



Commentator

NOVEMBER 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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2014		CALENDAR
WE WELCOME THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT ALL EVENTS! NO CHARGE!		
OCTOBER		
31	Fri. 10:30AM	SHARED SERVICES study group, home of Ellie Charwat, 7 Creek Bend Road, Poughkeepsie. 845-462-7061
NOVEMBER		
4	Tuesday 6AM-9PM	ELECTION DAY – Don't forget to vote - and to turn over the ballot for the 3 proposals!
4	Tues. 10:30AM	Study group meeting on the TERM LIMITS study. Location TBD. Contact info@lwvmidhudson.org or 845-340-2003 .
6	Thurs. 1:00PM	Resource Development Committee – location TBD. Contact info@lwvmidhudson.org or 845-340-2003 .
11	Tues. 7:15PM	LWV MHR BOARD Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989. All welcome!
13	Thurs. 7:00AM	Bus pick-up at New Paltz exit for those going to the United Nations . \$155 for bus, tour, expert briefings, and lunch in the Delegates Dining Room.
15	Sat. 10:30AM	De-briefing discussion with those who went to the League's UN Day on Nov. 13. Gateway Diner, 9W Highland, just north of Mid-Hudson Bridge (across from BK). Topic: WATER issues around the world.
19	Wed. 5 pm	Book Discussion on Barbara Ehrenreich's classic Nickel and Dime about low-wage jobs. Enzos Ristorante & Pizza, 207 Boices Lane at Enterprise Ave. Call Enzo's at 845-383-3696 for directions. For more about the book, see https://www.nytimes.com/books/first/e/ehrenreich-01nickel.html
27	Thursday	
DECEMBER		
2	Tues. 7:15PM	LWV MHR BOARD Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989. All welcome!
6	Sat. 10-Noon	CONSENSUS Meeting on BALLOT ACCESS study. Location TBD.

PREZ SEZ...

Election Day is almost here, and I hope you're getting ready! I've been doing some homework myself and confess to have just now discovered this very helpful site on judicial races: www.nycourts.gov/vote Judicial races don't get as much publicity as legislative ones and it's easy to be surprised in the voting booth.

Ballot issues are also a surprise to many voters and there are three this time, so be sure to turn over your ballot and vote on them. Our state office creates **Voter Guides** with the pros and cons on these issues and you can pick one up at any Dutchess or Ulster library (call us if they've run out!) or go to our state league website and read it there: www.lwvny.org.

The best way to avoid surprises is to go on www.Vote411.org, put in your address, and see what's on your ballot. All of my candidates had answered the questions the League posed and that was both helpful and interesting! If any of your candidates haven't answered, call their campaigns and complain or call us and we'll push them again. The pros and cons on the ballot issues are also there.

Of course your County **Board of Elections** (BOE) is also an important resource, particularly if you have questions about your polling place, registration status, an absentee ballot or anything specific to you. The **Dutchess BOE** is at [845-486-2473](tel:845-486-2473) or www.dutchesselections.com. **Ulster's BOE** is at [845-334-5470](tel:845-334-5470) or www.voteulster.com.

The Ulster BOE website allowed me to see exactly what my ballot would look like. On my ballot the parties are (in this order) Democratic, Republican, Conservative, Working Families, Independence, Green, Women's Equality, Sapient, and Stop Common Core Libertarian. I can help improve a party's position on the ballot next time if I vote for my favored candidate on that party's line, so I need to do more research on some of these parties.

Wow, it's a lot of work. But in a democracy, it's our job - one we should be grateful to have and eager to preserve. It's our best defense against Big Money and the other forces we deplore.

Call the LWVMHR phone if we can help: [845-340-2003](tel:845-340-2003).

Happy voting!

Dave

**MEMBERSHIP
NEWS**

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

PROGRAMS**LWV Day at the
UN****LAST CALL for the UN TRIP**

You may be able to join the trip to the United Nations on Thursday, November 13 if you contact the LWVNYS immediately at 518-465-4162. \$155 covers everything but if you want just part of the event and/or don't want to take the bus, you will pay less. If you need a ride from Kingston or Poughkeepsie to the New Paltz exit where we'll catch the bus at 7 AM, call 845-340-2003.

If you can't go to the UN but want to hear all about it, join us at the Gateway Diner on Rt. 9W in Highland at 10:30 AM on Saturday, November 15 for a discussion with those who went.

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.

