



**League of Women Voters  
of the  
Mid-Hudson Region**

**53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting  
May 23, 2013**

*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 of Women Voters of Mid-Hudson Region  
P.O. Box 3564  
Kingston, NY 12402  
<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org>**

## A Dedication to our Membership

The strength of our League is based on the commitment of our members and their willingness to work hard for the League and contribute to our activities. We have been fortunate in having many devoted members keeping the League strong and active, but several board members have been overtaken by other commitments and have left the board in the last few months. They deserve special recognition. All LWVMHR members join the board in thanking **Cindy Bell, Betty Chin, and Jim Mahoney** for their years of service on the board. As they step down, they all hope to remain involved even though their current schedules make board service difficult, so this is only a hearty thank you, not a good-bye! Cindy specifically has agreed to continue coordinating moderators for candidate events. We hope to see all of you at LWVMHR events.

Our league also depends on recruiting and keeping new members and we wish to acknowledge the people who have joined the league since January 2012 and are working on our current projects. Please make sure they feel welcome and appreciated.

Nancy Beard	Regina Klein	Ellen Sheffield
Katherine and Paul Bienkafner	Janet and Ken Kraft	Soyal Smalls
Adele Calcavecchio	Tim Lietzke	Herb and Suzi Stoller
Rokki Carr	Brook Nam	Glenn Sutherland
Karen Corey	Kathy O'Connor	Mary Tsakis
Susan Holland	Nina Postupack	Robert Winrow
Diane Jablonski	Peter Robbins	Sarah Womer

Of course, our continuing members are also wonderful and provide the leadership, companionship and mutual support that binds us together and helps us function as a unit. Take a minute to look around and just enjoy each other's company. Thank yourselves and each other for being such good league members and accomplishing so much.

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**Action Items**

- 10 Nominations
- 12 Local Program Proposals:
  - to continue Solid Waste Study
  - to continue Dutchess County shared services study
  - to study Ulster and Dutchess County Budgets
  - to study financing of local public education
  - to participate in the national LWV agriculture study
- 11 Budget (handed out separately, not in packet)

**Forms and Information**

- ..Bio Liz and Gerry Benjamin
- ..Student Inside Albany—Joseph Pugliese  
Telephone list
- ..Nominating questionnaire and activities sheet

## Agenda

Call to order by President Dare Thompson

Lunch buffet

Speakers Gerry and Liz Benjamin and Q&A with them

Business Meeting for members

- Announce secretary for meeting

- Announce parliamentarian for meeting

Treasurer's Report by Dorothy Winrow

Proposed Budget for 2013-2014

Local Program Adoption

- Solid Waste

- Shared Services for Dutchess

- Dutchess ad Ulster Budget comparison study

- Study of financing local public education

- National study on agricultural policy

Nominating Committee Report

- Election of officers, directors, nominating committee

Review and Q & A about annual committee reports

Adjourn

## President's Report

This has been a year in which so many of the issues we've worked on over the years came to a head. A major theme was **solid waste**, as Cindy Lanzetta reports elsewhere. It was the topic of our fall membership kick-off meeting and led to a truly inspiring gathering of both new and long-time environmentalists sharing their backgrounds and their connections to the League. It led to a terrific fundraiser, Tea and Trash (also described elsewhere), and ultimately to a vote taken by the Ulster County legislature for **flow control**, which went the way we recommended. The theme continued this spring with a "green spring cleaning" workshop in Dutchess, organized by new-ish LWV member, Sarah Womer of Beacon, who knows about as much as any person alive about how to dispose of things in an environmentally sound way.

Another critical issue to us also went the way we wanted. In September we presented a public program on the topic with Dr. Gerald Benjamin, "father" of the charter, and Cynthia Lowe, another new-ish LWV member who chaired the Charter Revision Commission. Then in November, modest and generally sound **revisions to the Ulster County charter** were approved by the electorate.

The hot issue of the **sale of Golden Hill**, the Ulster County nursing home, was resolved this spring in a more positive way than even the League expected when a doctor from Ulster County and his colleagues bid on the home, were selected by the Golden Hill LDC board (which I chair), and sailed through the approval process at the state Department of Health with truly record-breaking speed. I am getting calls from leagues elsewhere in the state who are dealing with the possible sale of their county nursing homes and I am so proud to report on both the process and the outcome here.

