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Newsletter February 2024

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The Prez says ...



I know that right now most of our minds are swirling with concerns about the incredibly important elections that lie ahead in 2024. And if you listen to interviews with voters in the media it would appear that many people have pretty limited knowledge about what really happens in the halls of government.

For one thing, most people think that the president and their own representatives should be able to solve every problem there is, from wars abroad to the price of gas - and all without working with their fellow lawmakers.

You probably want to scream because you know better. And you also know that DC is not the only place where important business is conducted.

If you've attended town or county meetings or state Senate or Assembly meetings, you've seen that other levels of government handle really challenging and important business too. And you may notice that they are probably more functional about it than our Washington reps! (How can they NOT be?!)

So if you want to stop beating your head against a wall about Congress, look closer to home where as a thoughtful, knowledgeable voter you can have much more of an impact and

with much less effort. You can even reach out and TALK to these folks directly! They will probably even listen!

The legislature is back in action at the Capitol and the League is right on top of what's happening there and eager to help you get involved. Just watch for "**Your Weekly Legislative Update from LWVNYS**" that hits your mailbox every week when meetings are going on between now and June. (One just came on January 26th, and has a number of really important bits of news you'll want to see.)

Besides giving you the inside scoop about happenings at the Capitol, it will give you ways to get involved - like the February 3rd Zoom with our LWV issue specialists talking about League priorities for this session. (See more about this elsewhere in this newsletter including a link to register.)

You'll also see info about a lobbying effort in Albany labelled "Turn Off the Plastic Tap" about the Bigger, Better Bottle Bill. It happens for several hours on Tues., February 27th. We might be able to get you a ride if you want one. This is just a sample. Opportunities to interact with live people about live issues abound!

Notice also in this newsletter that Jane Simkin Smith has submitted another report on the Dutchess legislature's last meeting. It's just a taste of the sorts of things discussed (and visible in person or online) by the people making decisions for all Dutchess residents. Such discussions can be yours in Ulster and Orange as well. Just let me know if you need any help in finding them. And reports from other counties would be great!

We all know that January is "get exercising!" month. It applies to your civic self too! You truly can help make better government happen.

Dare Thompson, President, LWVMHR darethompson@gmail.com,
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Action Items



Get the most out of a Membership and Be Involved with Your Local League!

This section offers reports from ongoing groups and a Calendar to keep us connected:

MEETING DATES & ZOOM LINKS-

February

* All members and interested non-members are welcome at all League meetings unless otherwise indicated.

February 3rd

10am

Legislative Hot Topics

LWVNYS Zoom

Register [Here](#)

February 7th

12:00 PM

LWV Mid-Hudson Membership Committee Meeting

Zoom link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82525444407?
pwd=K7bTXgUbH6mKNaDLCiXar4kbTOmckg.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82525444407?pwd=K7bTXgUbH6mKNaDLCiXar4kbTOmckg.1)

February 16th

12:00 PM

Southern Tier Meeting

[The Silk Factory](#)

Newburgh

February 20th

8:00 PM

LWVMHR Board Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87841231146?
pwd=dFp5bDdtZFNvWjNMRTkyTVBCRmg3dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87841231146?pwd=dFp5bDdtZFNvWjNMRTkyTVBCRmg3dz09)

February 26th

1:45 PM

LWVMHR Book Club

[Enzo's Restaurant](#)

Kingston

March 9th

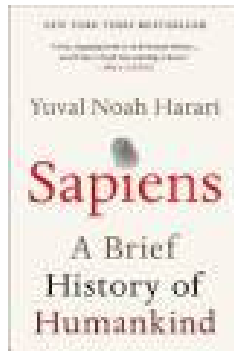
10:30 AM

ERA Discussion

Greenburg Library, Elmsford or ZOOM

Register [HERE](#)





LWVMHR Book Club Meeting

February 26th

1:45pm

Our next book discussion will be "**Sapiens- A Brief History of Mankind**".

from Amazon:

"From a renowned historian comes a groundbreaking narrative of humanity's creation and evolution—a #1 international bestseller—that explores the ways in which biology and history have defined us and enhanced our understanding of what it means to be "human.

One hundred thousand years ago, at least six different species of humans inhabited Earth. Yet today there is only one—homo sapiens. What happened to the others? And what may happen to us?

Most books about the history of humanity pursue either a historical or a biological approach, but Dr. Yuval Noah Harari breaks the mold with this highly original book that begins about 70,000 years ago with the appearance of modern cognition. From examining the role evolving humans have played in the global ecosystem to charting the rise of empires, Sapiens integrates history and science to reconsider accepted narratives, connect past developments with contemporary concerns, and examine specific events within the context of larger ideas.

