



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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Commentator

May 2017

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>	
May		
1		Labor Day
2	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.
11	4:00-6:00 PM	Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's, 167 Apple Hill Rd, Hurley, NY 12443.
23	1:45-3:30 PM	Book Club Meeting Club at Enzo's Pizzeria, Boices Lane, Lake Katrine. We will be discussing <i>Democracy in America</i> by Alexis de Tocqueville.
24	5:30 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

On April 21 and 22 I attended the "Women in Politics" event co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters. Besides various members from New York State, I was privileged to meet Dr. Wylecia Wiggs Harris, the Chief Executive Officer of the LWVUS, who had travelled from Maryland to attend. Dr. Harris holds a Ph. D. in organizational development. Her questions over dinner to myself and other League members showed a keen interest in and understanding of the issues we deal with as we try to run our organizations properly, maintain our online presence, perform Vote 411 and respond in a timely manner to issues of the day.

Liz Benjamin of "Capital Tonight" moderated a lively and honest session in which 4 women elected officials shared how they decided to run for office and what it is like now that they have been elected. Kathy Sheehan is the Mayor of Albany, Kathleen Jimino is Rensselaer County Executive, Christine Quinn is Speaker of the New York City Council and Marisol Alcantara is State Senator for District 31. This was my favorite event. They were articulate, competent, funny, honest, and Liz asked such good questions.

But what did I learn? That the journey to equality is long and slow. It was 69 years from Seneca Falls until the referendum that gave women the right to vote in New York State in 1917. It took another 12 years to send the first New York woman (Ruth Pratt) to Congress and 52 years from 1917 to send the first black woman (Shirley Chisholm) to Congress. Currently only 5 states have a woman governor. Many many policies that would make life more equitable for women are still only a dream in the LWV policy positions.

So we march on with arms linked, on the shoulders of those who came before us, creating a more equitable world for our daughters and granddaughters.

Jolanda Jansen

VOTER SERVICE

What Voter Service has done and What We're Doing

Locally, our Electoral Reform committee, headed by Gai Galitzine, held its organizational meeting on April 4th. They agreed to share information on election related bills in the NYS Legislature with recently formed local activist groups. Other action planned is to interview local Board of Elections and of course, to continue lobbying members of the NYS Assembly and Senate. A follow-up meeting will be in May.

READ ON

League Lobby Day

Dare Thompson, Kathy OConnor, and Jean McGarry participated in League Lobby Day , April 25, and visited the offices of Assemblyman Cahill, Senator Amedore and Senator Serino to promote our proposals for election law reform listed in the chart below. We were also fortunate to be able to show our support for voter reform at a press conference and rally. (See video <https://www.facebook.com/LWVNYS/videos/10154760247686185/>) Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins and the bill's sponsor for early voting, Assemblyman Kavanagh, along with other members, spoke passionately about the need for changing our restrictive voting laws in New York State to raise voter turnout. The vote on early voting was scheduled to be on the agenda in the Assembly Election Law committee the following day.

Issue	Description	Bill Numbers
Early Voting	The League supports enacting early voting in New York State. Currently 37 states allow for some form of early voting. Early voting should be implemented in a manner that will allow equivalent access to the polls for all voters.	A.2064 (Kavanagh)/ 5.2950 (Stewart- Cousins) Allows for early voting for up to eight days before the general election.
Voter Registration	The League supports paperless forms of voter registration as a means of decreasing costs and increasing accuracy of the voter rolls. The League supports Election Day registration, (registering? and voting) on the same day, as a proven method of increasing voter participation. The League supports pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds to ensure that their voting participation is routine before they attend college or enter the workforce.	A.1070 (Kavanagh) / S.1661 (Carlucci) Allows for pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds. A.2090(Kavanagh)/S.2478 (Gianaris) Amends Constitution to remove requirement to complete voter registration 10 days before an election.
No-Excuse Absentee Voting	The League supports a constitutional amendment to allow for no-excuse absentee voting. Currently 27 states and the District of Columbia allow for no-excuse absentee voting.	

- Ballot Design**

 - The League supports improvements to ballot design that would include:
 - (1) A clear delineation between offices with a bold vertical bar between offices and a fine line between the candidates
 - (2) A larger font with an absolute minimum size
 - (3) Fill-in circles in black instead of gray.

- Single June Primary**

 - The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports legislation that would create a single combined congressional and state June primary date and would bring New York State into compliance with the Military Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

- Electronic Poll Books**

 - The League strongly supports replacing printed poll books with electronic poll books to eliminate time and resources spent producing paper poll books and updating voter information, and to speed up processing voters at the polls on Election Day.

