



# Mid-Hudson Region Commentator

February, 2006

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### Mission Statement:

*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.*

CALENDAR		
<b>FEB.</b>		
7	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's
18	10:00 to noon	Medicare General Meeting at City Hall
19		Deadline for March Commentator
<b>MAR.</b>		
7	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
18	10 to noon	General Meeting at City Hall, Gerald Benjamin speaking
19		Deadline for April Commentator
<b>APR.</b>		
3	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting, place to be announced
18		Deadline for May Commentator

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**"It's not the hand that signs the laws that**

**holds the destiny of America.**

**It's the hand that casts the ballot."**

**--President Harry S. Truman**

### **The Prez Sez...**

I hope everyone is surviving the wet and yet warm weather we are having.

The meeting on Disaster Preparedness was well attended and I heard that it was a great presentation. It definitely gives you something to think about. The overall theme seemed to be that we all have to take responsibility to prepare ourselves for emergencies. This means being informed, having supplies, and updating your personal emergency information.

The next general meeting will be about the new Medicare program. The more information the better. Hope to see you there.

Chris

### **Finance Drive 2006**

The Finance drive for 2006 is in full swing at this writing. The member portion of the drive began January 16th and runs through January 31st. Solicitation letters have been sent to members. The League is fortunate in having a loyal and generous group of members.

Starting February 14th, the Friends of the League part of the annual Finance Drive will commence, and it will end February 28th. Our community has shown its support and generosity for the League over the years. We hope it will continue to do so.

We depend on our Finance Drives for many of our expenses, as a very large part of our dues go to the state and national leagues to support their lobbying and publications at higher levels.

### **Financing Education Study**

The major impetus for the current financing education study is the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) vs. State of New York* Litigation that has already spanned a decade and that, absent an agreed settlement among the parties, promises to consume many more years of court time.

Although we tend to recoil at the enormity of approximately \$8 billion that the court in *Campaign for Equity vs. State (CFE)* ordered infused into the New York City schools, the court's findings about the deplorable state of city schools are equally compelling.

The NYS system is the largest in the United States, with 1.1 million students educated in 1,100 schools by 78,000 teachers. 73% of the students are eligible for free lunch as compared with 5% in the rest of the state. The students speak 180 languages in their native tongues, with 16% of the student body classified as having limited English proficiency. In 1997-98, NYC had 13.7% uncertified teachers, (defined as those who were not teaching one class for which they had certification) as compared to 3.3% for the rest of the state. Between 1/4 and 1/3 of NYC teachers fail their certification exams on the first try, compared to fewer than 5% in the rest of the state. NYC cannot compete successfully in the metropolitan NYC labor market because its teachers earn 20-36% less than those elsewhere in the metropolitan area. Moreover, NYC's increased recruitment of teachers (between 8,000 and 14,000 a year) will only exacerbate the quality differential.

## **Education (cont.)**

NYC currently cannot maintain the quality of its physical plant. The crisis is three-pronged: the budget fails to provide adequate funds for repair of buildings, the district cannot provide space for an increasing student population, the district cannot update the existing physical plant to meet the needs of the current curricula for computer usage and science labs. The Court quoted the findings of the Levy Commission, which noted a school infrastructure with collapsing facades, 760 buildings with serious heating and ventilation problems, 424 that needed wholesale modernization and 343 (over 1/4 of the schools) that still relied on coal-burning boilers. The Regents had previously determined that facilities needs in NYC were greater than those in the rest of the state combined. Moreover, severe overcrowding at the elementary and high school levels negatively affected student achievement.

NYC has half as many computers per 100 students as districts in the metropolitan area. Many schools have insufficient wiring to support computer technology, and much of the hardware is obsolete and unable to support current operating systems. Furthermore, no funds are currently available to support the computing needs of elementary students, high school students, or special education students.

The shortfall of educational inputs has negatively affected student achievement. Most telling is the graduation rate. Of the 60,000 students who enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time annually, approximately 50% make it to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in four years. In 1996, 30% dropped out and did not obtain a GED and 10% dropped out and did obtain a GED. 60% remained in high school but only 50% made it to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade in four years. 12% of these

students received a Regents diploma, while the remaining 48% received a local diploma, which has now been phased out.

Although the NYC system is the most spectacular example of the human cost of inequitable funding of education in New York State, it is hardly the only example. New York State tops the list of states in terms of disparity between wealthy and poor school districts.

A question that comes to mind is the funding and application of the STAR program. What are the revenue sources used for New York State elementary and secondary education?

Our league is currently forming a committee to study the financing of education in our state.; If you are interested, please contact Emily Johnson at 338-3554 or [john651@attglobal.net](mailto:john651@attglobal.net).

## **Voters Service**

Last fall both Dutchess and Ulster County units moderated a number of candidates' meetings. Voters Service is commended for supporting these meetings, which are an important part of our service to the community. The moderators traveled far and wide, from Highland to Shandaken and elsewhere. All people interested in moderating or time keeping should let Jill Hudler know. Thanks go to all the moderators!