Dr. Harari also compels us to look ahead, because over the last few decades humans have begun to bend laws of natural selection that have governed life for the past four billion years. We are acquiring the ability to design not only the world around us, but also ourselves. Where is this leading us, and what do we want to become?"

Meeting will be 1:45 PM, at [Enzo's Ristorante](#) in Kingston.

All members are welcome to join. Bring a friend and discover a new experience with League Members.

As always, we encourage members to borrow the book from the library or purchase from local booksellers.

Daisy Tyler

daisytyler68@hotmail.com



Legislative Hot Topics Event: Saturday, February 3rd

Join the State League the League's state issue specialists on February 3rd at 10:00AM for a virtual event about the 2024 legislative session. This program will take a look at how the New York State League adopts and takes action on issues and sets legislative priorities. We will also introduce the various state issue specialists, how members can get engaged in their work, and what the expected hot topics are for the 2024 legislative session.

Register for this program [here](#).



IS THE LEAGUE POLITICAL?

A little Q and A

"What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?" and "Can we do either? both?"

A fairly new member asked these questions recently and we decided other people have these questions too, so we're sharing the answers.

ADVOCACY is encouraging people to support (or oppose) a particular issue (like reducing the use of plastics or banning assault weapons or increasing affordable housing). Activities might be having a panel discussion on the topic, creating an ad or bumper sticker encouraging certain behaviors, or sending the newspaper a letter-to-the-editor.

It is only when an organization or individual speaks up about **a particular piece of legislation** that they have moved into LOBBYING territory.

When we go to Albany to advocate for the League, we are given specific bills to talk about. That's lobbying.

"How much of either can a League member do?"

Our local League is a nonprofit, but its IRS designation is 501(c)(4), not 501(c)(3), so it can lobby all it wants! That's why if you want a tax deduction for giving to us, you have to send us a separate check made out to the state League's Education Foundation with our name on the memo line. LWVNY's Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) while LWVNY itself is a 501(c)(4).

If your mailbox fills up regularly with appeals you may have probably noticed that other organizations in Albany and DC also have both a "c3" as well as a "c4" - e.g. the Planned Parenthood clinics and educational efforts are 501(c)(3) entities and the lobbying for reproductive freedom is done through its "action fund" - a 501(c)(4).

Many 501(c)(3) organizations are so afraid of being called out for doing lobbying, they carefully avoid anything that even looks like it. But actually most nonprofits can do far more lobbying than they think they can. Few even get close to the limit. This is why if we could recreate the LWV, we would probably opt to be 100% a 501(c)(3) organization that accepts tax-deductible donations. Laws have evolved over the past century!

“Can we still be credible in these distressingly divided times?”

YES! Somehow even now we continue to maintain the public's confidence in our fairness. Our nonpartisanship and our thoughtful, well-researched positions are our greatest assets, especially now. Even when people say we lean too much toward one party's policies, our reasonable, courteous approach keeps doors open. We are also still trusted to register voters and moderate candidate events.

“If I'm a big supporter of a certain candidate, can I still be active in the League?”

YES to that too! It takes some care and discretion, but except for highly visible members like the president or voter services chair who have to be especially careful about how they are perceived, League members can either just help behind the scenes or learn how to put their private views aside when they are wearing a League “hat” publicly. 104 years ago, our founder, Carrie Chapman Catt, insisted we should and could be nonpartisan even when others insisted it would never work. In 2024 we will continue to prove her right. The country still needs at least one organization like us.



2024 Promises Broad Protection for All New Yorkers' Equal Rights

The New York State League of Women Voters is an active partner in the effort to pass a constitutional amendment adding to existing enumerated protections against discrimination based on race and religion.

This amendment would explicitly prohibit discrimination based on a person’s ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, and sex—

including their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, reproductive healthcare and autonomy.

Check out this website:

<https://nyequalrights.org/>

The LWVMHR had our first committee meeting on January 24th. We are making a list of groups in the MidHudson Region that we can partner with to spread accurate information to the electorate.

Are you interested in joining our LWVMHR ERA task force? If so, contact Cindy Lanzatta at packback56@yahoo.com or Louise Reavis at louise.reavis@gmail.com

Our Committee's next meeting will take place on February 16th, during the second half of the Southern Tier Meeting at the [Silk Factory](#) in Newburgh (regular mtg at noon, ERA discussion 12:45)



Observer Corps

An important part of a local League organization is an "Observer Corps" made up of volunteers who attend County Legislative Meetings. LWVMHR Member Jane Simkin Smith attended

(virtually) the Dutchess County Legislative Meeting that took place on January 16th, 2024.