A.3379 (Kavanagh)/S.1512 (Avella) Creates the Voter Friendly Ballot Act which would create a ballot layout that is easy for voters to read and use.

A.3052 (Cusick)/ 5.3562 (Stewart-Cousins)
Allows for the consolidation of state and congressional primaries to create a single June primary.

A.5547 (Cusick)/S.2788 (Akshar)
Authorizes counties to employ computer generated registration lists; updates the list of supplies to be delivered to poll sites.

Jean McGarry

Moderating Guidelines

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.*

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

Action

VOICES App

You can help us with our advocacy agenda by downloading our new app on your phone (iPhone or Android). Voices is a political advocacy app that shares action alerts from the League directly to your phone. These action alerts will allow you to quickly call, email, or tweet at your legislator with the touch of a button. The alert will provide you with a sample script, email, or tweet and give you the power to lobby on these issues quickly and easily. You can download the app to your smart phone or tablet by using this link: <https://tryvoices.com/lwvnys> or by searching "Voices: Political Advocacy" in the Apple App Store or Google Play on your cell phone. Please download the app so that you can help us take action as we move forward this session.

Sign making is happening and we are gearing up to be more visible in expressing our concerns to protect our progressive agenda. We believe we need to partner with other organizations who share our angst with the direction of the new administration in Washington. Education, Environment, Health Care, Equality for all, Transparency in Government, are all areas that need to be addressed so none are eroded or compromised. We welcome supporting and working with organizations who share our ideals. To a limited extent, we have started doing this but the league definitely needs to up the ante. Lest some members feel our local league may be going down the wrong path (what? action, not studies?), Dare Thompson, president of our State league, summarized some comments of Wylecia Wings Harris, CEO LWVUS. Wylecia recently spoke to 50 league members at the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill.

But while we end the first century of LWV history strong, she challenged us to start our next century even stronger. We have always been evolving, but as change picks up speed, we need to move beyond evolution to transformation. Many new members are younger and more action-oriented than current ones. We want to retain them and to prepare for the next generation of members. We also need to be sure that our relevance is evident to those outside the League. We need greater diversity in age, ethnicity, perspective.

Keeping in mind that we are a non-partisan organization that promotes policies, not individuals, that adhere to our legislative agenda, we welcome all members and organizations to join us in action.

Jean McGarry

**LWVMHR
Materials
Management
Committee**

The Committee did not meet in April, but we have several things to report.

Organics Summit

Jolanda Jansen and Kathy OConnor did attend the Organics Summit in Troy on March 28th. This event was sponsored by the New York State Association of the 3 "R's." What is an Organics Summit? It's a place where a plethora of folks get together and discuss their best efforts at transforming biodegradable material into useful

soil. It really was a fascinating day.

Our Committee member Sarah Womer gave a presentation on how her company "Zero to Go" goes about this task. She has a thriving company in Beacon, by which her staff picks up food scraps from both residences and business. This material is then picked up and taken to the compost facility at the Ulster County Resource and Recovery Agency in Kingston by a trucker called Empire Zero. I personally found the fellow from Empire Zero (Phil Hollway) fascinating. His presentation followed several haulers who showcased their \$65,000 plus trucks. Phil's is a simple, rather large pick-up truck, on which he has fashioned a way of securing and being able to tip the material, by means of a flap on his truck. I believe he designed and built the flap mechanism himself. His dedication to returning food scraps to the land, clearly matched Sarah's zeal.

To get a better idea of the many dedicated presenters at this event, check out the Facebook page that Jolanda created on the spot that morning: [facebook.com/2017OrganicsSummit](https://www.facebook.com/2017OrganicsSummit). UCSWMIC

The report that the Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission has been working on for approximately two years, will soon be previewed to the UCRRA before it is presented to the County legislature. It is amazing how much work the dedicated people on this Commission have put into this effort. Can't wait to see the data they've collected and their recommendations on how Ulster County should prepare itself for the demands of dealing with the disposition of solid waste materials in the future.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 2nd, at 5:30 p.m., at the Main Course Restaurant in New Paltz.

Be Earthwise

(submitted by Kathy O'Connor)

Lobby Day

At Lobby Training Day April 25th, Dare Thompson, Jean McGarry, and I visited four Assemblymembers' offices where we included in our discussion, in addition to voting reform issues, the topic of Paint Stewardship legislation. This topic has been near and dear to our Materials Management Committee for quite a few years now.

At Steve Englebright's office, we were greeted by a rather dour young woman, whose visage darkened when, of the two Paint Stewardship bills currently in the Environmental Conservation Committee chaired by Englebright, we informed her that we preferred the Stirpe bill (A01038) rather than the one proposed by Peoples-Stokes (A-2242). We understood that we had not made a previous appointment, so were gracious about being hastily escorted out of the office.

