



Newsletter March 2023

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The Prez says ...



Ranked Choice Voting (RCV): I thank all of you who participated in one way or another in the RCV concurrence discussion, with special thanks to Gerda Maissel and Dave Heller for their leadership! Except for one person who was very concerned about this new method making people even

more suspicious about the integrity of our elections, all comments were very positive. We hope that by using this method more, at least in primaries, we can help lower the temperature in campaigns, make voters feel that they are not just voting for the lesser of two evils, and generally make things more democratic.

We will now join several other local Leagues in lobbying to have the state LWV convention in June adopt RCV as a statewide position in the elections laws section of our state Impact on Issues. Meanwhile we can encourage parties to use it locally.

Speaking of lobbying, look for a separate article in this newsletter about visiting your State Senator or Assembly member. Many of the legislators have been serving for awhile, some are well-known to us, like newly minted senator Rolison, the former mayor of Poughkeepsie and previously the head of the Dutchess legislature, and some are brand new to us. Each visit is usually less than a half hour but its impact on you is likely to be long-lasting. Some may make you mad, some may be a delight, but no matter what, you are likely to come away with a more nuanced understanding about how your government works. We especially welcome new members. You will not be forced to speak - you are allowed to just listen.

As the separate article on Legislative Visits points out, while the Senate lines are new this year, the Assembly lines were not approved after they were challenged in court last spring, so the Assembly is being redistricted right now. You may have a lively discussion with your current Assembly person about what's happening to his or her district! Some changes are bound to be dramatic.

Finally, dear friends in Ulster County, we encourage you to pay attention to changes that are being made to the County Charter.

The Charter requires that a Commission be established every ten years to keep the charter up to date and one has been at work since last year. It is winding up soon and I hope you'll stop by on March 2nd (5 pm) or at a later meeting to see it in action.

If you want to know more about the issues the Commission is debating, let me know. Our good League member, Tom Kadgen, is on the Commission, understands the charter well, and will be happy to share what he knows. The Commission also has a website, <https://ulstercountyny.gov/charter-revision-commission>, where you can see who's serving, when meetings are, and minutes of past meetings.

Democracy is not a spectator sport and the League provides lots of ways to get out on the field. Join the "play"!

Dare Thompson

President

darethompson@gmail.com

845-236-3074 (preferred) 845-591-3445 (cell)

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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 - March

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

March 2nd

5 PM

Ulster County Charter Reform Commission's next meeting:

6th floor, County Office Bldg, Kingston

The Commission welcomes visitors!

March 7th

12:30 AM

LWV Mid-Hudson Membership Committee Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86309152442?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86309152442?pwd=eGlxQU1WRG53NE9SWUNZS1I1eWExZz09)

[pwd=eGlxQU1WRG53NE9SWUNZS1I1eWExZz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86309152442?pwd=eGlxQU1WRG53NE9SWUNZS1I1eWExZz09)

March 13th

1:45 PM

LWVMHR Book Club

[Enzo's Restaurant](#)

Kingston

March 16th

7 PM

LWVMHR

Board Meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82555616265?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82555616265?pwd=M0w4bFJCL0U1cTY4Q3l6RUtlY1F1dz09)

[pwd=M0w4bFJCL0U1cTY4Q3l6RUtlY1F1dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82555616265?pwd=M0w4bFJCL0U1cTY4Q3l6RUtlY1F1dz09)

March 24th

11 AM

Ulster County Naturalization Ceremony

Contact Daisy Tyler

daisytyler68@hotmail.com

March 24th

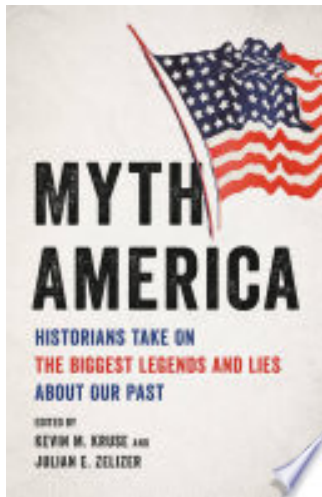
Noon

League Southern Tier Meetup

[Silk Factory](#), Newburgh

Special guest speaker, Julie Shiroishi, "Insights into becoming better lobbyists"

SAVE THE DATE: Thursday June 15th - Annual Meeting!!!



