve? Collection and use of data about regulated animal feeding operations or aquaculture operations? Apply and enforce clean air and clean water regulations? Jean McGarry and Dare Thompson are participating. **To join in, call Jean at 845-336-6622 about the meeting.**

3. Which approaches to Research & Development should the government fund or accomplish? Basic research is important because it is unlikely that other entities will support research that is not likely to show an immediate profit. Research on the impacts of new technologies is important to protect people and must be done in a way that is fair and honest. Are all new technologies troubling? Are all genetically modified foods "bad?" -- without some, we would have to use more pesticides and would have great difficulty feeding the world. Seed banking will probably not continue without government support. It saves old varieties and now they can be used to increase genetic diversity. How do we respect intellectual property rights? Who should support studies on the long-term effects of new crops, products and processes? Who should support the development of new practices and technologies to promote conservation for all types of farms? Margaret Sellers, Vic Melville, Anne Needham, Susan Holland, Sherret Chase and Helen Chase are participating. Join us. **Call 845-340-2003 for the next meeting time and place.**

4. With regard to Food Safety, which approaches should the government perform or fund? Clarifying and enforcing pre-market requirements for new foods and food additives developed using any *new* technology? Requiring developers to monitor all food products developed using any new technology after releasing it to the market, government or independent third parties? Who should assess new products? Monitoring of pharmaceutical applications in animals for human health impacts and/or limit use of antibiotics in animals?

Promote crop management practices that decrease dependence on pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers? Increase funding for regulatory agencies? How sufficient is current **Food Labeling** with regard to nutrition facts, consumer education, allergen labeling, health and ingredient claims that consumers can understand? Should health and safety marketing terms such as immunity support, humane, pasture raised, natural, etc be better defined? Should the use of images and other sensory advertising be regulated? Should marketing claims match labels? Should food developed by new technologies be labeled as such? Should animal product labeling reflect their feed? If no new technologies are involved, should that be labeled? Shirley Kobran, Dorothy Winrow, Anne Needham and Margaret Sellers are participating. Join us. **Call Shirley at 845-382-6989 for the next meeting time and place.**

Margaret Sellers (mcsellers@aol.com)

**Materials
Management
Committee
(Solid Waste)**

The Committee met on January 14th at the Gateway Diner in Highland. A lot of the discussion centered on the Committee's interest in promoting product stewardship legislation. This means that producers would not only provide products for sale, but also take back unused products for reuse or recycling.

On January 16th, members of our Committee met with the Deputy Commissioner of Dutchess County Solid Waste, Lindsay Carille. We talked about the successes and challenges of her new position and the work of Material Management in Dutchess County. Their new website is up and full of lots of good information on recycling: www.Dutchessny.gov/solidwaste

Ms. Carille hopes 2014 will bring the help of a part-time recycling coordinator to help with County projects to increase recycling – especially in schools. A summary of our meeting can be found elsewhere in this Commentator and on our Committee Information Page: http://lwvmidhudson.org/Action_Study.html

Our next meeting will be on Tues., Feb. 11, 5:30 pm, at the Gateway Diner in Highland.

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! We especially need observers for both the Ulster and Dutchess County legislatures. Observers go to meetings on subjects that interest them, often get to know the legislators, and report objectively to the Commentator monthly. While county meetings are our priority, you may observe

your town or city board meetings if 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 &
Environment
Committee**

Date: Jan. 22, 2014 Start Time: 6:18 p.m. Adjourn Time: 7:02 p.m.

Chairman Tracey Bartels called the meeting to order, followed by a welcome, introductions, and overview of the committee.

Present: Tracey A. Bartels, Chairman; Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr., Deputy Chairman; Manna Jo Greene; Richard Parete and Mary Wawro

Energy and Environment: To set policy pertaining to the Department of Environment, Environmental Management Council, Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Forest Practice Board, and Soil and Water Conservation District, including the protection of water ways and the County's recycling efforts. To set policy and review contracts pertaining to but not limited to the activities of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency.

Proposed Resolution No. 30, reappointing members to the Soil and Water Conservation District Board was discussed. No action was taken, pending future action.

