



Newsletter August 2023

Table of Contents (When viewing the entire newsletter you can click on the title to go directly to that item)

- [The Prez says...](#)
- [Action Items](#)
- [Environmental Impact](#)
- [News Items](#)
- [Editor's Note](#)

The Prez says ...



I don't know why the song says "livin' is easy" in the summertime because our League board has met twice this July just to talk about Voter Service work. Once September comes we will be busier than ever with voter registration, Vote411, and candidate events and we hope you will all want to

help.

We are organizing all the registration and Vote411 efforts by counties to make it more manageable, so if you want to volunteer, just reach out to Louise Reavis (louise.reavis@gmail.com) in Orange, Lisa Bretherick (lisabretherick@gmail.com) in Dutchess, or me, for now, in Ulster (darethompson@gmail.com).

Voter registration is our first priority because September 19 is National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) and we are trying to get as many individuals and groups working with us as possible. Might you get a group that you are connected with (e.g. your church, your favorite political action group, your local school or library - ETC!) to work and make the day even bigger? Go to the website for NVRD (nationalvoterregistrationday.org) to see the amazing number of for-profit and non-profit groups who are sponsoring this effort! Of course LWV at all levels is signed up and NVRD will be mailing out posters and other supplies to everyone (like the LWVMHR) who are on their list.

[Vote411](#) is also a cooperative effort with LWVUS and LWVNYS and others, but we are still learning more about how we will manage this so stay tuned for more in the next newsletter or just call or email me with questions or offers of help if you want to get started right away. If you are connected to a political party in your county you may be especially good at helping us get information from candidates, so please consider helping us make Vote411 work better for our three counties. It will take many people to do it well.

Finally, we need more people willing to help with candidate events, particularly moderators and timekeepers. We will be providing training in late August/early September, so stay tuned for that too - but don't hesitate to let us know right now if you are

interested.

If you are a League member, I know you want to **Empower Voters and Defend Democracy**. So please plan to join us in this work in September - or reach out to us sooner!

Dare Thompson

845-236-3074

darethompson@gmail.com

[CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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-

August - September

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

August 2nd

12:00 PM

LWV Mid-Hudson Membership Committee Meeting

Zoom link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84179974295?
pwd=S1U0bEZ5TjFJcWp1UituUEVWcmw5dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84179974295?pwd=S1U0bEZ5TjFJcWp1UituUEVWcmw5dz09)

August 4th

2 PM

Dutchess County Naturalization Ceremony

Fishkill Recreational Center

Fishkill

August 7th

1:45 PM

LWVMHR Book Club

[Enzo's Restaurant](#)

Kingston

August 15th

8 PM

Discussion on Affirmative Action Decision

Zoom link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83690132027?
pwd=by8wWkNRWE5HQXhxRUFnS1F3amo4QT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83690132027?pwd=by8wWkNRWE5HQXhxRUFnS1F3amo4QT09)

August 17th

7 PM

LWVMHR Board Meeting

Zoom link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87841231146?
pwd=dFp5bDdtZFNvWjNMRtkyTVBCRmg3dz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87841231146?pwd=dFp5bDdtZFNvWjNMRtkyTVBCRmg3dz09)

August 18th

12:00 PM

Southern Tier Meeting

[The Silk Factory](#)

Newburgh

September 8th

11 AM

Ulster County Naturalization Ceremony

Quimby Theater, UCCC

Stone Ridge

September 19th

[National Voter Registration Day](#)

Opportunities to do Voter Registration will happen all week!

Watch your email for information!

September 20th

11 AM

Orange County Naturalization Ceremony

Newburgh Armory

Newburgh



LWVMHR Book Club Meeting

At July's regular meeting, members decided to choose from an array of topics related to American History during the Civil War. We decided to read some of the Inaugural Presidential Addresses including Lincoln's First and Second Inaugural Addresses and his speech at Gettysburg.

Why go back to such a long time passed, you might ask yourself and, besides, we already studied all this at school.