LWVMHR Book Club Meeting

by Daisy Tyler

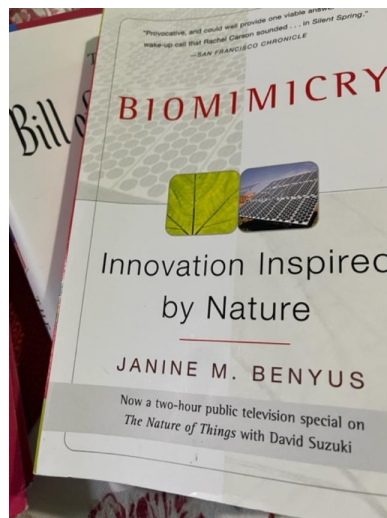
Last month, we found "Myth America" so interesting that we decided to repeat it as the reading for our Book Club on March 13th. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, this book is a compilation of essays debunking some common mythology of the history of our society. These essays are written by prominent historians from universities and other media.

Our upcoming book for April 17th will be "Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired By Nature" by Janine M. Benyus. Biomimicry is a unique book. It introduces you to the science of the future. As one critic writes - "It's a primer that will teach you how to think like a blade of grass, a duck pond, a wheat field, a red wood forest, and thus

to live within the natural order. It is not about ecological thinking; its instructions and revelations come straight from nature...”

All Book Club meetings are at [Enzo's Restaurant](#) in Kingston at 1:45PM. Any League Member is welcome. Bring a friend! Hope to see you next time!

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



April's Selection



Mid Hudson Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) Concurrence

by Gerda Maissel, MD,
BCPA, CPE

On February 7, 2023, the
Mid Hudson Region
chapter of the League of
Women Voters held a

concurrence on Ranked Choice Voting. After a discussion of the

pros and cons of RCV, the members present were in agreement to concur with the NYC position on Ranked Choice Voting.

(see below)

Thank you to all who participated in the subcommittee to study Ranked Choice Voting as well as those who attended the Concurrence session.

"We support ranked-choice voting (sometimes called "instant runoff voting") in all local elections, including primaries, specials, and general elections.

Voters should have the option to rank at least three and at most six candidates for a given office.

The counting should cease to reallocate votes once a candidate receives over 50% of the current round's vote.

RCV/IRV should happen instead of any head-to-head runoffs that might otherwise have occurred.

Adequate funding should be provided for training, equipment, staff, and voter education."

Ulster County YWCA Collaboration Report

by Cindy Bell

Dare Thompson, Cindy Lanzetta and Cindy Bell had the opportunity to meet and talk with Athena Demetra Fliakos (CEO) and Isis Benitez (Director of Community Outreach, Advocacy & Public Relations) at the [Ulster](#)

County YWCA in Kingston. We toured the facility and discussed the many ways our missions intersect and how we can collaborate to enhance both our organizations.

Their enthusiasm matched ours as we looked forward to plans for a community event (**Jamboree on the Academy Green**, Kingston in June) and a co-sponsored honoree event at the end of summer.

That they were generous was an understatement. Rooms for meetings and events, space for programs and joint outreach ('We're better together') were just a few of the topics of conversation.

Please email Cindy Bell for inclusion on the email list or to be a part of future events at cindylwv@gmail.com. Join us for some fun!



Isis Benitez, Athena Demetra Fliakos, Cindy Lanzetta, Dare Thompson



Ms Magazine

LWVNYS/ Mid-Hudson ERA Advocacy Taskforce News by Louise Reavis

The next meeting of the ERA task force will be Tuesday, March 7 at 6:30. If you are

interested in joining the LWV-MHR's ERA Education Committee and would like to attend this meeting, please contact Cindy Lanzatta (packback56@yahoo.com) or Louise Reavis (louise.reavis@gmail.com) for the link to the meeting.

Since the legislature passed the bill in January of this year, for the second time (the first time was last June), we are now preparing for the education campaign on the ballot measure for the public. Our goal is to keep voters energized and engaged on this issue through a myriad of activities including such things as op-eds and letters to the editor in local newspapers, social media posts and "Get to Know the ERA" events for the public.

The ERA Amendment will be on the ballot for New York state in November of 2024. Currently our state constitution only protects against racial and religious discrimination. The proposed ERA would protect discrimination by the government based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, age, disability and sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes. It would also protect against any government actions that might affect a person's access to reproductive health care. Please join us in supporting this important amendment to the New York state constitution!

PRE-BUDGET LEGISLATIVE VISITS 2023

Every year in March, our League members have arranged visits to their local State Senators and Assembly members and this



year will be no different. LWVNYS provides full information and instructions on the how-to of these annual events. It's a wonderful way to introduce legislators to the League and for member constituents to get to know their elected representatives.

There are a few of us that have been doing it for a long time and others who will be venturing forth for the first time.

The State League provides a list of 3-5 questions to be asked and teams of 2-6 members, along with all of the foundational information for each question. One member makes the appointment (I usually ask for 30 minutes) to meet at their local office. One member will ask the questions and another will take notes for the visit. If you're lucky, you have a representative who is interested in what else you have questions about or are interested in but generally, you'll be out in half an hour, especially if it's a busy office. In person visits are preferred, though we've done Zoom for the last couple of years (that's how I know it's better in person).