Tim Rose, PE, Executive Director, Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA), discussed an overview of 2013 operations and an outlook for 2014. In 2013, revenues and expenses were acceptable. The debt service was paid and the rates were OK, with an avoided net service fee this year. He discussed factors of the debt service: hauling bids, disposal bids, tipping fees. The NYS controller wants reserves of 15% and the agency is working toward that objective. Flow Control may help.

Legislator Ken Wishnick (not a member of the committee) asked why the fuel surcharge is not lower: discussed. There is now interest of small haulers.

Legislator Manna Jo Greene asked about the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) of the UCRRA and if it's available. Mr. Rose commented the SWMP (draft) is to be reviewed first by the DEC for their comments - as requested (directed) by the DEC, and thereafter made available to the public, including the committee. Mr. Rose objected to releasing the draft to the committee at this time as that would cause confusion and additional work by the UCRRA staff to handle concurrent comments and updates. The document was written by UCRRA staff (1), so additional staff would be needed to handle the additional workload.

Krista Barringer, Deputy Clerk, confirmed a copy of the SWMP draft is in the legislature. Mr. Bartels will make it available to the committee. Mr. Rose wants a "hold" on the document and Ms. Greene wants it just for "reading" now. Legislator Hector Rodriguez (not a member of the committee) commented the committee now has more expertise.

Ms. Greene discussed a Climate Smart proposed resolution and the task force pledge that may have been taken - to be confirmed. Prospective appointees are

to be contacted. Further discussion and action is planned.

The outstanding action on Environmental Management Council Term Limits and appointments is to be on the agenda of the next meeting.

UCRRA appointments will come to the committee.

Smart meters are planned for a continued discussion.

Ms. Greene opened a discussion on energy improvement corporations, based upon activity in Westchester. A document is to be circulated in the committee and a guest speaker may be invited to address the committee.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer Corp, 1/24/14

UC Board of Health

The January 13, 2014 meeting of the UC Board of Health was convened by President, Dr. Marc Tack at 6:36 and adjourned at 7:30.

Present: Tack, Woodley, Graham, Kelly Absent: Delma

Others Present: Deputy Commissioner/Patient Services Director Nareida Veytia, Environmental Director Shelley Mertens, Dr. Douglas Heller, Medical Examiner, Amy McCracken, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Katrina Kouhout, Secretary to the Commissioner

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes for October and November, 2013.

Under New Business the Board addressed the following topics:

-Schedule of meetings: the Board approved the schedule of meetings to be held at the UC Golden Hill Office Building, Rooms 300 and 303, 2nd Monday of each month for 2014 with 2 changes: February's meeting to be held in the Administrative Offices of the building and the October meeting to be held on October 6, the first Monday as the 2nd Monday is Columbus Day, a holiday.

-Based on the material distributed and the discussion that followed, there is apparently a group of people locally who are concerned about the impact on health that may result from the use of Smart Meters, the latter being devices which would be installed by Central Hudson. There has been contact with the NYS DOH by Ms. Merterns, who was advised that the state DOH would follow the regulations established by the FCC with regards to the use of Smart Meters. The Board determined to advise the group seeking to speak at a Board meeting that it could; that time would be allotted with a specific amount of time allotted to each person within that total; that there would be no dialogue as such from the Board itself at that time. Material on the topic will be obtained from the state ahead of time for the board's use and preparation.

-Dr. Heller, the UC Medical Examiner, reviewed the final report for 2013:

-311 calls were received;

-41 site visits made;

-97 autopsies;

-11 suicides;

- 7 motor vehicle incidents; and

- 2 homicides.

-DC/Patient Services Director provided the Commissioner's report in Dr. Smith's absence:

- the relocation date for the Health Department to the Golden Hill Office Building of January 30 is on schedule;

- the Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Update has been submitted to the state and is just waiting for state approval;

- the update on the mass gathering event: meetings continue to take place, most recently with Art Synder, Director UC Emergency Planning, Dennis Doyle with regards to transportation; on January 14 a meeting will be held to review the progress made so far (the event date for which the request has been made is in July 2014 in Saugerties) to ensure that all the necessary requirements for safety, health related needs, etc. are in order. The fees to be charged are being worked on; the permit application form to be used has apparently been locally approved. The county attorneys are involved in the process and have been right along. There was also comment about the potential number of attendees: apparently there has been an estimate of 20,000; but the company itself has suggested 32,500.