## **Disaster Preparedness Meeting**

On January 14<sup>th</sup>, more than 65 people met at City Hall to hear about the status of disaster preparedness in Ulster County. There were speakers from the state and the county, covering the various aspects of dealing with a disaster. Ward Todd served as moderator.

All speakers emphasized two points that residents should bear in mind:

?? Emergency management is a local responsibility, and state and federal emergency management cannot take ultimate responsibility for recovery.

?? People should also be aware that although assistance and recovery efforts start as soon as possible, it may be some time before organized help is available.

Every household should have a personal emergency plan for three days survival before help arrives. Although every disaster has its own problems, common dangers are lack of potable water, lack of electricity and gas, and food shortage due to lack of transportation.

The first speaker, Tom Fargione, is Deputy Director for Preparedness for the New York State Emergency Management Office. The role of this agency is to assist local efforts in response to emergencies, supplying whatever local authorities ask for to the best of their ability. By looking ahead at possible emergencies, the agency can help with planning and implementation of support for affected people and businesses.

Captain Patrick Regan of the New York State Police said that the experience that many policemen had had in helping after Katrina had been very valuable in underlining what most needed to be done and in uncovering problems that were not immediately obvious, such as that many of the emergency workers were also

residents and family members in the area, and were thus torn between family obligations and job duties. The police do much of the communication and try to keep the public informed at all times, but they can be stretched thin in emergencies and need cooperation from the public. One problem can be people's refusal to evacuate in time, resulting in difficult rescues later, which result also in not being able to carry out other pressing duties.

Susan Rounds, executive director of the Ulster County chapter of the American Red Cross, spoke of the work the Red Cross does in caring for people. The Red Cross has arranged for a number of temporary shelters for people if needed, however, more places would be helpful. Although no one can make complete plans to cover all possible emergencies, the Red Cross is committed to immediate care for displaced persons and further care for those who cannot return home for a prolonged period.

Arthur Snyder, Director of the Ulster County Emergency Management Agency, spoke to the need for public awareness of pending disasters and self-sufficiency for a period of three days. He also talked about the plans that are in place, the resources available to keep the public informed, and the need for people to know and monitor their areas' vulnerabilities to keep track of

problems such as rising waters before a critical emergency occurs.

Eleanor Troy, supervising public health nurse for the Ulster County Health Department, spoke to plans for dealing with epidemics or terrorist attacks as medical emergencies. Local hospitals have emergency planning in place and will coordinate their response to medical needs. Schools also have comprehensive plans

These three points were key to the presentations by all speakers:

- ?? The public must realize that government cannot deal with emergencies alone
- ?? The public must expect to manage without help for three days following a disaster
- ?? The public must be aware of and responsive to imminent emergencies. Many resources and plans are in place to assist people in times of disaster, but government and private agencies cannot do it alone.

The speakers made many helpful brochures and pamphlets available.



### **Next Month: Medicare**

Our next general meeting will be on February 18<sup>th</sup> from 10 to noon at Kingston City Hall. It will be an informational meeting on understanding Medicare and the new prescription drug benefits. The full title is “**Understanding Medicare and Prescription Drugs: Clues for the Confused.**”

For many months the public has been reminded that Medicare would have a prescription drug coverage component starting January 1, 2006. The public was advised that there would be a variety of plans from which people could select the coverage for which they were eligible and which met their prescription drug needs.

In fact, while there are over 150 plans to select from, the selection process has not been an easy one so far for everyone. The League hopes that the information provided in this meeting will answer questions that many have had and help them select the most suitable plan for them.

The panelists for this meeting are all well versed on the subject. They are:

- ?? Blanche Duffy, Coordinator of the Health Insurance Information Counseling Assistance Program (Hii Cap) for the Ulster County Office for the Aging
  - ?? Timothy Higgins, District Manager of the Kingston Field Office of the Social Security Administration
  - ?? Laura Mulvihill, the New York State EPIC Outreach representative.
- Len Cane will be the moderator.

## **LWVUS Program Planning**

Current positions for 2004-2006 cover **representative**

**government, (promoting an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.)** Goals are: protecting voting rights, securing self-government for DC, supporting voting districts and legislative bodies based on population, improving campaign finance, abolishing the electoral college, supporting uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections, protecting citizens rights to know and participate, opposing major threats to constitutional rights, protecting the right of privacy on reproductive choice, supporting responsive legislative processes, and promoting a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches.

**international relations, (promoting peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.)** Goals are: a strong, effective United Nations, supporting reduction of trade barriers and expansion of international trade to meet humanitarian, environmental, and social goals, US policies that meet needs of developing countries, support arms control measures, and examining defense spending in the context of total national needs.

**natural resources (promoting an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.)** Goals are: management of natural resources as interrelated parts of eco-systems, resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, preserving environmental protection and pollution control, protecting air quality, conserving energy and using renewable

sources, promoting responsible land use, protecting water resources, promoting responsible waste management through reuse, recycling, and reducing waste, protecting the public and the environment from nuclear hazards, encouraging public participation in managing natural resources, and setting agricultural policy to provide products at reasonable prices, support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices, and increased reliance on the free market.