Looking through the lenses of time, we discover in Lincoln not a mere historical figure but rather a man that answered the call of time. A man that, with his monumental decisions, laid the foundation of our republic. Yes, he was a political figure with all his frailties, but he stayed true to the Union he swore to protect preserve and defend.

Where are the people like Lincoln who will find the moral resolve to do the right thing for the country, today? How is it that our present leaders find themselves in a quagmire of decision making when trying to decide what is right for the people? Lincoln told the South, in so many terms: "In your hands my dissatisfied compatriots, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. Is your decision to go to war? "

Was he thinking about his political career? Or was he true to the people who have voted for him? Did his religious affiliation or other reasons stop him from doing the right thing? No. He stayed on course and did the right thing.

In our readings we find people like Lincoln struggling to do the right thing, and that, in spite the difficulties, managed to stay on course.

NEXT BOOK READINGS –

August 7th

1984

Author George Orwell

September 18th

UNRAVELED: The Life and Death of a Garment

Author Maxine Bedat

October 16th

Countdown

Authors Shanna HSwan, Phd. & Stacey Colino

Note: The Book Club meets at 1:45pm monthly on the listed Mondays 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

ERA Update



No matter our gender, age, disability status, or cultural background, we all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Check out this website:

<https://nyequalrights.org/>

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.

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

We hope to begin meeting regularly to prepare for the campaign in 2024. In the meantime, read the info on the website and watch this space!

Regional Meetup Groups

A report on the "Southern Tier Group" by Cindy Lanzatta

On July 21st, we had a good turnout at our



monthly meeting at the [Silk Factory](#) in Newburgh. We discussed National Voter Registration Day and Leslie Simons will coordinate activities for the Southern Tier. Already planned:

September 18th, Orange County Community College (Middletown).

September 19th, East Fishkill Library.

September 20th, Orange County Community College (Newburgh).

Louise Reavis spoke about [Vote411](#).

Daisy Tyler made a special trip, from Kingston, to deliver additional voter registration material.

The group agreed to plan a meeting on Domestic Violence in October. We will also work to stagger future meetings so people who can't meet during the day can join us.

Our next regular meeting will be August 18th, noon, at the [Silk](#)

Factory. All League members & friends are welcome to attend!

Vote 411 Help Needed!

by Louise Reavis

Are you familiar with the voter registration tool sponsored by the LWV known as Vote 411? If not, you should be.



This website enables all voters to simply type in their address and instantly have access to all the voting information they could possibly need from how and where to register in their area, to finding out what races are on their ballot (national, state, county and local town or village), even information from candidates about their stand on important issues and recordings of any debates that have occurred.

Sound impressive? It is, but it takes a lot of time and effort to set up, which is where the local leagues come in.

While national and state data are entered already, each local league is asked to help provide as much info as possible about local races. This involves contacting candidates with questions about their campaigns and reporting the information you gather to our chapter contact.

If you are interested in helping with this important initiative for 2023, or to learn about it in preparation for the big election of 2024, contact Louise Reavis at louise.reavis@gmail.com Thank you!

[CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Environmental Impact

NYS FARM FACTS

New York State is very much an agricultural state, contrary to the popular belief throughout the world - that all people from New York are urban folk. Our League's recent visit to State Senator Michelle Hinchey (Chair of the Agricultural Committee) piqued my interest regarding farming and I thought I'd share them with our newsletter readers. I found a few surprises as well, like the amount of acreage in production by women farmers.



Here are a few things you may not have known:

- 98% of all farms in New York State are family owned.
- There are 6,866,171 acres in production (down from 7,183,576 in 2012)
- The average farm size is 205 acres (up from 202 in 2012)
- The average age of farmers today is 55.8 years old.
- Women-run farm acreage is 21,860, men-run acreage is 35,985.

New York's National Ranking in 2017 is as follows:

- #1 in yogurt, cottage cheese and sour cream
- #2 in apples, snap peas, maple syrup and cabbage
- #3 in dairy cows, milk production and grapes

Confession: These facts have been lifted shamelessly from the New York Farm Bureau's website.

Also, in the 'did you know?' category are some further facts.

These are a few about some of New York's top farm products.

- A dairy cow produces about 6.3 gallons of milk each day and 350,000 in their lifetime
- A steer typically weighs about 1,000 pounds and yields about 450 pounds of edible meat
- Field corn is different than what we eat- it's hard and dry, used for livestock feed and ethanol
- Apple trees take up to 4-5 years to produce their first fruit
- US poultry farms provide about 10% of the world's egg supply (75B eggs annually)

For more information:

[New York Agriculture :: New York Farm Bureau](#)

[New York's Top 10 Ag Products](#)

Cynthia (Cindy) Bell

[CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

News Items

**Our League
Honors the**



Passing of a Beloved Member

James M. McGarry of Ruby, New York passed in the comfort of his home on July 5, 2023 surrounded by his family. Jim was born in Kingston to Mary and John McGarry on November 26,

1948. He was a graduate of Kingston High School, SUNY New Paltz and Albany Law School.

He was honorably discharged from the US Navy having served from 1967-1971. He was in private practice from 1978-1992 and retired in 2004 from the Ulster County Department of Social Services as supervising attorney.

Jim was honored to serve as a member of the first Ulster County Charter Revision Committee. At the urging of his wife, Jim became a reluctant member of the League of Women Voters of the Mid- Hudson Region. This turned out to be a most rewarding experience as he used his considerable computer knowledge to guide the league into the digital age.

Jim sang in the Kingston High School choir under the direction of Leonard Stine which established his lifelong appreciation of music and singing. As an adult, Jim sang for many years in the Mendelssohn Club of Kingston and the St. Mary of the Snow

choir.

Jim was proud of his Irish heritage and was a longstanding member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. With his keen intelligence and inquisitive mind, he enjoyed attending the Lifespring Adult Learning Program where he also volunteered his technical skills.

Jim was also an amateur photographer and a master bread maker.

Jim enjoyed his sons as they grew up, going on numerous hiking and camping events with Scouts or supporting them in hockey and baseball. He willingly and patiently passed on his knowledge which continued when he became a grandfather. His granddaughter, Ashlyn, credits her grandfather for her interest in photography and choosing a career in the culinary arts.

Jim loved his home and in his earlier years, he landscaped his property by creating beautiful bluestone walls, walkways and gardens. Each piece of bluestone he carefully picked out and placed with great pride. Looking out from the deck one day, he remarked, "I never want to leave this place." The family takes great comfort that this request was made possible with the exceptional support of hospice and his personal caretaker and friend, Dhyan Singh.

Jim leaves behind his high school sweetheart and wife of 52 years, Jean (Felton), his loving sons and daughters-in-law, Peter (Meghan) and Conor (Shauna). He was the proud Poppy of Ashlyn, Liam and Owen. Also surviving are his faithful and supportive siblings MaryLee (Al Queen), Charlie (Jan) and Tom (Marlayne). Being introduced to the Felton family at 14 years old, he had a special bond with his brothers-in-law, Rand (Mary), Les

(Shirley) and Kirk (Audrey). Numerous nieces and nephews will always remember Uncle Jim for all the family gatherings and celebrations that he so welcomed and encouraged.

Besides his Mom and Dad, those who passed before him are his siblings Patricia (Bob Carr), Jack (Diane), Marbie (Ed Bellamy) and an infant brother, Peter.

Memorial donations may be made to Hudson Valley Hospice, 374 Violet Ave. Poughkeepsie 12601, Alzheimer's Association, Hudson Valley Chapter, 2649 South Rd. Suite 101 Poughkeepsie 12601 or a charity of choice.

Affirmative Action Ruling by the Supreme Court - We need to discuss this....



Join our LWVMHR Vice President, attorney Jennifer Clark, in a Zoom discussion about the latest Supreme Court ruling on Affirmative Action and its ramifications. The discussion will be on August 15th, 8pm at the following link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83690132027?pwd=by8wWkNRWE5HQXhxRUFnS1F3amo4QT09>

Please familiarize yourself with the ruling by reading it online [HERE](#).