National Voter Registration Day September 23

You will recall from last month's Commentator that Cindy Bell, Cindy Lanzetta, Jean McGarry, Karen Miller, Jacki Morarity, Daisy Tyler, and Lee Ridgway registered 51 new voters at the Kingston Area Library and SUNY Ulster on September 23rd.

Thereafter, Cindy Lanzetta and Jean McGarry spent two hours at SUNY Dutchess on October 7th and registered an additional 25 students (*even as we competed with a featured hypnotist in the dining hall*). Given our success at both SUNY Ulster and SUNY Dutchess, we will attempt to redouble our voter registration efforts at the area colleges this spring.

Update on National Voter Registration Day

The official tallies are in for National Voter Registration Day! Our league members joined 9,043 other volunteers to register a total of 143,831 individuals. Next step: Encourage these individuals to get to the polls to cast their vote on November 4.

Jean McGarry

BENJAMIN and DADEY Debate Amendment One on the Ballot

What a privilege it was on October 22 to hear two experts on good government - and good friends - argue with civility and passion their opposing views on an amendment that is supposed to reform redistricting in NY.*

Dr. Gerald Benjamin, director of SUNY New Paltz's Center for Research, Regional Education, and Outreach (CRREO) and a Distinguished Professor of Political Science is opposed to the amendment. Dick Dadey, executive director of the 100+-year-old reform organization, Citizens Union, favors it.**

There were strong areas of agreement between them in spite of their differing conclusions. They both agree that the current NY Legislature and the U.S. Congress are dysfunctional, voters are totally turned off, and voting in NY is at abysmally low levels. They are both strong advocates for replacing the present system in which legislators completely control the process of drawing the state Senate and Assembly lines and the U;S. Congressional lines.

That said, Benjamin - an expert on New York's constitution - felt strongly that the amendment was so seriously flawed (and he told of many flaws) that it should not be added to so permanent a document as a constitution. Knowing that in 2017 we'll all be voting on a Constitutional Convention, he is hopeful that voters will say yes to a convention and that there could soon be a better way to give New York a truly independent redistricting process. If this redistricting amendment passes now, such a convention (if it occurs) would be much less likely to address redistricting.

Dadey argued that imperfect as the amendment might be, we have been waiting for fifty years for the legislature to relinquish even this much power and he doesn't want to depend on either a convention or the legislature providing any better reform any time soon. There are too many IFs, he insisted. "Don't let the perfect drive out the good."

Dadey also pointed out that the amendment would allow the courts to get involved in the redistricting process in a way they can't currently, so the danger that many fear of the legislature reverting to their old ways by turning down the commission's work is not as real as "NO" advocates claim. Many other questions raised by the audience can be answered at www.voteyes4progress.org/faq/ and www.lwvny.org.

As a little bonus at the end of the debate, Benjamin commented on the other two ballot issues. The second amendment would permit electronic distribution of state legislative bills, which he said has no opposition. The third proposal, the Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014,

he called "problematic."

Many, many thanks to these fine men for a great debate and to the moderator who kept it all on track, our former LWVMHR president, Jean McGarry.

**If you don't know the basics and pros and cons about this amendment or the other two issues that will be on your ballot on November 4, check out all the information on the LWVNYS home page, www.lwvny.org .*

*** Our state LWV is also in support of the amendment. We are non-partisan but that doesn't prevent us from taking positions on issues we feel well-informed about.*

Dare Thompson, Co-President

**The City of
Kingston (City)
Conservation
Advisory Council
(CAC) presentation
– Sale of water to
Niagara Bottling
Co.**

The Council met on Tuesday, October 14th, to hear a presentation by Judith Hansen, the City Water Superintendent, regarding whether the City would sell water to Niagara Bottling Company. About 300 concerned citizens were in attendance.

The CAC invited the League of Women Voters to help with the public questions portion of the program. League Treasurer Dorothy Winrow and league volunteer Merrill Sunderland handed out index cards and collected questions from the audience, while Jolanda Jansen organized the questions and later presented them to Judith Hansen and the CAC on behalf of the audience.

Judith Hansen gave a comprehensive presentation including: the history of the Kingston water supply; graphs and statistics showing the capacity; the increase in water rates since the departure of IBM, and the cost of ongoing maintenance of the system.

The audience submitted well over a hundred questions. There was time for only about 25 to be addressed by Ms. Hansen and the CAC, the remainder were given to the CAC as input for their deliberations. Although there were jeers and applause from the audience, and some vociferous comments, the index card method was successful at maintaining overall decorum and giving the audience the feeling that they had been heard.