Meanwhile we have continued to strengthen our presence in **Dutchess County**. The solid waste committee has had half its members from Dutchess, and we are following the issues with the resource recovery agency there as well as in Ulster. We were the only non-partisan voice raised against that county's **redistricting** process (and were even ahead of the usually attentive *Poughkeepsie Journal* in criticizing it). And we had a very successful showing of the film on women's suffrage, **Iron-Jawed Angels**, at the Poughkeepsie Friends Meeting, a showing which generated an excellent half-page article in Ulster Publishing's *Almanac Weekly*.

We have also taken more advantage than usual of our allies at the **state LWV**. We sent a contingent of four to the annual **Lobby Day**; the LWVNY executive director, **Laura Ladd Bierman**, came to us in February to talk about campaign finance reform; and volunteer legislative director (i.e. lobbyist), **Barbara Bartoletti**, came in March to fill us in on the state budget and other activities at the Capitol. For the first time, I agreed to help chaperone the state's wonderful **Students Inside Albany** program, and I'll be reporting back on what our own student, **Joe Pugliese**, and others learned in their three days at the Capitol. Finally we continue to benefit from the local, state and national LWV partnership in the **Membership and Leadership Development** program.

We simply had **FUN** this year too, from the fall salad supper, through Tea and Trash, to the post-holiday party in January, and finally to this annual meeting. We never run out of things to talk about and love getting together just to share opinions and vent.

*We feel sure we're making the world better, and we thank all of you who help.*

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## **LWVMHR Resource Development Committee**

The Resource Development Committee meets monthly after the regular Board meeting to elaborate on the plans and directions that the Board has taken. The committee reviews the finances and determines if any further action needs to be taken. It looks at the membership; charts dues payments; considers needs of members for mentorship; sets calling lists for member notifications; develops fund raising ideas; and reviews the findings of our NYS mentor from the NYS Membership, Leadership, Development Committee to see if we are meeting our goals to increase membership and develop leadership. We review future program planning and assist in meeting arrangements when necessary. Anne Needham, Irene McInnes, Lee Ridgway, Margaret Sellers, Esther Stickley, Dare Thompson and Dorothy Winrow have formed the core of the committee. All are welcome.

## **Membership and Leadership Development (MLD)**

We are completing our second year in this exciting LWVUS/LWVNYS program of implementing the best practices we all are encouraged to follow. Our monthly conference calls with Maggie Moehringer of Albany County, our State Coach, gives us the opportunity to share insights on the success of the ideas the League has provided.

Just a few of the suggestions that we are trying to implement are "Following Up with Prospects" and "Program Planning to Grow the League." We continue to learn with new, but yet old, methods of building our membership and widening the scope of our programs.

MLD Team Members are Dorothy Winrow, Esther Stickley and Anne Needham.

## **Program Highlight: Tea and Trash**

Three threads – a flagging awards luncheon format, a very active Solid Waste Committee, and "Garbage Lady" Shirley Kobran's birthday – all came together to inspire an event that happily got the cheeky name, "Tea and Trash." The name made everything more fun and inspired a lot of creativity.

Shirley was proclaimed Queen of the event (or of the trashpile) and her friend, retiring Congressman Maurice Hinchey, agreed to be her King. We held the event at our usual location – the Wiltwyck Golf Club – which agreed to do an elegant but reasonably priced "high tea" for us instead of our usual luncheon.

Thanks to the popularity of our Royal Couple, a lot of hard work on Shirley's part in re-connecting with a lot of recycling "pioneers" whom we told we would "recognize" at the event, and a reasonable admission price, we drew over hundred people and had a very happy time.

Considering that modest admission price, we surprised ourselves by raising \$3000. Steve Changaris, the head of the regional haulers' organization, has been a speaker for us, and he had his organization agree to be a \$500 sponsor even though we sometimes advocate on different sides of solid waste issues. We also had a successful silent auction of recycled treasures (teapots,

### **Tea and Trash (continued)**

handmade sweaters, Waterford glasses, etc.) and various trash related items (e.g. a composter and a year of curbside service from Waste Management) along with the ever-popular restaurant and fitness certificates.

