



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* April, 2007

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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 LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region covers the Mid-Ulster County area and the Dutchess County area. We belong to the LWV of New York State and the LWV of the US.

CALENDAR

MARCH

26 8:30 to 2:00 Student Legislative Day in Albany

APRIL

10 7:15 to 9:15 Board meeting at Jacki Moriarty's
 14 10:30 to 12:00 General Membership Meeting, Kingston Area Library
 "Education-Bright Spots on the Horizon"
 19 10:00 to 12:00 LWV Voting Machine Committee, Sally Colclough's

MAY

1 7:15 to 9:15 Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's
 5 Women's Health Fair at Tech City
 15 All day School board election and Annual School Budget vote
 15 6:00 to 9:00 Annual meeting of LWV of Mid-Hudson Region, pot luck at
 Unitarian Universalist Church
 18-20 Starts Fri. PM LWVNYS Convention in Albany

Non-Partisan Statement

The League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region is a nonpartisan organization which does not support or oppose candidates for public office but does encourage its members as individuals to participate actively in the political process. The League acts on those issues the membership chooses for study and action.

Board members will use discretion in any political activity and determine in advance from the local and/or state board that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the League of Women Voters.

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Prez Sez...

Greetings,

It seems I write this column on “snow days.” Let’s hope this is the last one. It is hard to believe that our annual meeting is only two months away. That’s right folks, only two months away. Traditionally we have always had our annual meeting in June but the more we thought about it, the more it didn’t make sense. Our fiscal year ends May 31st so it was time to align our calendar.

In the past, we invited guest speakers at this meeting but we found there was not enough time to conduct all the business at hand and have a formal program.

What is on the agenda? Voting for the new slate of officers, passing the budget, considering upcoming league studies as well as getting updates on the many league committees. It is your opportunity to voice your opinion, to sign up for committees and to “get up to speed” if you have not been able to be involved this past year.

And last, but certainly not least, it’s a time to enjoy a delicious smorgasbord while enjoying catching up on news with fellow members. This is a meeting you should not miss. Save the date, May 15th, at the Unitarian Church on Sawkill Road. I look forward to seeing you.

--Jean

Observer Corps Recruiting

There was a one-hour orientation held for those who are interesting in being part of the LWVMHR Observer Corps with an emphasis on the UC Legislature committees and meetings, particularly as

they relate to the upcoming charter transition. More people are needed to provide one or two people for each meeting, so we are asking for a twice a month commitment from now until the end of 2007. If you are interested in being an observer or alternate, please call 845/336-5763 or email Cindy Bell at CBell1000@aol.com for more information.

Observer Corps Reporting

Ways and Means Committee: The major controversial issue involved two positions at the Mental Health Department. The committee was interested in maintaining the budget as passed, not making changes that would pave the way toward wholesale position upgrades as a way of dealing with the salary compression resulting from management and union salaries not increasing in step.

The upgrades in question were not in fact related to general upgrading but were part of a reorganization that would provide significant savings. These changes were approved twice by the Personnel and Health Committees but were deferred again by the Ways and Means Committee. –M. Sellers

Vote by Mail Committee: The first meeting of the committee looking into vote-by-mail was 2/27. Susan Zimet heads the committee and the hour was spent sharing the knowledge of the members and discovering the direction the study would take. Discussion included the possibility of bringing the concept before voters this November to gauge public support and legal requirements dealing with the state Constitution. It was agreed that costs would have to be nailed down in order for

people to make an informed choice, and material was distributed for reading in preparation for the next meeting. –C. Bell

Criminal Justice: In February of 2005, after years of work by the "Balancing Criminal Justice" study group, The League presented its findings to the Legislature in the form of three recommendations. In essence they were to establish a criminal justice council, create a data management system to help process and assess criminal justice matters, and to establish a way to evaluate criminal justice programs.

In May a report was published and distributed to all legislators calling for a resolution to establish a criminal justice council. As a result, resolution 225 was passed in July 2005 and a council was appointed. With the idea of giving this council time to organize and lay out its objectives the League put its other recommendations on hold.

After waiting until the autumn, the Board published and distributed another report calling for the adoption of its other suggestions. The report sparked media coverage on public radio and a full page article in The Woodstock Times, with supporting commentary from Legislator Dart, Chairman of the Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.

At the February 27th meeting of the Criminal Justice Committee we asked that our recommendations be adopted. The committee gave these objectives their unanimous support and agreed that they would forward these suggestions.

Special thanks go to Legislators Dart, Gregorius, Parete, Distel, and Every for their support. We now have the

legislative will behind us. Now for the bureaucrats. –Tom Kadgen

Ulster Tomorrow Public Forum on March 7, 2007
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The forum, held at SUNY Ulster, was a standing room only event capturing the attention of over 200 people. Great effort was made to help create a positive view of Ulster's economic future. Ulster Co. Development Corp. (UCDC), Ulster Co. Industrial Development Agency (UCIDA) and Ulster Co. Planning Board (UCPB) were the project sponsors. Most of the County Legislators were in attendance. Many community members had input in the process. Twelve major strategies were presented as a base for economic growth and development.