This meeting was a business meeting with important discussions. Ms. Smith attended virtually and wrote up an interesting summary of her observations and you can find them [HERE](#)

We look forward to her future reports and hope we can find some members who can pop into the County Legislative Meetings in Orange & Ulster, as well!



Regional Meetup Groups

Southern Tier:

This group is made up of members from Orange County, Southern Dutchess County, and Southern Ulster County.

Our next regular meeting will be February 16th, noon, at the [Silk Factory](#) in Newburgh.

We will have a special discussion about the latest ERA developments during the second half of the meeting!

All League members & friends are welcome to attend!

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Environmental Impact



Brief COP28 Report January 2024

(COP stands for the 'conference of the parties' to the United Nations climate convention - this meeting held in Dubai)

Well, I just sat down for the 5th time to write something that didn't qualify for Book Club. My head is just bursting with details, all of them of critical importance in this global crisis.

There were 12 participants on our LWVUS-UN (LWVUS-United Nations) team, some in person and others, like me, virtually. It was nice to be able to see the events in my pajamas but not anything like being there in person.

The events I observed started at midnight and ended at 9:00am our time, so there was a great deal that I sadly missed. I was able

to get on to nearly every event at the Hydrogen Transition Forum and took quite a few notes at those.

The Agri-Food Forum and the Circular Economy were the other subjects I followed. My notes became bullet points, as I felt a narrative wouldn't add anything to the readability of the facts. Please check our LWVMHR website for the full notes.

It is all incredibly interesting and mostly positive information (until politics enters the picture). All three of the themes I observed have been elevated in importance at this COP and will be more thoroughly addressed in the future.

I was among the more than 100,000 viewers attending virtually. Although this was not ideal, it may be possible for LWVUS-UN to have more League participants in the future. At this point, participation was limited to twelve, staggered over the two weeks.

The LWVUS team included several members who were invited to speak or were panelists at the COP. These women covered Children's Issues for the Rotary and UNICEF, the WHO (World Health Organization) and the Arctic, as experts. All identified themselves as official LWVUS-UN Observers during the panels.

Other attendees were basically independent observers and covered topics they had professional experience in or were most interested in. It was noted that, in comparison to COP26, this event had more of a 'trade show' feel to it, with polished and very expensive exhibits.

It was also noted that an Emirate representative was present at every negotiation, though this time, negotiations were easier for observers to access, probably due to the post-Covid world.

At the post-COP Zoom, League members discussed LWV participation and how we can share climate-related issues within

our membership. Connecting with other women's organizations, participation with LWVUS's Climate Interest Group and having a caucus, panel or event at the national convention this year were discussed at the meeting.

There are so many other urgent matters for the League to attend in our country, at this time, that climate issues might not get the attention they deserve unless we can weave climate through our conversations. The changing climate's effect on health and healthcare delivery is a growing issue, especially among children and underserved populations.

Stay tuned.

Cindy Bell



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News Items



Congressman Pat Ryan

Ulster Regional Chamber of Commerce Breakfast

I attended the Chamber Breakfast this morning with featured speaker Congressman Pat Ryan with low expectations of the event and was in awe of the outcome, so thought I should share this with my fellow League members.

First off, the Congressman was repeatedly interrupted by activists supporting a ceasefire in Gaza. He was incredibly gracious and patient with them as the interrupters were escorted one by one from the venue by Secret Service personnel.

Congressman Ryan explained that he knew who these people were and had a number of conversations with them in the past. He went on to outline his concerns about the current state of the House of Representatives and spoke about his positions on many other issues like gun control, border security and the status of the Middle East, calling out by name the leadership of both Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu and Gaza, Hamas.

When the floor opened for questions from the audience, he again

addressed the war in Gaza with an audience member concerned with what our government is doing to promote a ceasefire. He said he has a 7-point proposal for peace and that will definitely include a 2-state solution and would be happy to share that.

Another audience member stood to discuss a more local issue with healthcare and complimented the Congressman on his unwavering support and assistance to Ellenville Hospital, which has made all the difference to them.

Another audience member brought up the FAFSA program for her college-age children. He did not have an immediate answer and asked her to follow up with his office so they could discuss it further. A staff member gave her a card so she could do that.