Jolanda Jansen, Co-President

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

**Fixing Our Broken
Government: A
Book Discussion**

Last month our book discussion focused on Marcia Coyle's recent book, THE ROBERTS COURT. Because the book covers so much territory (race, guns, money, and health care), we focused just on the section on money - specifically Citizens United, a case famous for allowing corporations to spend almost unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns.

While this book isn't an easy read because there are just so many cases and legal details to absorb, Marcia Coyle makes it as clear as anyone could, and she provides so many interesting insights into the inner workings of the court and the personalities of the individual justices that it is easy to get totally swept up in the narrative.

One participant commented quite specifically: *"I was particularly interested in how constitutional challenges are "engineered" by persons who want to challenge and change the legal interpretation of laws and the constitution. An example is a challenge to Section 5 of the Voting Rights act of 1965 which requires certain state and local jurisdictions with a history of voting discrimination to obtain federal approval of proposed changes in their voting or election procedures.*

"Edward Blum, a long time opponent of race-based laws found a water district in Austin, TX, that wanted to move their elections from private homes and garages to schools and public places, but chafed under the federal law's "preclearance" requirement for making election changes, ultimately arguing that Section 5 was unconstitutional. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court.

"The origin of this case is particularly striking. Essentially one man with an agenda was searching for and bringing cases to the Supreme Court to challenge laws that are not in keeping with his own private thinking. This type of action was used again and again: find an

innocuous case and use it to disable legislation that the person does not like. Does this advance the good and welfare of the people?"

The book made us more aware than ever about the role of the Supreme Court in our lives and about the way the justices' own backgrounds and core beliefs influence the decisions they hand down. We were grateful both for Coyle's fine reporting and for the chance to discuss it!

Margaret Sellers

Today people are marching, singing, confronting and begging to have the Federal minimum wage raised.

In 1998, Barbara Ehrenreich decided to see for herself how people being forced off welfare by the Clinton administration would manage on \$6 or \$7 an hour. So she worked and lived on a minimum wage in three states. The picture she paints is not pretty and has not changed in the ensuing 16 years.

Today, the federal minimum wage is just \$7.25 an hour.

We'll revisit Ehrenreich's book at **5 pm on Wednesday, November 19th at Enzo's, Boices Lane, Kingston (near Enterprise Drive).**

The discussion will no doubt highlight just what Ehrenreich found: food insecurity, manipulation, and disrespect by both employers and the public, ("I am "baby," "honey," "blondie," and, most commonly, "girl," she reports.), and above all horrifying living conditions. She had to travel miles from her pathetic job to live in a shabby trailer. Her co-workers crammed in with others or lived in their vans.

Furthermore, minimum wage ads are often a sham. Companies advertise all the time and sometimes even interview in order to be assured a new supply of desperate workers.

We hope you can join with us to look at this serious problem and to figure out what we can do to move towards a fairer system. **You don't have to have read the book to participate - all are welcome.**

The Materials Management Committee met October 14th. We discussed the Zero Waste Program held in September in New Paltz. We are moving forward on the Paint Stewardship Support Program. We also discussed issues related to the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency and its budget.

Because of the shift in the Board meeting, and the proximity of Thanksgiving, we will NOT be meeting in November. We will work, independently, on our tasks and keep in touch via email. Anyone who wants to be added to our email list can let me know at packback56@yahoo.com

Information on the Public Hearing on the UCRRA budget can be accessed at [Ulster County Resource Recovery - Draft Minutes of Budget Public Hearing.](#)

Cindy Lanzetta

Chairman, Materials Management Committee

The Shared Services Committee

The Committee met on September 22nd and welcomed the newest member of the committee, Flora Jones from Beacon.

Since the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council expressed no interest in consolidating with the County Loop Bus system, the committee will take no action at this point.

The committee received a letter from Rebecca White, Risk Management Director for Dutchess County, in response to questions regarding the county-wide worker's compensation insurance plan, and the status of the health insurance consortium. Dutchess County will not be pursuing a health insurance consortium at this time because "since we are in a community rated plan, we are not in a position financially to successfully move toward a self-insured plan at this time."

Nickel and Dimed - On (not) getting by in America, By Barbara Ehrenreich: A Book Discussion

Materials Management Committee (Solid Waste)

With regards to county-side worker's compensation insurance, 13 municipalities are currently participating, with two or three in the pipeline.