We were received much more warmly by an intern in Assemblymembers Crystal Peoples-Stokes office. Geraldine was not familiar with the Paint Stewardship bill, but she agreeably took detailed notes about our inquiry. We really were looking for this Assemblymembers's reasoning, as to why she submitted this alternate bill to that of Stirpe's. Turns out, Geraldine is a student at SUNY New Paltz and is well acquainted with Lisa Mitten, Manager of Sustainability at SUNY NP and member of the Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission. Our mutual enthusiasm for Ms. Mitten's activities was clearly evident.

In Assemblymembers Al Stirpe's office, we spoke with Drew Davis, Legislative Coordinator for Mr. Stirpe. The Assemblyman, unfortunately, has been out of the office with a serious health challenge, but is expected to return soon. Mr. Davis told us that the Environmental Conservation Committee was against imposing a charge on consumers, who would have the benefit of being able to return their leftover paint to the retailer where they had purchased the paint. Therefore, a member of their Committee (the ECC), Crystal Peoples-Stokes, proposed an alternate Paint Stewardship bill. Drew advised us that if we wanted to get our voices heard on this issue, we should contact the House Speaker.

And last, we spoke to Assemblymembers Kevin Cahill about this issue. Kevin actually is a co-sponsor on the Stirpe bill. While he was in a serious rush to get to another commitment, he took the time to reiterate his support of the Stirpe bill, and said he would speak to Stirpe when Stirpe returned to the office following his health challenge.

(submitted by Kathy O'Connor)

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Laws and Rules, Governmental Services Committee

Laws and Rules, Governmental Services Committee
4/17/2017

Present: all Committee Members and several observers, attorneys and other interested parties

There were 8 resolutions discussed, several postponed, some that inspired conversation, and one that generated lively discussion.

Highlights were as follows:

- Resolution No. 448- Setting a public hearing on proposed Local Law No. 18, a Local Law Prohibiting Discrimination On the Basis Of Gender Identity At Places Of Public Accommodation, Resort Or Amusement. Discussion included the point that there is already a system of justice in place (federal and state) and that it is possible that this additional law may interfere with current enforcement of the law. Those 'of counsel' present stated that this law does not appear to be permissible anyway. The purpose of the law is educational in nature and if it is passed it will not necessarily stop the behaviors. Schools are already covered by other regulations and administrators may object to being told what to do by the county legislature. It was also pointed out that this committee would like to see an annual report of the details of enforcement and problems encountered if the law is passed. The vote was even at 4-4, which resulted in failure to pass.

- Resolution No. 95- Setting a Public Hearing On Proposed Local No. 1 Prohibiting The Possession, Distribution, Or Use Of Tobacco Products By A Minor In Ulster County. Most legislators agreed with the concept, though one made an objection stating that underage people would not even be able to help shoppers load their cars with tobacco products in the bags. There was a question of whether or not the County Sheriff is behind this law, as they would be charged with enforcement and another legislator stated that he would reach out to see if the Sheriff will support it. It was also noted that this law would only effectively apply to 16- and 17-year olds who will be prosecuted in justice court and, for ages 15 and younger, there could be no prosecution at all, except in family court, which is already stretched for resources. Since the sponsor of the measure was not able to be present, this resolution was postponed for one month.

- Resolution No. 96- Setting a Public Hearing On Proposed Local Law Amending The Ulster County Charter and Administrative Code To Clarify Budget Modification After Adoption. The conversation for this item centered around whether or not a public referendum or special election is required for the change. The purpose of the law is to stop the county executive from making changes to payroll lines in the county budget as this process was used more than ten times last year to make changes without input from the legislature. It was noted that this process was present before the institution of the County Charter. For a referendum, the measure would have to be approved by June or July, including a public hearing and a vote of the general legislature. Two legislators agreed to work on the language and will bring it to the next meeting.

- Resolution No. 140- Setting A Public Hearing On Proposed Local Law No. 3 Exempting From Taxation Real Property Improved Pursuant To the Federal Americans With Disabilities Act Of 1990. This law grants a tax break for businesses who make improvements to their property in order to make it more accessible. The 50% incentive applies only to the actual cost of the improvement and remains in effect for ten years, reducing by 5% every year until it zeros out. It was thought that this might make it more attractive for smaller businesses ('mom & pops', medical offices and other small businesses) to make modifications. The resolution passed.