There was so much more to this event than I can explain here and I'm sure media will provide more details in the coming days. I had to leave the breakfast for an urgent personal matter even as Congressman Ryan continued to interact with audience members, kindly going far over his expected speaking time.

On the way out I did take a brief moment to speak with Juan Figueroa, Ulster County Sheriff and Undersheriff Mullen, about coming to the jail for a voter registration/education visit before the Presidential Primary in April. He appreciated the offer and I will follow up with him to do that.

Finally, on my way out of the parking lot, I encountered a large group of protesters that blocked my way so they could get a photo of their group.

Ulster County Sheriffs and Kingston City Police Departments were on hand to ensure smooth passage for the Chamber crowd when the event ended.

This was a spectacular event and I'm so very glad I decided to get

up in the dark and brave the bad weather to be there. It has been substantially harder to do so since I'm no longer working but you can be sure I'll do it again!

I encourage every member to choose a community organization to join and support. Networking opportunities and interesting programming abound in every county.

I chose the UC Regional Chamber partly because their support of our League's activities is long and excellent. We are part of their annual Candidate Events and hope to continue. LWVMHR is a member of this Chamber and you are welcome to sign up for events with your LWVMHR membership.

I encourage all members to find your own place and reap the benefits of being part of your neighborhood. You'll be glad you did for so many reasons.

Oh, and don't forget to wear your League pin as long as your chosen organization is non-partisan.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Bell



[New York Times Article](#) Highlights Important New Laws for 2024:

Schools have to make voter registration forms available

As part of a law intended to teach young people “that their voice matters in the political process,” most schools in New York will be required to provide eligible students with voter registration and preregistration forms during the school year. Preregistration allows 16- and 17-year-olds to ensure they can vote once they turn 18.

The legislation, which lawmakers hope will promote long-term civic engagement after years of abysmal voter turnout among young people, also requires schools to help students fill out the registration forms.

Inmates must be told of their voting rights before release

Those who have been previously convicted of a felony must be notified — both verbally and in writing — before they are released from a state correctional facility that their voting rights will be restored once they get out.

The facility’s chief administrative officer must also provide those who are leaving with a voter registration application and offer assistance in filling it out, should they choose to do so.



AAUW invites NYS LWV Deputy Director to speak about the NYERA

Saturday, March 9 at 10:30AM

Greenburgh Public Library,
300 Tarrytown Rd, Elmsford and via Zoom

Visit <https://greenburghlibrary.libcal.com/event/10921598> for in-person or virtual registration.

Come learn about the NYERA Amendment that will be on your ballot this November. SPEAKER Erica Smitka, Deputy Director at the League of Women Voters of New York State, will speak about what this amendment to the NY State Constitution means and how important it is for every New Yorker.





Black Church Coalition Names Voting Among Priorities

"[The Christian Century](#)" magazine reports that The Conference of National Black Churches is partnering with The National Action Network in a new joint get-out-the-vote initiative that will train clergy and organizers this year.



Special Thanks Are In Order for These Folks and Businesses That Help Us Do Our Work!

Anthos USA (match via Beveridge)

Auchincloss, Stuart and Susan

Beinkafner, Kathie

Bell, Cindy and Don

Brice, Christine and Frank

Buckley, Alison

Cane, Lee

Carroll, Matt
Casatuta, Fay
Cernos, Christina
Charwat, Ellie and Martin
Chase, Helen
Chin, Betty
Colclough, Sally
Doty, Lisa
Fallert, Johanna
Frazier, Cecily and Mike
Gardiner, Kevin and Eric Beveridge
Giannascoli, David
Handel, Shirley Havnaer, Adriana and Doug
Huntley, Phyllis
Menking, Kirsten
Redmond, Mary
Scherer, Nora
Sellers, Margaret and Vic Melville
Smith, Jane Simkin
Thompson, Dare and Doug
Tyler, Daisy
Waslyn, Gloria/Ulster
Co. Women's Network
Weissman, Alicia
Whitecliff Winery/Yancey Migliore



We also have an archive of videos done by our local LWV Mid-

Hudson on YouTube!
You can access them [here](#).

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Editor's Note:

We want you to know that we welcome your feedback with regard to anything you read in this newsletter, or items that you would like to see. We're here for you and would like to hear from you. Contact info@lwvmidhudson.org. Thanks. Next Newsletter deadline is February 21st.

Also note: this and previous issues of our newsletter are available for viewing on our website lwvmidhudson.org.

info@lwvmidhudson.org

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