**social policy (securing equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.)**

Goals are: ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment, adequate and flexible funding of government through an equitable progressive tax system through a broad-based income tax, responsible deficit policies, a federal role in funding of entitlements, a health care system that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all US residents and controls costs, programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency, decent income assistance programs based on need, essential support services, decent housing, affordable, quality child care, early intervention for children at risk, supporting violence prevention programs, supporting gun control, and promoting the economic health of cities and the quality of urban life

## **Meet Our Advertisers/Members**

The advertiser is **Fred's Place** off Route 209 North in Lake Katrine; the members are **Cynthia and Fred Wadnola**, who share the proprietorship. One can only marvel at the accomplishments and professional qualifications of this couple who have just joined the League. In a previous incarnation (Cynfre's Caterers and Bakery), they had also been *Commentator* advertisers.

As we sat over cups of deliciously brewed coffee, Cindy first guided me through Fred's life. He was a native of Ulster County and attended parochial schools from elementary through Marist College. He received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy, but by the time he was to enter Annapolis, he had made the decision to ship out and "see the world," so he enlisted and did a six-year hitch with the Navy, going to every continent except Australia. After his service, uncertain what he wanted to pursue, Fred enrolled at Marist College, where he earned his way by working at local restaurants. He received a degree in Asian studies and Education and spent a year teaching at Highland High School, then transferred to the Kingston district and spent 36 years in the capacities of social studies teacher, vice-principal and assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and instruction. During this time, Fred served 13 years with the Naval Reserve and retired as a Lt. Commander. He recently retired also from 30 years spent in politics as an Ulster County legislator, a town of Ulster councilman and ultimately town of Ulster supervisor.

During this time, he also functioned as the business manager of family-owned Cynfre's Caterers, Bakery, and Café, which had expanded from the town of Ulster to include branches in West Hurley

and New Paltz. (This is still about the accomplishments of one person.)

Cynthia's life and careers started in Glasco and continued in the local schools. She attended SUNY Albany for one year and decided to change direction. She enrolled in the Richard I beauty school in Kingston and after graduation was hired by Richard and Shirley Kobran for their beauty salon, where she spent two years.

She and Fred were married in 1967 and when her two sons came along she became nominally an "at home" mom. She operated her own beauty salon, Studio "C" on the premises, and she and Fred also operated a licensed real estate and insurance office on site in a structure next door to their home.

When their younger son, Chris, started school, Cindy decided it was time for her to return also. She had always enjoyed cooking, baking, and catering as an amateur for years, so she applied to and attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. In 1984, after completing the two year course, she graduated 4th in her class. She was employed by a local restaurant for one year and decided she would enjoy having her own catering business, so she re-enrolled at the CIA and took a comprehensive baking course, graduating first in her class. In 1987 she and Fred opened Cynfre's Caterers and Bakery. After 15 successful years, Cindy was forced to retire because of bad knees

which resulted in surgery. During her recuperation, she became a director of the local Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Growing restless once again, Cindy completed a demanding written examination in her field in line with her goal of becoming more proficient. She was granted the signal honor of becoming the 131<sup>st</sup> woman Certified Executive Chef in 1997.

The Wadnolas' sons are now grown. The elder, Frederick James II, is a principal of a BOCES facility in central New York State, and Christopher is a CIA graduate and is currently executive pastry chef at a well-known restaurant in Naples, Florida.

Chris suggested unloading Fred's overwhelming albeit interesting collection of Navy memorabilia and using it in the décor of a new restaurant called Fred's Place. Fred and Cindy were irresistibly challenged, and two years from the date of conception, they opened their new establishment with a nautical theme that the Undersecretary of the Navy would applaud. It is also a restaurant for anyone who enjoys fine food. The Wadnolas offer an eclectic menu that satisfies appetites from traditional comfort foods to those craving a gourmet flair.

To illustrate the commitment to excellence that Cindy demands of herself, all the meats are hand crafted, all baked goods are created on the premises and all sauces are made from scratch. They tried three purveyors to find one who could supply the right bones for the sauces.

Fred's Place was a joint decision and the affable Wadnolas never feel it is finished but rather a work in progress. They open for lunch and dinner Wed.-Sun. and the handicapped accessible upstairs is available for catering up to 75 people.

### Membership Application

Fill out the following fields and mail with the appropriate size check to the Treasurer, PO Box 3564, Kingston, NY 12402

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family membership: \$65.** \_\_\_\_

**Individual member: \$50.** \_\_\_\_

**Phone about meetings** \_\_yes\_\_no

**Send e-mail notices** \_\_yes\_\_no

**Extra contribution: \$** \_\_\_\_

Join now for membership to  
June 2006

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please give us his or her name and address and send this slip to:

Shirley Kobran  
53 Schuler Lane,  
Lake Katrine, NY 12449.

We will send out information as soon as possible.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_