- Resolution No. 141- Requesting The NYS Legislature Introduce Home Rule Legislation Amending General Municipal Law To Authorize a Permissive Referendum for Ulster County's Independent Redistricting Plan. The gist of this resolution is that the Legislature wants the authority to approve or deny the Redistricting Committee's findings. This measure was postponed.

- Resolution No. 142- Appointing And Reappointing Members To The Periodic Compensation Review Committee. It was noted that the Legislature has never accepted the results of the committee's study.

Observer's Opinion- This meeting was short and sweet, with none of the personal strife present at the last one. As a League member, I intend to keep a particular eye on any proposed changes to the Charter to make sure that they will benefit the citizens of the county and do not shift the governmental balance as a primary focus. I also note that changes should be considered in light of their influence in the future, when personnel and socio-economic issues change.

Cynthia Bell

Legislative Public Health and Social Services Committee

The April 3, 2017 meeting of the Legislative Public Health and Social Services Committee meeting was convened at 6:03 and adjourned at 7:30 by Chairman, Legislator Craig Lopez.

Present: Lopez, Allen, Belfiglio

Absent: Heppner, Roberts

Other Attendees: Deputy County Executive Ken Crannell, Nettie Tomshaw, Secretary to the Committee, Paul Fowler, advocate

Following the call to order, the committee addressed and approved the January, 2016 meeting minutes.

Resolution #95: This resolution dealt with setting a public hearing date on proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2017

on the use of tobacco products by a minor in Ulster County. The public hearing would be held Tuesday, May 9, 2017 at 6 PM.

A sponsor of the law, T.J. Briggs, commented on this matter: The questions raised in March have been answered. Lawyers have all evaluated the material as presented and have indicated that the language presented is acceptable. By law one must be 18 to buy tobacco in NY state. Also can't sell such tobacco to anyone under 18. The public hearing on the Local Law 1 of 2017 dealing with this subject would add penalties to any minor who is found guilty of violating this article: fine not to exceed \$50 for each offense or complete 10 hours of community service for each offense, or both. An alternative to both, the minor may participate in a tobacco education program where available, but no longer than 60 days from the date of conviction. The Ulster County Sheriff's Department will enforce this article.

Committee passed the resolution.

Resolution #148: This resolution deals with a contract that Ulster County will enter into with Westchester Medical Center for professional services dealing with forensic pathology services from May 1, 2017 to April 30, 2018 in the amount of \$432,000.00 which is 100% county funding.

The contract for such services occurs as a result of changes that took place in the: Ulster County Medical Examiner's office starting in the summer of 2016. All the services previously provided individually have been rolled into one contract to cover all services in this contract with Westchester Medical Center. It is projected that 150 cases will be handled by a forensic pathologist; the costs cover autopsy supplies, lab services, morgue storage.

Committee passed the resolution.

After addressing the first two resolutions the committee listened to a presentation by Paul Fowler, a public advocate. He came with a friend, Gail Ferris, who has serious medical problems, needed oral surgery and was not able to secure insurance which could cover the costs. For some time Mr. Fowler has advocated for her. It appears that she now has insurance but has costs to pay for regardless, and is scheduled for dental treatment soon.

The question he raised was what can be done for those in Ulster County who have the same type of problem. According to what he said, there are no dentists in UC who accept Medicaid. Apparently, Medicare does not cover dental costs.

One suggestion made during the discussion was to have an advocate for those having such problems obtaining medical services...A Medical Family Advocate. Another suggestion was to contact the Resource Center for Accessible Living located at 727 Ulster Avenue in Kingston for assistance in this type of situation

Resolution #177 was then addressed. This resolution dealt with opposing a full repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without a comparable and immediate replacement plan that is read for implementation.

The resolution was offered by Legislator Chris Allen, Deputy Chairman of the Public Health and Social Services Committee.

The resolution was very extensive. Legislator Allen proposed it as he felt that the resolution #135, previously offered by Legislator Heppner in March was not specific enough, and Allen indicated that #177 was more specific as it addressed those provisions of the ACA which were working well such as: not denying insurance to those with pre-existing conditions, allowing those 26 and younger to remain on parents insurance; leaving the funding of Medicaid as is, not allowing insurance companies to charge older Americans more than 300% more for insurance premiums than what younger insured are charged, maintaining some for of addiction treatment services available to insurance customers, or defunding any services that cover the health and safety of US citizens.

There was a very lengthy discussion that the committee members engaged in. While there were amendments to the resolution suggested as well as suggestions regarding how to approach the matter differently, the committee voted against keeping the reference to providers of reproductive services; this was followed by further discussion and the committee voted against postponing a vote on the resolution, followed by further discussion and the third vote against the resolution as presented.

There was no further business brought before the committee

Lee Cane, Observer Corp