Dare and Gina shared the results of their meeting with Jerry Benjamin of CREEO, SUNY New Paltz, on fire districts and the contracting out of emergency medical services. When local Fire Districts provide EMT services, they can't be billed to insurance companies. When contracted out by the Town, they can be billed to insurance.

Committee members will check on the status of county grants for shared services, and state grants for shared services, follow the proposed consolidation of services of the County Departments of Health and Mental Health, and will review the power point presentation to see what needs to be updated.

Presentations to the community will be scheduled for after November elections.

Submitted by Jolanda Jansen based on Ellie Charwat's meeting notes.

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.

Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Planning & Transit Committee

Oct. 7, 2014, 6:30 – 7:13 PM

Committee Members: Thomas J. Briggs, Chairman, James F. Maloney, Deputy Chairman (absent), Chris Allen, Lynn Archer, Herbert Litts, III (absent), Mary Beth Maio, Kenneth Wishnick

Meeting called to order by Chairman Briggs, and approval of Sept. 22, 2014 meeting minutes.

Resolutions for Oct. 21, 2014:

Resolution No. 373: Pertains to approving the execution of a contract regarding UC Economic Development Alliance, Inc. Department of Planning. Suzanne Holt, Esq., Director, Office of Business Services, discussed the contract, its objectives and approach. Legislator Wishnick is concerned about the approach as not being productive for the county. Josh Summers, consultant re Focus Media, is to address the committee in Nov. Legislator Lynn Archer and Ms. Holt commented on the Shovel Ready and Ready to Go programs.

All other resolutions were approved or held.

New Business:

Wawarsing Vacant Lots – Property Auction: Mr. Briggs discussed the procedure and notices for sale.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 10-24-14

**Energy and
Environment
Committee****Oct. 8, 2014, 6:30 – 8:43 PM****Committee Members:** Tracey A. Bartels, Chairman, Kenneth J. Ronk, Jr., Deputy Chairman, Manna Jo Greene, Richard A. Parete, Mary Wawro

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bartels, and approval of minutes of Sept. 15 and Sept. 23, 2014, meetings.

Resolutions for Oct. 21, 2014:

Resolution No. 314: Pertains to setting a policy for county owned vehicles to utilize alternative fuel sources. Postponed.

Resolution No. 344 and **Resolution No. 345:** Pertains to setting a public hearing on a local law regulating the use of polystyrene foam ware. Postponed.

Resolution No. 348: Pertains to adopting a local law to update the term of membership to the Environmental Management Council. Approved.

Resolution No. 349: Pertains to adopting a local law to establish a Sustainable Energy Loan Program in Ulster County. Approved.

Resolution No. 372: Pertains to approving the execution of contract regarding replacing county lighting fixtures with more efficient devices. Ken Crannell, Deputy County Executive, and Amanda LaValle, Coordinator, Department of the Environment, discussed the program and its benefits. The county jail is the major user of power. The committee, Mr. Crannell and Ms. LeValle discussed other opportunities and the need to coordinate across the county. Approved.

Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency: Tim Rose, PE, Executive Director, and Charles Landi, Board member, announced the UCRRA public meeting on the proposed budget to be held Oct. 21., at which several town supervisors are expected to attend. They also discussed the status of previously discussed issues, particularly the relationship with the towns.

Mr. Rose said the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) is not yet back from the DEC.

New Business:

1. Proposed Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission.

Chairman Bartels introduced a draft proposed resolution to establish a Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission. Legislator Greene emphasized the inclusion of a League of Women Voters Representative or Environmental Group Representative, and the committee discussed the language of membership. Ms. Greene commented she wants the League to take on the assignment of finding out the towns tipping fees (I didn't comment.)

2. Niagara Water Project

Ms. Greene raised a concern about this proposal. To be discussed in the future.

Old Business:

1. Climate Smart Committee – no action
2. Watershed Hydro-Vac Truck – no action
3. Emerald Ash Borer – to be discussed at the next regular meeting
4. Pilgrim Pipeline – to be discussed at the regular Nov. meeting
5. Renewable Energy REC- briefly discussed
6. Recycling Committee Appointments – a letter has been sent seeking assistance

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 10/24/14

Legislative Programs, Education and Community Services Committee

Oct. 15, 2014, 5:03 – 6:05 PM.

Committee Members:

David B. Donaldson, Chairman, Mary Wawro, Deputy Chairman, Lynn Archer, Donald J. Gregorius, Craig V. Lopez (absent)

Other Attendees: Dennis Doyle, Director, Planning; Marc Rider, Director, Purchasing; Michael Lamoree, Director UC Community Action; Mark Komdat, Dean of Administration, UCCC; Lee Reidy, Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Meeting called to order by Deputy Chairman Mary Wawro, and approval of minutes of Sept. 10, 2014, meeting.