Thanks to board member Jolanda Jansen, her daughter Soyol Smalls, and Soyol's friend Candi Sterling, we were blessed with the most technologically-advanced presentation in our history. In addition to creating a more traditional display of clippings of the League's solid waste history, Jolanda asked Candi to make a PowerPoint (with great photos) featuring our speakers, sponsors, and auction items. The PowerPoint scrolled on a screen in view of all throughout the event. Jolanda later created a Shutterfly album of pictures taken at the event for our Queen, for whom it is a much-treasured item. Very little WASTE (or cost) was created because of this – there was no printed program. Finally, Soyol got to liking us and is now a member in her own right!

Another waste and cost-saving measure and a message-enhancing detail was our invitations. Mostly we used email and social media but we also mailed printed invitations to a select list on pieces of paper taken from our recycle piles. Invitees were treated to all sorts of odd material on the back of the invitation – from bits of a play's script to an agenda from a public meeting. Some of the paper even had three-hole punch marks! The invitation explained that in case they wondered, we were promoting recycling. We hoped this made people smile – and want to come. At the very least, we promoted a League value.

### **Membership Report**

The membership committee has continued to send information to people who request it or are suggested as prospective members by current members. Brochures are distributed at meetings and programs. All members are encouraged to "talk up" the League to friends.

In spite of the deaths of several members and normal attrition, our total membership has gone up by 4.5% since July 2011. The Solid Waste Study in particular has brought in new members in Ulster and Dutchess Counties. The Dutchess Shared Services Study has involved Dutchess people as well.

We are looking for ways to make the League more visible in the community and to take advantage of the reputation we have gotten from the Golden Hill, charter, and redistricting efforts we made. We are studying ways in which people can be effective with little time, and we welcome suggestions. Efforts are being made to bring people to meetings and to hold small meetings on special topics.

Betty Chin, who has chaired the membership committee for some years, has left that position. We recognize and thank her for her service on the board and look forward to her continued participation in other areas of league work

## Finance Report

This year has been a good year financially for the League. With the help of \$3000 of net income from the Tea and Trash event, there will most likely be a net surplus at the end of the fiscal year, compared to last year's deficit. Also, there is a substantial asset balance of over \$22,000. Expenses are largely usual. Our biggest asset is our professional level volunteer workforce.

An Audit Committee reviewed the Treasurer's books and found them to be in excellent order. Many thanks to Dorothy Winrow.

Projected expenditures for next year are fairly close to the current year. We are hoping to send more of our members to meetings as delegates. We will reduce *Commentator* printing costs, which have been rising, by using more email. On the income side, membership needs constant attention, while a net of \$1500 of income is planned from fundraising, which needs membership support.

## Voter Service Report

National Voter Registration Day on September 25 was an opportunity to join forces with many other organizations to get citizens registered to vote. So successful and rewarding was this undertaking that it served as an impetus to continue our partnership with AAUW by extending and expanding our efforts. It wasn't just about getting individuals to sign up but it also served the community by answering all kinds of voting questions. Another "feel good" volunteer opportunity was our participation in the Ulster County Naturalization ceremonies on November 16 and March 15 where our volunteers distributed voter registration information. Again, this was a unique opportunity to welcome these individuals from all walks of life and from all corners of the earth by informing them about their most important right as a United States citizen.

Our league was called on again to assist with moderating or timekeeping by various organizations. We assisted the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce with the Congressional debate and the Saugerties League of Women Voters with the State Senate and Assembly debates. Greenwood Lake in Orange County sought us out to moderate a highly contentious mayoral debate. We have also been asked to moderate in various board of education forums.

As is our yearly custom, our league sent a student to participate in Students Inside Albany, April 14-17. Joe Pugliese was the lucky delegate to have the opportunity to learn about law making and lobbying in Albany. We look forward to hearing about Joe's impression of "Albany World."

Jean and Jim McGarry attended **Vote 411** training at LWVNYS on April 10. Having been immersed in how to better publish an electronic voter guide, we are committed to have this available this fall for most local races in Ulster and Dutchess Counties.