League members should meet with their own representatives and deadlines for the visits are before the budget deadline, which is April 1st.

For more information or to join a team, please contact [Cindy Bell](#) or Dare Thompson through the general League email at info@lwvmidhudson.org.



Medical Aid in Dying

by Kathie Beinkafner

On WAMC public radio from Albany, Dr. Alan Chartock interviewed Corinne

Carey, Senior Campaign Director at Compassion and Choices.

She is the leader who is helping to get the New York State Legislature to pass the AID IN DYING ACT. The interview was on “The Capitol Connection” show # 2301 and aired on January 5th and 7th, 2023.

You can hear the program interview [Here](#).

The League has supported passage of this bill for about 7 years. 59% of New Yorkers support passage of this law in a poll by Marist College in 2021. This is the year - we need to apply pressure to our representatives and get this bill passed before we pass. There is a website called “compassionandchoices.org” where additional information can be obtained,



RURAL CAUCUS MEETING REPORT

by Cindy Bell

There were 14 participants from across the state plus an observer from LWV North Dakota on this very informative Zoom. Most of us are aware of rural issues, with lack of broadband access, since the pandemic exposed many of those problems. This lively committee has been discussing much more than the internet.

Read on...

One of the many specific areas of interest covered in this session was funding for EMS (Emergency Medical Services). Emergency Medical Technicians are poorly paid, so many are leaving the field for more lucrative employment, leaving residents badly in need of more coverage and stretching existing staff thin. Funding for salaries and equipment are critical to continue and expand services. These first responders may have long distances to travel

before getting to the patient and even longer distances before reaching a hospital, so EMTs are the best, and sometimes only, chance for the most positive outcome.

Another area of concern is maternity care. There are two counties in New York State that are maternity care 'deserts', making prenatal care and delivery services much more challenging. Families with two working parents, as most are, have the additional difficulty of finding affordable childcare in rural areas.

For the elderly, long-term care often means residing outside of their communities, with family members having to travel long distances to visit. Homecare staff is not paid a living wage and this is a real problem even in well-populated areas.

Finally, the high rural suicide rate is linked to lack of mental health and other support services.

There seems to be a disconnect between politicians and places where fewer constituents live, though there are a number of bills in both the State Senate and Assembly to address some of these issues. Those bills with their corresponding identification numbers were presented so that participants could support their elected representatives in order to ensure passage.

This is just a sample of the very pleasant hour I spent with these wonderful people. I plan to continue to attend and would love to see any of our members with common concerns join in.

The Rural Caucus group welcomes all and if you would like to participate in one of their semi-monthly Zoom meetings, please contact Kathy Stein at kstein1@twcny.rr.com. The committee is also planning to present the caucus at LWVNYS Convention this June. The next meeting is in April and Kathy will send the agenda

and link to anyone interested.

Regional Meetup Groups

A report on the
"Southern Tier
Group"

The LWV Mid-
Hudson Region
Southern Tier had
its monthly
meeting at the Silk
Factory Cafe on
Friday, February 17th.



Southern Tier Meeting in Newburgh

In spite of some rainy weather, we had a delightful time enjoying good food, fellowship, and plans for upcoming events. Thanks to many of our Orange County members, we will be doing voter registration in the Minisink High School the first week of March. Plans are being made for more Voter Services Outreach, as well as Legislative Visits.

Next meeting for the Southern Tier is Friday, March 24th, noon. We have a private VIP meeting room now, at the [Silk Factory](#)! We will have a special guest speaker, Julie Shiroishi, talk about ways to improve lobbying our legislators. RSVP's are appreciated. If you are interested in joining us, call Cindy Lanzetta for more information on logistics! 845-236-7288 or packback56@yahoo.com.

Alert! The Nominating Committee is looking for thoughtful and helpful folks to add their insights and talents to our board for the 2023-24 year and beyond.



The Committee consists of three members that the Annual Meeting elected last June - Pat Lamanna, Jean McGarry, Kathy OConnor - plus Sheba Abraham and Cindy Bell who were appointed by the board as our bylaws require. These five will be interviewing potential candidates over the next few months and presenting a slate at the June 2023 Annual Meeting.

We know there are many hidden talents to be discovered in our growing membership and we are eager to reflect the diversity of the three counties we now serve. The pandemic limited our ability to discover these talents, so please help us find them! Contact info@lwvmidhudson.org to express your interest.

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Environmental Impact

Our Valuable Forests

New York State's
forests are home

to more than 100 tree species and comprise 61% of our land area, which is around an acre for each of the 19.4 million residents.