Kathy OConnor, Dare Thompson, NYS Senator Michelle Hinchey, Cynthia Bell, Lisa Bretherick, Kathie Beinkaufner

LWVMHR Members meet with State Senator Michelle Hinchey

Senator Hinchey chairs the Agriculture Committee and much of the discussion revolved around natural resources, since the top requested priority for our group at this meeting was “climate, climate, climate”. She stated that there are 1,000 farms in her district that are in need of support. The conversation continued regarding climate versus an impending food crisis in that we still import food that is widely available in New York State.

Transportation and distribution of products in and out of state pushes up prices for consumers as well as adds to farmers’ cost of doing business. The committee is looking into ways to discourage this practice as well as supporting the financial health of farmers. Since many farmers aren’t making a living, many are abandoning their farms and/or selling out to corporations and

industrial farming companies. The lack of revenue makes it unattractive for succeeding generations to inherit and work and so, as farmers age out, so go many smaller farms.

Conversation continued with the use of agrivoltaics (placing solar panels, wind turbines/renewables on farmland). Some solar companies are placing panels on farmland in a way that the soil underneath cannot be farmed, which is contrary to the purpose of the policy. Livestock grazing, beehives, grapevines, and even crops may be placed underneath panels if they are placed appropriately for farming machinery, etc.. Senator Hinchey stated that agrivoltaics should not be placed in a way that impinges on farming in prime soils anywhere in the state. She further stated that there appears to be no state map that shows where these prime soils are located and that ORES (Office of Renewable Energy Siting) will require one as a basic foundation to their work. What they have now does not include farms, which makes it insufficient to its task.

I could go on and on, but will just hit some of the discussion highlights here:

- Many NYS Legislators understand that due to wildfires and drought in the Midwest (expected to worsen in coming years) may make NYS part of the new 'breadbasket' of the US and are working toward sustaining and supporting farmers in every way possible to support and ease such a transition.
- Senator Hinchey supports the Extended Producer Responsibility bill, though she needs to consider very seriously its effect on the agricultural impacts to farmers.
- Regarding NYS Soil Health Laws—\$500k has been included in the budget this year to be given directly to farmers to support a responsible and thriving agri-forestry industry.
- Farmers need to make a living in order to continue to exist. One way the Legislature is working toward that goal is to advocate for

whole milk to be required for school lunches. In the past, whole milk was seen as a fat and calorie-rich addition to children's lunch based on erroneous information but whole milk has been supplanted by sugar-laden teas and other drinks. This problem must be solved by Congress via changes to the federal Farm Bill. If whole milk is again included, it would be a boon to dairy farmers in the state.

- A NYS bill was recently passed in order to cover any and all additional costs to schools in NYS not paid by the Farm Bill so that every student can have access to free meals at school.
- Senator Hinchey encourages all citizens to choose locally grown and produced grocery items whenever a choice is possible to keep our economy strong, supportive and sustainable.

On other topics:

- Senator Hinchey also has water infrastructure on her list of current important concerns.
- The Senator supports Medical Aid in Dying. It seems as though passage has been stymied by a group that does many other amazing things, but their beliefs don't allow for support of this bill.
- Senator Hinchey also supports changes to support the current and growing crisis in home health care, particularly in rural areas. She told a personal story of the need for end-of-life home care for her father, former Assembly Member and US Congressman Maurice Hinchey. They had to sell off land in order to pay for it and worries about the many residents without financial resources or land to sell in order to support loved ones on their final journey.
- There is now \$25m available for firehouse improvements and applications are now being taken. It is hoped that this money will go to the fire companies most in need and not to stable and functional organizations. While it might a sufficient amount, there is a great concern, especially for rural small towns and communities, and this won't go far enough. More will be needed.
- Kathy OConnor took a moment to thank Senator Hinchey for her

work in supporting and updating the Tivoli Firehouse, which was badly in need.