Obviously, providing voter service is a huge effort and many are needed to volunteer in whatever capacity you can offer: voter registration, time keeping, moderating, delegate selection for Students Inside Albany, or offering any of your time for the many tasks required to put together an electronic voter guide. As Jim said, look forward to a "summons" and I hope you will heed the call. We will miss Cindy Bell's outstanding leadership as voter service chair.



## Website and Commentator Report 2013

The website and *Commentator* hits have continued to show a modest increase but are still a far cry from the halcyon days of our first three years. Three factors have contributed to the increase – several new members, regeneration of interest of our Dutchess County members and an increased emphasis on more variety in our newsletter. Nevertheless, it is encouraging. A sturdy core of contributors has made this possible. We would be grateful for whatever snippet of information our members would like to have published... electronically, there's always room for more!

Far and above all other pages of the website, the Elections pages are nearly three times more often accessed, most often during the election cycle. The public looks to us for this kind of information. We do have an extensive array of useful links but it has tended to remain stagnant and, of late, has little local material. Having recently attended a **Vote411** training with Jean we expect to revive our local voter guide and should be able to provide “fresh” material for our site visitors. This is part of a nationwide collaboration of the National, State and Local leagues offering a one-stop system to gather candidate information. We will undoubtedly benefit from the extensive publicity that is planned to ensure a more enthusiastic participation rate by our local candidates. For the program to be successful we will need the help of many of our members. Look forward to a “summons” in a few months!

Cost savings efforts for the *Commentator* distribution have continued to be fruitful. We've reduced our snail-mail from 64 to 38 recipients saving over \$500.00 per year. Shirley Kobran has undertaken to call media outlets and libraries that didn't respond to our canvas to find out their interest and encourage them to accept e-mail delivery. Our goal is to eliminate 30 media and library snail-mail deliveries for an additional \$600.00 per year. As there are still quite a few libraries we don't include in our distribution, when the dust has settled on this project we'll move on to expanding our e-mail delivery to them as well.

## Observer Corps

The Observer Corps continues to attend and report in the *Commentator* on many meetings of the Ulster County Legislature. Most legislators are very aware that they are being observers. Most continue to improve their legislative skills. We can observe emergent issues, such as county economic development and food insecurity and continue to follow problems such as resource recovery and health issues. The UCRRA wants to people to attend! City and town meetings could be covered if more observers can be found. Dutchess County reports on fire districts are appreciated as will be Dutchess County legislative reports. Observer training is available. Lee Cane, Vic Melville, Lee Ridgeway, Cindy Lanzetta and Ellie Charwat have been active.

Transparency, fresh air and sunlight are our goals!

## Publicity Report

Publicity for our events is at the mercy of the media, depending on what other news is breaking and how stretched media resources are. If we follow their preferences on submitting material, we usually get space in the calendars and newsbriefs. Coverage of events has depended on the topic and the timing. In 2012-2013, we have done press releases and announcements for ten events.

We try to put notices and press releases in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, *Kingston Freeman*, *Kingston Times*, *Times Herald Record*, *Northern Dutchess News*, and other papers where appropriate. Cable News has on several occasions sent photographer/reporters to our events. Members have appeared several times on WKNY's Jody McTeague show to discuss environmental and political issues. WGHQ has been sent releases for our events. We use community calendars. We are looking at how to use Facebook for additional publicity. We rarely use media advertising for budgetary reasons, although we do occasionally advertise exciting events.

## League of Women Voters Solid Waste Committee

The focus of the Solid Waste (SW) Committee is to monitor the handling of solid waste and educate ourselves and others about "Materials Management" issues in both Ulster and Dutchess Counties.

As the Ulster County Legislature grappled with ideas to help the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA) become self sufficient, the SW Committee monitored Legislative Committee meetings and advised the Committees to:

- Maximize waste reduction, reuse, recycling and organic composting with incentives
- Enable separation of waste into three streams in compliance with the state DEC's "Beyond Waste" plan
- Insure financing for household hazardous waste collection
- Fund enforcement
- Ask questions such as: Will the solution attract or repel business in Ulster County? Will the solution cut down on greenhouse gas? Will the solution comply with the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan directed by the Governor?