The most emphasized finding was that we wanted to remain a rural county with an agricultural presence. We did not want to be like Orange and Rockland Counties. We have to grow and develop our own businesses. Large corporations are unlikely to move here. We need leadership, change, accountability, to help emerging business, redesign services, streamline permits, develop infrastructure, preserve quality of life, recruit diverse businesses, retain existing businesses, develop our workforce, enhance tourism, maintain agriculture, develop green technologies and products, and nurture our creative artistic community. A report is available from UCDC.

Remarkably, strengthening education was not a significant strategy. Although people agreed that we would have trouble attracting and retaining business with our

current HS graduation rates (63% in Kingston), education redevelopment was relegated to a part of the Recruit a Diverse Business Base strategy and somewhat acknowledged in the need to create a capable workforce.

Interestingly, comments were made about how the various levels of government affect the county's ability to attract business. Some towns are business friendly, others are not. Also, the permit and review process varies throughout the county and tends to make development difficult, if not impossible. – Margaret Sellers

LWV Voting Machine Committee

Sally Colclough of LWV Saugerties hosted a meeting of the voting machine Committee and conversation centered on the possibility of Vote By Mail in Ulster County. Pros and cons were discussed, as were questions about costs and procedures. Next meeting is April 19th at Sally,s, 22 Main street in Saugerties. Please email Cindy Bell at CBell1000@aolcom or call 845/336-5763 for more information or to join us at the meeting. –Cindy Bell

Education Study Group Program: I

Educating Kingston's Children: "How Do We Stand?"

The first of two meetings on local public education examined the big picture of how our schools are doing at preparing all of our city's children for a healthy and productive future. The inquiry began with a look at the NYS school report card* page for the Kingston School District showing "KHS Graduates and

Noncompleters". The numbers showed some good news: 280 (72%) of the 389 students who graduated during the 2004-05 school year earned a Regents Diploma. The more sobering news was that during the same school year, 266 students left school without any diploma. Although the record showed that 116 of these non-diploma students entered a GED program, no data on GED program completion was given. A probing conversation followed between the audience and three guest presenters to discover why so many Kingston children are not finishing high school, and what it will take to reverse the trend.

* Report cards, released annually for every public school in NYS, can be found at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/reportcard/> These reports are produced to inform the people of New York State about the recent performance of public schools. They are intended for use in constructive conversations which lead to improved education for all children in the State.

School District, outlined actions the district has taken recently to keep more students in school. Recognizing the difficult transition some students experience in moving from middle school to the large KHS campus, the high school has reorganized staffing structures to provide a more personal and supportive setting. Engaging more students to participate in some of the more than 80 clubs and activities at KHS is an ongoing effort. Problems with poor attendance for students in the middle schools are addressed by an attendance officer, who can file PINS petitions against

parents of chronically truant children.

Joe Fay, Director of the Kingston Boys and Girls Club, shared his observations of Kingston's Midtown youth in their out-of-school hours at the Greenkill Avenue facility. Falling behind in school is embarrassing for a child, and leads to loss of interest and effort. It is important to support children in areas where the family is unable. Guidance counselors are vital, as is instilling the wish to excel within a child's social group peers.

Teresa Washington is director of the Read and Write Program at the Kingston Library, which offers free after school homework help for children in the Midtown neighborhood. She sees an urgent need to supplement a child's early learning when it has not been provided in the home. Some children in stressful home environments need emotional support before school learning can take place. Speaking for two former KHS students who were unable to attend, she described the personal circumstances which led to their dropping out of KHS.

Education Study Group Program: II

"Educating Kingston's Children - Bright Spots Ahead"

Kingston is not alone in having children leave school with incomplete educations. What can be learned from other communities where particular schools have been successful in reducing high numbers of dropouts? The past ten years have seen a dramatic rise across the country in innovative school models

designed to prepare the least advantaged students for healthy and productive lives. Three of the most promising are operating in our region: the KIPP Academy in the South Bronx (Knowledge Is Power Program), Amistad Academy in New Haven (Achievement First), and North Star Academy in Newark (Uncommon Schools).

A closer look at each model will be led by our guest presenter, Adrian Brown. Mr. Brown grew up in Midtown Kingston and graduated from KHS. In addition to college and post-graduate studies, he has completed Chancellor Klein's NYC Leadership Academy program, and is presently the principal of a public middle school in the South Bronx. Although no longer a local resident, he has a personal interest in seeing all children in his home town be educated to their fullest potential, and has graciously agreed to return to Kingston to participate in our community conversation.

The meeting will take place on Saturday, April 14th, in the community room at the Kingston Library from 10:30 am to noon.

--Linda Roberts

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee has met and completed its work for this year. The following is the slate of nominees that will be voted on at the annual meeting in May, 2007.

1st Vice-President: Jacki Moriarty '07-'09 (second two-year term).