This was an extremely pleasant, informative and productive hour spent with our State Senator and we are all deeply grateful for her extensive knowledge of all topics, ability to articulate solid ideas and the support of her amazing staff to work out all the kinks to make this happen. It should be noted that we had only requested 30 minutes, so we are appreciative of the generous expenditure of their limited time resources. A special thank you goes out to Dan Wrenn, the Senator's scheduler.

On a personal note—this was the very best hour of my entire week especially because I spent it with our awesome team of League friends. There was a lot of conversation that took place outside of the notes I took as well as before and after the meeting.

Thanks to one and all who made this report possible.
Cynthia (Cindy) Bell



Leslie Simons & Mary Missere have committed their Wednesdays to registering voters at their local Cornwall Farmers Market. Here they have enlisted the help of a friend, Tani, and our newest & youngest (high school) League member - Aaliyah. Thanks for making a difference in the community!

NYS Volunteer Firefighters- A Status Report

by Cindy Bell

(as part of the LWWNYS Rural
Caucus)

Mike Karashay, Legislative Committee Chair for the Firefighters Association of the State of New York (FASNY), was kind enough to spend time to meet with Peg Nau and Cindy Bell to talk about what's happening to this most important segment of rural life.



Volunteer fire departments have been a mainstay of communities for more than 100 years, saving lives, property and creating a place where neighbors can become friends with a unity of purpose. Over the last 20 years, firefighters and leaders have aged out with fewer and fewer young people to take their place. Budgets are squeezed and the rewards for volunteering and civic engagement have not kept pace with the needs of the next generation.

One positive development is that EMS can now charge for ambulance service-- but there have been firefighter-related budget reductions.

To put it in dollars and cents terms, volunteer firefighters save NYS 4.7 billion, yes billion, dollars statewide in services, with Ulster County alone saving \$94,000,00 and for the Mid-Hudson Region it is \$796,000,000. That is a huge savings for taxpayers on services that are considered critical for residents.

The main issue, as Mr. Karashay sees it, is that recruitment and retention have gone down to dangerous levels. There has been a loss of 20,000 members over the past 20 years without a corresponding increase in fire company membership.

There are efforts to engage young people and raise awareness of these issues. Many towns are now giving property tax credits to

members of fire companies but more needs to be done, especially for young people who may not own property.

Firefighters provide more than the ability to fight fires—they also provide for public safety by providing inspections and work to pass legislation such as the Upholstered Furniture bill, keeping dangerous chemicals out of our family furniture.

There are a number of bills in the state legislature waiting for action:

- Ensuring parity with NYS Workers Comp reimbursements (right now, if injured on the job, firefighters are eligible for just a fraction of the coverage others get)
- Designate EMS as an essential service
- Endangering welfare by making illegal modifications (to living quarters)
- First Responders peer Support Program Act
- Next-Gen 911 services
- Adjust GML-dd fire chiefs minimum standards threshold
- Recovery of 54-G Funding to Support Code Enforcement

Under consideration:

- Lithium-Ion Battery Safety Standards
- Cancer Coverage Cost Relief

For the 2024 budget:

- Reimbursement for training materials and classes
- Improve tax benefits for volunteer firefighters (real property (exists in some areas) AND income tax credit.
- Income tax credit increase (\$200 since beginning in 2006) to \$800 (FY 2024)
- Step increase tied to length of service up to \$2,500 for 10+ consecutive years

What can you do? Mr. Karashay says VOTER VOICE is critical as well as:

- Suggestions of new ways to engage youth (young firefighters

groups, etc)

- Finding ways to engage women
- More public understanding of jobs with fire companies (not everyone fights fires)
- Find ways to participate in your local fire department (attend pancake breakfasts, etc)
- Educate yourselves and your neighbors
- Contact your legislators to show your support for legislation

Get to know your neighbors. Get involved. Make a difference right at home.



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

[CLICK HERE TO RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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 August 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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