Ultimately the Legislature voted to have all residential waste directed to UCCRA for disposal. Known as "Flow Control," this will enable UCRRA to more accurately budget. The Legislature also hopes to gain state approval to expand the UCRRA board. There are ongoing discussions on the best way to maximize materials management in Ulster County. An exciting development at the Agency was the new commercial composting program funded by grants.

Meanwhile, the SW Committee followed developments in Dutchess County. There the Legislature had instituted a county department to oversee solid waste management and the Dutchess County Resource Recovery Agency. This department drafted a 10 year Solid Waste



## Local Program Proposals:

**Continuation of Dutchess County Shared Services Study** to complete exploring ways in which efficiency can be improved by cooperation between communities.

**Continuation of Solid Waste Management Study** to establish efficient and economical ways to recycle and reuse materials, and to dispose of waste safely in an environmentally sound way. This study has had some good results in Ulster County and work is progressing in Dutchess County.

**A new study on the Ulster and Dutchess County budgets.** It seems likely that each county handles some matters better than the other. A comparison of budgets and discussion with county officials should bring an understanding of the similarities and differences in requirements between the counties, and perhaps lead to improved practices on both sides.

**A new study on the financing of local public education.** Pension burdens and the tax cap have made education financing very difficult, and using the property tax as the basis for education spending has become increasingly burdensome. The formula for state aid to school districts is complex and arcane. League commitment to education dictates that study should clarify the issues and find improvements.

**Participation in the national League revisiting of our agricultural policy,** which was adopted in 1988. New developments in technology have brought potential hazards as well as improvements to agricultural methods and the use of agricultural lands. Current policy says that “most essential for the future of agriculture are: encouraging sustainable agriculture, providing research, information and technical assistance to agricultural producers, and increasing reliance on the free market to determine prices.” Does this position need expansion or alteration? Should the carbon footprint of agriculture be singled out for consideration? Should we take a position on genetically modified products? The national League will develop consensus questions, but we should answer them from a position of knowledge and thought.

## Introducing Our Speakers

Dr. Gerald Benjamin is the Associate Vice President for Regional Engagement and Director of the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) at SUNY New Paltz. Previous to the establishment of CRREO in 2008, he was Chair of the Department of Political Science, Faculty Presiding Officer, and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Benjamin has written and commented extensively on state and local government and regional governance, with a special emphasis on New York. He has been involved in major efforts to reform state and local government in and across New York State. Benjamin also served for twelve years as a county elected official and was the chief elected officer in Ulster County for two years. He chaired the Ulster County commission that created the first county charter seven years ago and his recently-published *Oxford Handbook of New York State Government and Politics* offers an unusually comprehensive, detailed, and systematic study of our unique and influential state.

Liz Benjamin hosts *Capital Tonight* each weeknight on the YNN stations across upstate New York. Liz joined the YNN political team in April of 2010 after spending more than a decade reporting and blogging about New York politics for the New York Daily News and the Albany Times Union.

In addition to her duties behind the anchor desk, Liz is the driving force behind Capital Tonight's new blog, **STATE OF POLITICS**, which is found on the Capital Tonight website and on the sites of all the YNN newschannels and NY1. Liz began her career in journalism in 1997 when she joined the staff of the Albany Times Union covering suburban government, City Hall and the State Capitol. She also launched that's paper's political blog, *Capitol Confidential*– the first blog devoted to state politics and government.

In 2007, Liz took a job with the New York Daily News writing a weekly column and taking over primary responsibility for the *Daily Politics* blog, delivering coverage of state politics to New Yorkers in real time.

### Our Student Inside Albany, Joe Pugliese

Joseph Pugliese, a senior at Kingston High School, was chosen by the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region to attend this year's Students Inside Albany.

The 13th annual Students Inside Albany program took place April 14-17, 2013. The program brought approximately 60 students statewide to learn about their state government in Albany.

Mr. Pugliese is an honors student and has served as president of Kingston High School Student Government. He said that his grandmother's death caused him to rethink his priorities and "I completely flipped my life around. I have learned that my back will be against the wall sometimes but overcoming obstacles ... will define me." He said that working for student government was "real world learning" and that the opportunity to go to Albany is "a once in a lifetime opportunity." The highlight for most students is the opportunity to shadow their Senator and Assembly members as they attend legislative sessions.

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