There has been considerable time, effort, concern apparently spent on this particular event and matters associated with it. From the discussion it appears that this procedure will continue in order to ensure that every part of the process is carefully addressed, evaluated and in order before final approval is granted.

- Flu Vaccination Summary and Influenza Surveillance Report: The schedule for the clinics where flu and pneumonia shots were given was distributed. This also had the number of people who received both types of vaccinations. The local DOH will continue to provide such shots through March. It was further noted that there are other locales where people are receiving such vaccinations, i.e., local pharmacies. The NYSDOH receives the figures which are then made available to the local DOH.

As to the Surveillance Report. There were two parts: for the week ending November 30, 2013 and for the week ending January 4, 2014. These reports are from the NYSDOH. The flu activity level is still widespread statewide; people are still being hospitalized with flu. There were no pediatric deaths from the flu per the report ending for the week of January 4, 2014.

- A sheet was distributed referencing the instance of October 23, 2013 when Governor Cuomo signed into law a new section 2171 of the public health law that requires the offering of a hepatitis C screening test to every individual born between 1945 and 1965.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

**UC Association of
Town Supervisors
and Mayors**

The January 21, 2014 meeting of the UC Association of T/Supervisors was convened at 8:40 by President, Supervisor Carl Chipman of T/Rochester and adjourned at 9:57.

Twelve of the 20 towns were represented: Denning, Hardenburgh, T/Kingston, Marbletown, New Paltz, Olive, Plattekill, Rochester, Rosendale, Shawangunk, Ulster, and Wawarsing.

In the absence of County Executive Hein and UC Legislature Chairman Parete, UC Comptroller Elliott Auerbach presented a report dealing with wholly-exempt properties in Ulster County. All real property in NYS is subject to taxation unless explicitly exempt by law. More specifically the report deals with those properties wholly exempt from being taxed. It includes not just religious entities but also educational, charitable and government entities.

Each of the towns in Ulster County, the villages and the city of Kingston are included in the report. There are over 2,000 properties in Ulster County which are wholly exempt from paying property taxes. The amount of revenue that is involved, which is not paid is over \$60 million dollars. Mr. Auerbach suggested that the towns review their individual situations to ensure that the status and procedures are in order.

As Deputy County Chair James Maloney was present, Mr. Chipman asked if he had any comments to make. Mr. Maloney noted that Mr. Parete had been elected Chairman of the County Legislature; that he had said he would do what is best for Ulster County. Further, he noted that in order for the sales tax legislation to go into effect as of February 1, there were certain matters that had to be taken care of: 9 PM meeting on Wednesday, 1-22 to deal with the details; the governor had to sign in Albany (he would not be back in Albany until 8:30 PM Wednesday) and then the signed response from Ulster County had to be in Albany by Thursday at 10 AM.

Next Mr. Chipman advised the members that the UC Legislature would be addressing a memorializing resolution on January 30 regarding the closing of the Social Security office located in the T/Ulster. He read the resolution to be considered to the group: which stressed the local concerns about this closing. The supervisors were very supportive of this resolution and proceeded to pass a resolution of its own indicating its concerns and support of the Legislature's resolution. Mr. Chipman encouraged the members to discuss this matter with their individual town boards and encourage them to pass their own supportive measures.

There was considerable comment/discussion dealing with the construction of the student/faculty housing that the local IDA is sponsoring.

Due to not having the November meeting minutes available, voting on such will be taken up at the February meeting.

Officers for 2014 were elected:

Carl Chipman, President, Rochester

Michael Warren, First Vice-President, Marbletown

Joseph Croce, Second Vice-President, Plattekill

James Quigley, Treasurer, Ulster

The group passed a motion made by T/Hardenburgh Supervisor Fairbairn to waive dues for 2014 given that the Association has over \$7000 plus in its treasury.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 11, 2014 at 8:30 AM.

The last item involved extensive discussion by the group, initiated by New Paltz T/ Supervisor, Susan Zimet, on property taxes and the impact of Governor Cuomo's budget on the towns. The group decided to create a sub-committee of the group (Supervisor Zimet to Chair) to review this matter. Mr. Chipman will also work with the group. Supervisor Zimet indicated she will contact Supervisors Zatz and Hansut to consider possible participation.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp