



Commentator

SEPTEMBER 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	
SEPTEMBER	WE WELCOME THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT ALL EVENTS! No charge!	
2	Tues. 7:15 PM	LWV MHR Board Meeting. Location TBD; 845-340-2003 for directions
4	Thurs. 2:30 PM	Resource Development Committee , home of Margaret Sellers, 80 Ringtop Road, Kingston. 845-339-3180 or 340-2003 for directions.
5	10:45 AM	Naturalization Ceremony , at the Ulster County Courthouse, 285 Wall St, Kingston, NY 12401. Contact Jean McGarry, 336-6622 / jfmcg@hvc.rr.com for more information and to volunteer. (Or just show up!).
9	Tues. 5:30 PM	Salad Supper with our LWNYS expert on financing public education, Marian Bott at the Town of Esopus Library. Kick off the fall season with us and bring friends! All welcome. Ingredients for our salad and other potluck items appreciated.
9	Tues	State and Local Primary
10	Wed 2 pm	FIX OUR BROKEN GOVERNMENT! Join the study committee that will be looking simultaneously at issues about Ballot Access and Term Limits , and learn about why we don't get enough good candidates and what some suggest is a way to oust the bad ones that get elected. Home of Margaret Sellers, 80 Ringtop Road, Kingston, 845-339-3180 or mcsellers@aol.com (See the comments on pg 3 below)
16	Tues 5:30 pm	Solid Waste Study Committee , Gateway Diner, Rt 9W just north of MidHudson Bridge, Highland. For more info and to confirm, contact Cindy Lanzetta, 845-236-7288, packback56@yahoo.com (NOTE: this is one week after our usual meeting time.)
18	Mon 8:30 – 9 am	Listen to LWV members of Kingston Community Radio on WGHQ, AM 920 or live or archived online at www.mykcr.org . We're on every 3 rd Mon. Guest this month: Tim Rose, Executive Director, Ulster Co. Resource Recovery Agency. (Tip: Sen. Cecilia Tkaczyk on right before us.)
19	Fri 10 am	Dutchess County Shared Services Study Committee , home of Suzi Stoller, 27 Brentwood Dr, Poughkeepsie. Suzi.stoller@gmail.com or 845-462-6798 for directions.
23	Tues	NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY! See more in this newsletter about joining local efforts and go to www.nationalregistrationday.org to see what others are doing.
OCTOBER		
7	Tues 7:15 pm	LWV MHR Board Meeting , home of Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, 845-382-6989. Time, date and location tentative; please confirm at 340-2003.
9	Thurs 2 pm	Resource Development Committee meeting , home of Margaret Sellers, 80 Ringtop Road, Kingston, 845-339-3180, mcsellers@aol.com . Time, date and location tentative; please confirm at 845-340-2003
14	Tues 5:30 pm	Solid Waste Study Committee , Gateway Diner, Rt 9W just north of Mid-Hudson Bridge, Highland. For more info and to confirm, contact Cindy Lanzetta, 845-236-7288, packback56@yahoo.com
22	Wed 7 pm Location TBD	Learn about the state ballot amendment on REDISTRICTING and hear why it's got the good government experts arguing among themselves, including good friends Dr. Gerald Benjamin of SUNY New Paltz's CRREO (who's against it) and Dick Dadey of Citizens Union (for it). Ulster BOCES co-sponsoring Mark your calendars for this lively debate!

PREZ SEZ...

Shake off the sand, keep a sweater at hand, fall is coming! And it's going to be busy.

In addition to our usual important Voter Service work (voter registration, Vote411.org, moderating, etc.), we are addressing three top crises that were highlighted at the LWVUS Convention last June: broken government (including voter suppression, gerrymandering, unlimited political money), a growing gap between rich and poor (with quality education for ALL being a critical solution), and climate change.

Our kick-off membership meeting on September 9 addresses inequities in education, and several meetings address solutions to the increasing loss of control we feel over our government.

On November 13 we are hoping a large contingent of Mid-Hudson League members and friends will take advantage of the League-organized UN Day. I went decades ago (from another state) and I still remember how eye-opening it was. The League's long history there gives us access to speakers that the general public doesn't have, and this year the topic is WATER, which we have come to see as essential not just to life but to peace. And of course it's a key player in climate change.

Watch as the year unfolds for even more activities that address the three crises and help us be part of the solution, not part of the problem. What we do has never mattered more and it adds joy when we do it together.

Dave (Co-President)

**MEMBERSHIP
NEWS**

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

Save the date: **NOVEMBER 13**, a Thursday, is **LWV Day at the UN**, featuring a tour, lunch in the Delegates Dining Room, and briefings by UN experts. The topic this year is "**Water for Life**," the UN International Decade for Action, 2005-15. More details are in the latest LWVNYS VOTER emailed to you on August 22nd and the registration form is attached here. The LWVNYS bus will stop for us at New Paltz.

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.

Naturalization

September 5 - mark your calendar to be part of this very rewarding event. Contact Jean McGarry, 336-6622 / jfmcg@hvc.rr.com for more information and to volunteer. (Or just show up!).

**National Voter
Registration Day
September 23**

Our league will join hundreds of other organizations in a country-wide effort to register citizens to vote. Previously we set up tables at Walmart's, Hannaford in Kingston Plaza and the Kingston Area Library. This year we will focus our efforts at SUNY Ulster and the Kingston Area Library in Ulster County. Locations in Dutchess County are still being finalized.

As in the past, all materials will be provided as well as an FAQ sheet for any inquiries regarding voting. In addition, we will have available Facts for Voters and information on the ballot proposal for a constitutional amendment regarding redistricting since our purpose is not only to get individuals registered but to educate voters before they get to the ballot box. Volunteers are needed.

Please contact Jean McGarry at 336-6622 or at jfmc@hvc.rr.com.

STUDY AND ADVOCACY

**Join Our Study
Group on Ballot
Access and Term
Limits**

On **Wed., September 10, 2 pm**, those of us interested in participating in the two state studies related to improving state government will meet at the home of Margaret Sellers and Vic Melville to divvy up the materials provided by the state LWV (and viewable on its website).

We may break into two groups to tackle the studies separately but for now we're looking at them together. We welcome the participation of any member - and even non-member - who wants to see our government work better.

Some of us have already gotten warmed up on the Ballot Access topic by reading Mickey Edwards' **Parties vs. the People** and we recommend that very readable book as a great way to begin. See more on the book in Anne Needham's article about our book discussion.

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

On August 19th several of us gathered at the home of Margaret Sellers and Vic Melville to discuss issues raised in the provocative and well-written book, **The Parties vs. the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans** by Mickey Edwards, former Oklahoma congressman (Republican, 1977 to 1993).

Edwards talks about many problems and their possible solutions and we focused on the ones that also apply to our LWVNYS study on Ballot Access.

We talked about Edwards' description of the difficulty of getting on the ballot and the limitations of choice imposed on voters by the party primary system. It was generally agreed that Edwards' use of the term "private power seeking clubs" as a description of both the Democratic and Republican parties was apt.

Edwards believes other states should follow the lead of Louisiana, Washington State and California and eliminate the ability of the political parties to determine who can appear on the general election ballot.

Briefly, It works this way: Every candidate, regardless of party, appears on

the same ballot and every registered voter in the state may participate in the selection process. The top two finishers run against each other in a general election. The political parties can no longer dictate who gets on the ballot.

Vic Melville is concerned that mischief could be done by large donors rigging the field. Dare Thompson, Lee Ridgway and Anne Needham thought that, considering the skewed results of primaries today, the plan should be given a try. Margaret Sellers said she needed to consider it further.

Edwards, along with most other political theorists, sees gerrymandered districts as a major culprit in the Washington gridlock. Safe districts lead to party loyalty best described by Edwards' quote from HMS Pinafore "always voted at my party's call, and never thought of thinking for myself at all."

Thompson, who served on the Ulster Legislative Reapportionment Commission, noted that another county's legislative leader proclaimed proudly in an open forum on their new redistricting plan that "we've taken care of the incumbents." Melville said that he believed redistricting reform was more important than changes in primary rules. Ridgway said that she saw the two issues of equal importance but reminded the group that the momentum nationwide is now towards redistricting reform.

The discussion was enlightening and enjoyable. We hope to have another book meeting soon and that there will be other members contributing.

Anne Needham

A Small d Democracy, a personal viewpoint by Margaret Sellers

In thinking about Mickey Edwards' book, **The Parties vs. the People**, I can't help but think about all the reform efforts in the legislative governing process that I learned about in school and experienced in my lifetime, including the introduction of primaries replacing the selections of candidates by party bosses and campaign finance reform, which have not had the intended results of placing the selection of political candidates in the hands of the "people." I also think about my 20 some year experience working inside the formal party machinery in the NYS Senate which had a major goal of remaining in the majority, which included being re-elected by the people (but without often encouraging interaction with the people.)

Is it possible for the people to do more? The cause of small d democracy has to be helped by reforms such as increasing ballot access so we have a broader choice of candidates; laws that provide more equity in campaign finance; and redistricting changes that eliminate gerrymandering, party protection of incumbents, and other inequities, but in the end it is **everybody**, no matter how busy with careers, families, problems, disasters and general fatigue that has to recognize that citizenship and small d democracy can only be achieved if all people work to make it better. On the other hand, party formation and party leadership make it easier to govern. Fewer people are involved. They can be organized more easily. Money can be raised and that money can buy staff that dedicate their working hours -

not just a few hours a week - to planning and executing all phases of the governing process. As in all cases involving government, **the devil is in the details**. It takes serious work to discover those details. Without a serious intervention, the party process leads to top down control, with token gestures towards other elected officials, interest groups (unless they contribute cash) and the welfare of the people as a whole.

I believe that unless there is serious change in our education system and the education of people in general through dialogue, videos, print, discussion forums that many participate in, we will see the maintenance and strengthening of the party system just because it is so much easier.

This said, I believe it still behooves us to work for greater participation in a small d democratic process because it helps us to avoid the end result of totalitarian-like powers in our presidents, governors, and legislative leaders. **Our LWV studies including ballot access, term limits and redistricting are good ones. They help us to see the issues more clearly. Please join in!**

Beyond this, we need to look at the use of power by all the governmental agencies and authorities. They have a tremendous effect on our lives too, with an ongoing power that is often seemingly beyond legislative and executive control.

Margaret Sellers

**Materials
Management
Committee (Solid
Waste)**

The Materials Management Committee is pleased to announce that Dutchess County has followed Ulster County in supporting the State's proposed legislation (A6939, S4690A) for a Paint Stewardship Program. Committee members met with DC Legislator Miccio, who took the information we provided back to the Legislature for a letter of support.

The Committee will continue to work with other Leagues throughout the state to provide the materials they need to get their counties to support this important legislation and ultimately get it passed. Then those who make paint will take responsibility for its proper disposal. Paint companies are ready for this to happen, so we just need a grassroots push.

Our regular meeting date for September has changed so that members can attend the LWV-MHR Annual Salad Supper on the 9th. The Materials Management Committee will meet on September 16th, 5:30 pm, at the Gateway Diner in Highland. We welcome anyone who would like to join us and see what we are up to!

Cindy Lanzetta

Repair Café

On August 16th, Dare Thompson and I attended the Repair Cafe on at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church at Catherine and Mill Streets in Poughkeepsie. It was an event that was organized by Rachel Ruth of Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting and a friend using the Repair Cafe guidelines (see www.repaircafe.org).

People in the community were invited to bring broken items to be repaired free of charge. There were five men and one woman who volunteered their time and skills to do various repairs. I brought an iron and a hair dryer that were not working. The repairs needed were very simple and they were restored to full functionality. I was very pleased to get them working again and to know that I contributed to reducing waste.

The event was well organized and orderly. It will be held at the same location every other month except for the next one which will be held on November 15th. I strongly encourage people to utilize the service.

Brook Nam

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! 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.

Laws and Rules, Governmental Services Committee

August 18, 2014, 6:04 – 7:26 PM Richard A. Meeting called to order by the Chairman Parete, and approval of July 14, 2014 meeting minutes.

Resolutions for August 19, 2014:

Resolution No. 274: Pertains to adopting a local law amending local law approving contracts and contract amendments.

Approved, following discussion of the usefulness of the resolution.

Resolution No. 303: Pertains to authorizing the Chairman of the Legislature to execute an agreement with the NYS Ag and Markets regarding funding a petroleum testing program.

Approved.

Resolution No. 309: Pertains to setting a public hearing on a local law regarding outdoor restraint of companion dogs.

Motion to refer to the Law Enforcement Committee: Approved to refer, following a discussion of the provisions and the appropriate committee.

Late Resolutions:

Resolution No. 310: Pertains to amending a resolution removing parcels from auction and authorizing transfer.

Approved.

Resolution No. 311: Pertains to authorizing the Chairman of Legislature

to enter a lease agreement regarding the Ulster County Family Court. Approved, following a discussion of the need for lateness.

Resolution No. 312: Pertains to approving execution of a contract regarding the STRIVE project.

Approved, following an extended discussion of the document review process with the county executive and the process with the state, cost concerns, questions about the project planning and future resolutions, and the expressed need for legislative oversight.

New Business:

Legislator Richard Parete wants a policy regarding the naming of bridges, re the bridge in Hurley, now under consideration. Other legislators want a policy and Mr. Parete is to draft a document.

LWV Observer: Vic Melville, 8-22-14

**Energy and
Environment
Committee**

August 11, 2014, 6:32 – 8:11 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, approval minutes of June 10, 2014 (as amended) and July 8, 2014 meeting.

Ulster County Soil & Water Conservation District's 2015 Budget Request: Gary Capella, Executive Director. Mr. Capella briefly discussed the budget in preparation, an increase may be requested. He discussed projects including the pelletizer, in final rollout, and activity at farm sites.

Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency: Leon Smith, Board Chair and Charlie Landi, Board Member. Mr. Smith mentioned the 6 month extension for the towns contracts, and he announced the UC Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors meeting to be held Aug. 19, at which a report from the group's committee on the UCRRA would discuss their concerns. The bids for disposal are coming in, pending trucking info. A tentative budget is expected for the Aug. 25 UCRRA board meeting.

The committee and Mr. Smith and Mr. Landi continued to discuss topics that have often been previously addressed, including: landfills, funding options, flow control of recyclables, single-stream, dual-stream, MRF upgrade, educational trips to regional landfills. Legislator Ken Wishnick, not a member of the committee, participated in the discussion. Mr. Smith has concerns about undercutting the private haulers.

A reconvened Recycling Oversight Committee is to be discussed at the Sept. meeting.

Resolutions for August 19, 2014:

1. Resolution No. 294: Pertains to amending the capital project for the STRIVE project.

Approved, following a discussion of possible costs to county taxpayers, stay tuned. An August 2015 move in date is planned.

New Business:

Emerald Ash Borer: Held for discussion in Sept. meeting.

Old Business:

1. Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC): A public hearing is to be held Aug. 19.

2. Protect the Pollinators: on-going topic.

3. Climate Smart Committee: on-going topics on membership and action.

Other Business:

1. Legislator Richard Parete raised a concern from the Catskill Watershed Corporation about a county related contract on a water handling machine.

2. Legislator Manna Jo Green discussed the proposed Central Hudson rate increases.

3. Legislator Wishnick discussed using renewable in Ulster County vehicles re MEGA.

LWV Observer: Vic Melville, 8/22/14

UC Legislative Public Health and Social Services Committee

The Committee was convened by Chairman, Legislator Craig Lopez at 6PM on August 4, 2014 and adjourned at 6:58. The next meeting of the committee will be Monday, September 8, 2014.

Present: Lopez, Provenzano, Belfiglio, Allen, Litts (arrived late); Others: Ken Crannell, Deputy County Executive, Erica Guerin, Legislative Counsel, Representatives of Trail Advisory group, Nettie Tomshaw, Secretary to the Committee

Following the call to order of the meeting, the group reviewed the minutes of the June meeting and approved them.

Chairman Lopez advised the group that the guest speaker, Ida Gage, a senior advocate, would not be coming to the meeting.

The committee then addressed the nine resolutions scheduled for discussion. All the resolutions were passed.

#276: allows for the creation of an Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board with not more than 21 voting members appointed by the Chairman of the UC Legislature on a bi-annual basis from UC Fire Coordinator's Office, volunteer fire departments, ambulance/rescue squads, basic life support first responder agencies, health care professionals and local government officials. The board shall cooperate

with appropriate state agencies in relation to such programs for EMS training, EMS related activities and mutual aid and to act as an advisory body to the county government and to the county EMS Coordinator, etc.

#279: approved the contract in excess of \$50,000 between the County (DSS) and Rondout Legal Services which extends the legal process service agreement used by the County's Support Collection Unit and DSS legal unit for one more year and to increase the no-to-exceed amount by \$72,500 (such service as billed on as used basis. The source of the dollars is 66% federal, 17% state and 17% county.)

#280, #281, and #282 dealt with amending three contracts each dealing with mandated transportation for pre-school children (apparently over 130 children are involved) between the county (DSS) and #280 Rolling V. Bus Corp, #281 Durham School Services, and #282 Arthur F. Mulligan. The cost for each is 50% Federal and 50% State.

#283: contract amendment between the County (Mental Health) and Multi County Development Corporation, cost covered 100% by the state, to increase the number of supported housing units as required by NYS mandated agreement from 16 to 24 and increase the funding by \$55,710. Such housing is primarily for people returning to the community from mental health type institutions.

#285: to amend the 2014 county budget to enable the county (DSS) to accept a NY University School of Medicine grant (\$12,878). New York City and Ulster County were selected for this grant due to their expertise in how each handles their child welfare foster care programs. Considered an honor to have been so selected.

Under Old Business a representative of the Trails Advocacy Committee presented a request that she hoped that all legislators of this committee be able to support the resolutions to be presented to the county legislature. There was considerable discussion ending with the legislators agreeing not to make a decision at this time. However, it was suggested that given the questions raised during discussion the legislators could raise their questions and concerns at their individual caucus meetings.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp

**UC Association of
Town Supervisors and
Mayors**

The August 19, 2014 meeting of the UC Association of T/Supervisors and Mayors was convened at 8:30 by Chairman, Supervisor Chipman and adjourned at 9:57.

Following the call to order Supervisor Chipman noted that Supervisor Zimet had asked that the group be advised there would be a demonstration in New Paltz re the IDA granting a PILOT to the builders who are planning to construct the Park Point housing project in New Paltz on 8-20-14 at 12 noon.

An additional item referenced the UC Planning Department will hold a meeting on 9-29-14 at Quimbey Hall at UCCC re the purchase of electrical

power.

The first item on the agenda was a report from the group's committee dealing with UC Resource Recovery Agency developments. The supervisor spent about an hour discussing their concerns particularly as such applied to costs and any increase in tipping charges, which they are not supportive of. What options might there be?

There were various observations made about the current situation:

- towns give RRA clean recyclables which the RRA should give the towns credit for;
- a 75 cent increase for everyone would cover costs;
- RRA claims losing money and needs to replace all their containers;
- apparently it was felt there has been mismanagement going back many years; perhaps some new people should be appointed to the board. The group did not believe that Tim Rose, the present Executive Director, should be blamed for this situation, based on the comments made by those present they apparently believe he was handed a "bad hand" when he came on the board;
- general discussion and information sharing indicated the towns charge various rates for collecting trash, etc.; not uniform how the towns handle the collections at their transfer stations, spring clean up, etc.;
- suggestion made to improve the situation possibly if neighboring towns have different days being open/closed, residents could be allowed to utilize either on opening days, with appropriate sharing of costs;
- possibly a county- wide permit was another suggestion which would apply only to towns with transfer stations.

The 10 year extension agreement made by the RRA to the towns is apparently not supported by the towns. There is to be a meeting in September to discuss this. The group believes all TSupervisors should be present. Mr. Rose will be in attendance.

Recycling costs, single stream v. separating recyclables and costs of having private handlers all need to be addressed and evaluated.

With respects to the county taking over election costs, the group is apparently agreeable to such being done over time: 2016, 2017, and 2018.

It was noted that the supervisors feel that staying under the 2% tax cap is going to be very difficult for 2015. What else can be reduced? There is no more "fat" in any town's budget.

With regards to shared services/consolidations there was some brief discussion on the possibility of the sheriff's department assuming responsibility for law enforcement in all the towns, but no conclusions were reached.

The minutes of the July meeting were approved. Treasury has \$6700.

Lee Cane, Observer Corp