



# Mid-Hudson Region Commentator

December/January 2005-2006

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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>DEC.</b>		
	6 7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria Plasker's
	18 2:00 to 4:00	Holiday gathering at Moriarty's
<b>JAN.</b>		
	3 7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
	14 10:00 to noon	General Meeting on Disaster Planning at City Hall, Kingston
<b>FEB.</b>		
	7 7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
	18 10:00 to noon	General meeting on Medicare at City Hall
<b>MARCH</b>		
	7 7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's

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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."

### **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!

## **Ulster County Charter Commission**

The Charter Commission, on which Renee Sachs served as a member, has reported a summary of recommendations. The Commission was constituted in August 2004 and charged with developing a plan to revamp Ulster County government to function in the most efficacious manner possible. The draft document represents a distillation of countless interviews with various officials both inside and outside Ulster County, research into the format and function of other New York State counties with and without charters and the operations of various counties having an elected executive, county manager or appointed administrator.

The commission suggested reduction of the legislature from 33 to 23 members elected by partisan elections in single districts, with plurality winning. The commission also voted to create an independent Commission on Reapportionment with a minimum of 7 members to redistrict after every decennial census. New districts will be effective in elections with years ending in 3.

The commission unanimously voted for an elected county executive with a four year term of office and no term limit.

The commission specified separation of legislative and executive powers and creation of a Budget Director and a Commissioner of Finance to serve as Chief Fiscal Officer. It also called for a 5-person Board of Ethics, with no more than two members from any political party. Legislature would approve appointments from the Executive.

As a separate item on the ballot, term lengths would be four years with half the legislature elected every two years, except that each seat would be for a two-year term every third election cycle to allow elections in newly apportioned districts every decade.

There would be a Periodic Compensation Review Committee to meet on a biennial basis.

There would be an independent body to review the operation of the charter and recommend changes after five years and thereafter every ten years.

To assure positive county/town relationships, the commission voted to create an Inter-Municipal Collaboration Council. Members will include the county executive, the presiding officer and minority leader of the legislature, the Kingston mayor, the head of the County Supervisors Association, the BOCES superintendent and one village mayor elected by all the village mayors in the county.

The next step in the plan is to present the details of the draft in various locales around the county and solicit public input.

## **Voters Guide Success**

Your editor has not yet been able to include a graph of the number of queries to the online Voters' Guide, but hopes to do so in the next issue.

Our busiest time was shortly before Election Day, but there were peaks that correspond to news articles and ads about the voters' guide. Our best day we had over 1000 hits.

# **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS HOW READY ARE WE?**

Saturday, January 14, 2006  
10:00 – 12:00  
Kingston City Hall  
420 Broadway, Kingston, NY

## **Panelists:**

<b>Arthur Snyder</b>	<b>Director UC Emergency Management Agency</b>
<b>Susan Rounds</b>	<b>Executive Director UC Chapter of the American Red Cross</b>
<b>Eleanor Troy</b>	<b>UC Health Department, Supervising Public Health Nurse</b>
<b>Capt. Patrick Regan</b>	<b>New York State Police</b>
<b>Thomas Fargione</b>	<b>Deputy Director for Preparedness NYS Emergency Management Office</b>

**Moderator:** **Ward Todd, Pres. UC Chamber of Commerce**

**There will be a Q&A period following the presentations.**

## **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

## **Membership News**

We haven't had space to list and welcome our new members recently. Please welcome new members who have joined since September of this year: Mary Redmond, Cynthia and Fred Wadnola (owners of Fred's Place, one of our advertisers), Campbell Sutton (who did AP reporting this election night) and Timothy Barbour, Marsha Lowry, and Stacy Kraft (who works for the health department and spoke to our Women's Health study group).

This year we select the president, the secretary, the treasurer, and directors for finance, public relations and voters service. Any members interested in one of these board positions or interested in working on the committees for finance, public relations, or voters service should make themselves known to a member of the LWV Board or Nominating Committee.

The other three directors' portfolios are membership, newsletter and publications. Members interested in working on any of these should let the appropriate director know: Shirley Kobran for membership, and Emily Johnson for the newsletter. The publications portfolio has been quite inactive as our league has devoted efforts to the web site which is under the care of public relations rather than to printed material.

Our president, Chris Henning has been chosen as one of the 20-under-40 movers and shakers by the Daily Freeman. We agree with that judgment and congratulate not only Chris but those wise enough to select her!

### **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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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

**E-**

**Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Phone about meetings** \_\_yes\_\_ no

**Send e-mail notices** \_\_yes\_\_ no

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

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,

iLake Katrine, NY 12449.

We will send out information as soon as possible.

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

—

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

—

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

**Your**

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