2nd Vice President: Tom Kadgen '07-'08 (finishing a term)

3rd Vice-President: Renee Sachs

'07-'09 (first two year term)

Secretary: Susan Hirsch

'07-'09 (first two year term)

Commentator: Lee Ridgway

'07-'09 (first two year term)

Membership: Betty Chin

'07-'09 (first two year term)

Public Relations: Esther Stickley

'07-'08 (second year 1st term)

Publications: Emilie Hauser

'07-'09 (on-board, 2nd term)

Nominating Committee '07-'08

Karen Goertzel, Christine Henning, Jill Hudler. Two members from the Board will be appointed by the Board after the election.

The Nominating Committee elects its own chairman.

The Nominating Committee extends its thanks to each of the nominees for agreeing to serve.

Members of the committee for this year were Cindy Bell, Lee Cane (chairman), Christine Henning, Emily Johnson, Dorthy Schuler.

Local Program Proposals

Two programs have been suggested:

?? Should the County require a coordinated and unified approach to local permitting?

?? Should the County replace, renovate and maintain a nursing home facility?

Members may suggest other program studies at the annual meeting, and they can be adopted by a 2/3 majority vote.

Women's Health Fair

May 5th is the Women's Health Fair, held at Tech City (300 Enterprise Drive) Kingston from 8AM to 4PM.

For several years some members have worked at registration tables and at our LWV table.

This fair will be available to you free of charge since you are a volunteer—so you can work for 2 hours (that's all we ask is 2 hours) and enjoy the fair.

Think of it. 2 hours makes you an active member. Please call Shirley Kobran 845/382-6989 to add your name to the list of volunteers and arrange a time to work.

LWV 2007- 2008 PROPOSED BUDGET				
INCOME		Budget	Actual	Budget
		'06-'07	2/27/05	'07-'08
	<u>DUES-TOTAL</u>	5,335	2,440	5,125
	<u>FUNDRAISING-TOTAL</u>	8,210	7,096	8,800
	Appeals and Contributions	2,700	3,775	3,200
	Events	3,260	2,271	2,000
	Commentator	2,250	1,050	3,600
	<u>VOTER SERVICES-TOTAL</u>	650	355	650
	<u>Bank Interest</u>	110	88	110
TOTAL		<u>14,305</u>	<u>9,978</u>	<u>14,685</u>
INCOME				
	To Education Fund		1,775	
EXPENSES				
	LWV US and NY PMPs	4,618	3,953	4,592
	FUNDRAISING	1,116	457	2,125
	COMMENTATOR	3,896	4,152	2,614
	OPERATING COSTS	1,847	1,046	2,130
	ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES	1,000	216	900
	EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	1,618	840	2,100
	PUBLIC PROGRAMS	210	263	220
TOTAL				
EXPENSES		<u>14,305</u>	<u>10,828</u>	<u>14,681</u>
	Spending from Education Fund		859	
SURPLUS		0	(850)	4

Budget Changes from 2006-2007

1. Household dues are raised from \$65 to \$75.
2. *Commentator* printed at Staples.
3. Get more paid *Commentator* ads.
4. Plan an event honoring someone, including an ad journal, a silent auction, and a 50-50 raffle.
5. No yard sale.

Breast Cancer Protection Act

The Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act of 2005 is being brought up in Congress as S910 and HR 1849. Its lead sponsors are Senator Olympia Snowe (R-Maine), Senator Mary Landrieu (D-Louisiana), and Rep. Rose DeLauro (D-Connecticut), as well as 17 cosponsors in the Senate and 179 in the House. The bill calls for a minimum in-patient coverage of mastectomy or breast-conserving surgery of 48 hours, and a 24-hour stay for lymph node dissection. It does not mandate a hospital stay if both doctor and patient feel it is not necessary.

Impact on LWVMHR

LWV will not subsidize family dues, but will break even on PMPs.

Need to take care of ad layouts, have committee to help with extra work.

Need people to contact advertisers and collect payments.

Need a large dedicated committee to plan and make this happen.

Member effort can be applied to other fundraising like ads and events.

The bill also assures a patient of a second opinion for any cancer diagnosis, and requires coverage for radiation therapy for patients undergoing a lumpectomy.

More information can be found on www.lifetimetv.com/breastcancer. There is a petition you can sign. (Already more than 14 million signatures are on it.) You can also contact your representative or senator directly to urge them to support this legislation.

Twenty states have enacted laws requiring a minimum length of stay to prevent "drive-through" mastectomies, and New York is one of them. However, national legislation is needed.

I/we wish to join the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2008

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (eve) _____

(day) _____

Email: _____

I/We enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) _____

Household Membership (\$65) _____

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (tax deductible:)

(Send a separate check which MUST be payable to NYSLWV Ed Fund) \$ _____

If this is a Household Membership, please include the name and email address of additional member(s) _____

Check here if you prefer NOT to be contacted about local LW meetings ____

Will read *Commentator* on website ____ or Please mail *Commentator* ____

**(Update the above form and return it to us with your check at
PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)**

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please send this slip with his/her name and address to Betty Chin, 69 The Hills Port Ewen, NY 12466

We will send out information as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Your name: _____

Do you have any comments about the League or our programs? Shirley would like to hear them too.

Be sure to visit our Advertiser's Page at
<http://lwny-bulletins.org/Capital Region/Mid-Hudson-2006-10-ads.pdf>