Agenda:

Common Core Standards – Jolyn Safron: postponed

Ulster County Community Action – Michael Lamoree, Director, reported the kitchen construction updates for services, food prep, and business are going well. The 3 year audit showed improvements. They are preparing for HEAP and rent relief programs for the winter. A funding increase from \$16,750 to \$21,750 is asked and supported by the committee.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County – Lee Reidy Executive Director, reported on current activities and festivals, the Annual Dinner on Oct. 23 and the planned program meeting on Dec. 4.

Ulster County Community College – Mark Komdat, Dean of Administration, discussed the domestic violence event with Natalie Merchant, reported the enrollment and budget are OK, the Capital Project – Kelder Farm, water and Sophie Finn projects are proceeding, some with delays.

Resolution No. 365: Pertains to amending Capital Program and Capital Project for STRIVE SUNY Ulster Satellite Campus. Dennis Doyle, Director, Planning and Marc Rider, Director, Purchasing, presented a detailed Legislative Briefing of the STRIVE Project. Mr. Doyle discussed the goals and plans of the project and Mr. Rider discussed the bids (qualified) and the contracts. A topic of contentious discussion with members of the legislature is the cost of the project: Initially at \$4.1M based upon a “proof of concept” cost estimate by Pattern for Progress to the current cost at \$7.83M for an expanded scope and additions, and contingences. The Pier 1 project was also briefly discussed. Approved.

All other resolutions were approved.

Vic Melville, LWV Observer, 10-24-14

UC Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors

The October 21, 2014 meeting of the UC Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors was convened at 8:34 by President, T/Rochester Supervisor Carl Chipman.

Since County Executive Hein had not arrived and County Legislative Chairman Parete had called Mr. Chipman to say he would not be coming, the representative of Allstate Benefits, Rochelle Ostrander, was asked to make her presentation.

According to the hand out that Mrs. Ostrander distributed to attendees “Allstate Benefits wished to offer its voluntary benefits program to municipal employees to give them access to the #1 accident, critical illness & Universal Life policy on the market and to qualify for coverage regardless of most pre-existing health conditions.”

One of the points that she made was that Allstate Benefits had acquired many clients who moved from Aflac to do so. A comparison was attached to the handout with Allstate Benefits far exceeding that of Aflac.

Mr. Hein arrived at that point. Initially County Executive Hein was introduced by Mr. Chipman. He was greeted by a round of applause for agreeing to take over the election costs from the towns.

His first comments dealt with the most recent patriot's project. This one involves finding

all the names of veterans dating back to 1776. A monument will be unveiled on Memorial Day 2015. The names of all veterans found are to be inscribed on this monument. He urged the supervisors to help doing this and help Steven Masee who would speak on this later in the program.

Mr. Hein reviewed what has been done to date with respects to the county budget for 2015. He did emphasize that the infrastructure, whether locally or otherwise, is not good. Over the years efforts to improve have been delayed for years. There are 423 miles of road that are not getting fixed as quickly as one would hope for.

Mr. Masee was the next speaker. He explained in more detail what Mr. Hein had begun in mentioning the monument to be unveiled on Memorial Day. There are two groups involved: volunteers and a research group. Methods involved are targeted research in which they are asking for towns help and public where in the committee will ask the public "Do you know of any such veterans?" The monument is 90% completed. The committee expects to break ground in the spring. The committee will be sending out the names of the committee members who will be contacting the towns.

A question was raised as whether those who are disabled are included in the project. No was the answer given.

Mr. Chipman noted that Mr. Parete had in fact come to the meeting and asked him whether he had any observations to make. Mr. Parete indicated that he came to listen not to comment.

However for the remainder of the time during the meeting the discussion dealt with the Resource Recovery Agency (RRA). There is an obvious concern about the costs that the towns are being faced with, given the comments that were made.

Mr. Chipman called for a report from the group's special committee which has been dealing with the concerns (given by Mr. Quigley), and advised it should plan to meet on October 28 to discuss what may have occurred when the RRA met on the 27th.

The possibility of the T/New Paltz becoming a regional hub to deal with the trash situation in that area was brought up. A further suggestion made was to develop a plan which would include all the towns' concerns and indicate a more offensive stance to the RRA.

At 10 AM it was necessary for this writer to leave.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