Everyone knows that caring for our forests has positive benefits, though you may not know that

14.4 of the 18.6 million acres in New York State is privately owned and employs more than 60,000 people? These activities add \$4.6b to the state's economy each year.

Maintaining and responsibly harvesting trees for timber, pulp and wood chips not only contributes to our economic health, it also keeps us healthy.

Whether living in the woods or living in a city, being around trees, even in parks or suburban yards, is good for us.

Being out and around trees is an immune system booster.

Breathing in fresh air provides phytoncides that have antibacterial and antifungal qualities that help plants fight disease. When breathed in, our bodies increase the number and activity of white blood cells called 'natural killer' cells, which are responsible for removing tumor- and virus-infected cells in our bodies.

There is further research being done and evidence shows that the benefits of being in forested areas lasts a good deal beyond exposure time.

Besides the immune system benefits, being around trees helps us focus, recover faster from illness and makes us happier people.

This year on Earth Day, take the opportunity to plant a tree, sponsor a planting or just get out in the woods to enjoy the fresh air. You'll be glad you did.

Cindy Bell, Tree Hugger

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News Items



Are Women Town Councilmen?

Thanks to the hard work of committed people like Margaret Bartley, Legislators Carrie Woerner & Samra Brouk and the League of Women Voters, the State of New York has changed the law in order to

allow people to run as "Council Members" in their Towns.

According to the article in "Talk of the Towns", written by Margaret Bartley, "After I read the law, I knew it was time for a

change. With the help of NY League of Women Voters and women in the State Legislature, the **Gender Equality Language** bill moved through the 2022 NY Legislature . On August 17, 2022, the first woman Governor of New York, Kathy Hochul, signed the **Gender Equality Language** bill into law. With the 2023 local elections coming in just a few months, potentially hundreds of women who want to run for office can finally run as council members, no matter what size town they live in."



Members Cindy Bell & Andy Lutz attended the Kingston YMCA Kickoff to Black History Month 2023. Cindy included a brief history:

Established in 1976 by President Gerald Ford to reveal and celebrate the often-forgotten accomplishments of African-Americans.

The first such occasion was created by historian, author and journalist Carter G Woodson in 1925 and called Negro History Week. It took place in February between the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Numerous mayors adopted the celebration and the federal government adopted it in 1976, making it last the entire month.

“Truth comes to us from the past, then, like gold washed down from the mountains.” Carter G Woodson.

The 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, states that “voting rights could not be denied or abridged by the UNS or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

The KKK was founded in 1865 and the [KKK Act](#), to suppress it, was signed into law by President Ulysses Grant. However, in the early 1900s, the KKK was revived because of increased immigration and again during the 1950s-60s during the era of Civil Rights. The KKK still exists today.

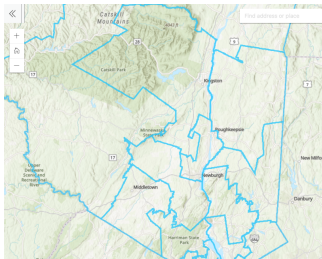
Black Codes existing in most Southern State legislatures denied the right for Black people to vote by demanding literacy tests (many freed slaves still not able to read and write), poll taxes and other discriminatory practices. Some voters were told to recite the Constitution or complicated parts of state election law. Others were simply lied to about polling places, dates and times or registration status. Poll taxes were not eliminated for federal elections until 1964.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law by Lyndon Johnson as a result of continued state and local voter suppression activities, especially in the south. The impetus for this timing is partially a result of the Selma to Montgomery March on March 7, 1965. That event sparked such outrage that Congress finally realized action was required. It passed the Senate by a 77-19 vote (Democrats 47-16 and Republicans 30-2). Only Southern State representatives voted against it.

In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act requiring states with a history of voter discrimination to seek federal approval before changing their state's election laws. We know that some states have imposed new restrictions (ID, early voting, etc.) disproportionately affecting people of color, the elderly and the poor.

The League Visits TriValley High School

League Members Marilyn Jones & Cindy Lanzetta met with the TriValley "Civics & Social Justice Class" in Grahamsville. This pilot program encourages students to identify local issues, research and do a project to address the issue. It's very hands on and the students are bright and enthusiastic! We look forward to being a resource to the class and going back to see their final projects in June.



We also have an archive of videos done by our local LWV Mid-Hudson on YouTube! You can access them [here](#).

You can see the New York State 2022 Redistricting Maps [HERE](#). Controversy continues on the NYS Assembly district maps.

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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 March 20th.

Also note: this and previous issues of our newsletter are available

for viewing on our website lwvmidhudson.org.

info@lwvmidhudson.org

lwvmidhudson.org



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