



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* November, 2006

Jean McGarry, President (845)336-6622
Shirley Kobran, Membership (845)382-6989
Emily Johnson, Newsletter (845)338-3554

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.

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.

CALENDAR

OCTOBER

- | | | |
|----|--------------|---|
| 17 | 7:00 to 9:00 | Charter School Financing Consensus, City Hall, conference room #1 (2 nd floor) |
| 24 | 7:30 to 9:00 | Finance Committee, Margaret Sellers, 80 Ringtop Road |

NOVEMBER

- | | | |
|----|----------------|--|
| 7 | All day | Election Day -- Vote
Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
Brunch Meeting at Everett Hodge Center "Women in Leadership" |
| 14 | 7:15 to 9:15 | |
| 18 | 10:00 to 12:00 | |

DECEMBER

- | | | |
|----|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5 | 7:15 to 9:15 | Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's |
| 17 | 2:00 to 4:00 | Holiday Celebration at Moriarty's |

PO Box 3564, Kingston NY 12402
Telephone (845) 340-2003

Website: <http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org> E-mail: info@midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org

Prez Sez...

Greetings,

I don't need to remind a League member to exercise his or her democratic right on election day but I may need to remind you to gently nudge others to get to the polls. Do you know someone who is newly registered (such as a new neighbor or an 18 year old) or someone who's disgusted with politics and cynical? Do you know someone who needs a ride or a babysitter so they can get to the polls? We all can make a small excuse seem big to avoid important things we should do. Help someone set aside his or her excuse!

While we may have many important electoral choices this year, none can be quite as significant for Ulster County residents than deciding if they want a new form of government. This is an historical vote and should be decided by everyone. Please remind your neighbors, friends, and family to get out and vote on November 7th. Maybe one of them can "nudge" someone too.

Jean

Charter Chatter

(I notice Hugh Reynolds uses the same title. Great minds etc.) We are now entering the "home stretch" not Yankees vs. Tigers but charter boosters vs. charter detractors. The charter committee has been delivering our flyers (Lee Cane's brainstorm). We have a brochure in the works, thanks to Cindy Bell, Tom Kadgen, Lee Ridgway and me. We

have been submitting letters to the editor of the Freeman weekly. (Hope you caught Tom's excellent missive last week.) We have now garnered two favorable editorials from the Kingston Freeman, one from the Poughkeepsie Journal and one from the Middleton Herald Record as far as I know. We are trying for more. If you see any please let us know.

Lee Ridgway and I appeared on the WGHQ Friday 7:30-9:00 AM talk show ably assisted and abetted by hosts Len Cane and Lew Kirschner who doled out lots of good humor and encouragement. Kingston's Mayor, James Sottile, did a local development update while we were there and gave the League a major plug and also boosted the Charter. Lee Cane and Emily Johnson will participate in Josephine McTeague's Saturday Morning Talk Show on WKNY at 10am, Oct 21. Arrangements have been made for Cindy Bell and Jim Mc Garry to join Tony Marmo and speak on WGHQ on Friday morning October 27 courtesy of Jacki Moriarty, arranger extraordinaire.

Lee Cane has done the logistics for a mass distribution of other printed materials. If you can help (an hour at most) please contact Lee at 338-0706.

We must get this Charter passed. Let's all pitch in!

--Renee Sachs

Vote for the Charter on
November 7th!

Briefings on the Status of Human Trafficking Around the World

Wednesday, November 15, 2006
9:00 to 3:30 at UN Headquarters
NYC, First Avenue and 46th Street

- 9:00 Registration (be prompt, security procedure)
- 10:00 Briefings on the Status of Human Trafficking
Around the World
Question and Answer period
- 12:45 Optional Lunch Buffet
- 2:30 Optional tour of the United Nations

For more information and costs, please contact the League of Women Voters on NYS at 518-465-4162 or at lwny@lwny.org.

Registration Deadline is November 6, 2006

Sponsors of the event are:

UN Department of Public Information,
LWVNYS,
AAUW-NYS,
Center for Women in Government and Civil Society,
NYS Federation of Women's Clubs
National Council of Jewish Women
Women's Bar Association of the State of New York
Others to be announced.

" Women As Leaders "

Brunch: November 18
Everette Hodge Center

10:00 Brunch dishes, Bagels, and Beverages

10:30 Program Starts, ends at 12:00

Speakers are:

Honorable Nancy Cozean--Mayor of the City of Poughkeepsie. She has had thirty years experience as an award-winning broadcast journalist and public relations professional specializing in programming, presentations, and advocacy development.

Laura A. Walls--Research Director, Pattern for Progress. She is a seven-year member and past president of the New Paltz Board of Education, Gardiner Town Supervisor, 2000-2002, during that time served as President of the Southern Ulster Alliance and a member of the Mountain Scenic By-way Committee.

They will share their experiences of overcoming obstacles to reach their present status in life by using their leadership skills and how they continue to use these skills in their daily responsibilities. This will be rewarding and inspiring, and we hope to see everyone there.

Everette Hodge Center: Franklin Street, Kingston, off Broadway. On the right if you come from Broadway. Some off-street parking.

State Position on Financing Education K-12 and Property Tax

As a result of the first consensus on Financing Education K-12, the State Board of the LWVNYS approved changes to its positions on education and property taxes. The position on education K-12, now states that New York State bears a constitutional responsibility for the education of its children.

“This duty has been defined by litigation of more than a decade’s duration, during which the Court of Appeals has held the State must provide all children with a sound basic education, defined as the opportunity for a meaningful high school education, consisting of the basic literary, calculating, and verbal skills necessary to enable them to eventually function productively as civic participants capable of voting and serving on a jury. Included in the goods and services that constitute a sound basic education are minimally adequate physical facilities and classrooms which provide enough light, space, heat and air to permit children to learn; minimally adequate instrumentalities of learning such as desks, chairs, pencils, and reasonably current textbooks; and minimally adequate teaching of reasonably up-to-date basic curricula such as reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies, by sufficient personnel adequately trained to teach those subject areas.

“This duty extends to all the State’s children, and to the extent that

children with special needs (students with disabilities, with limited English proficiency, and in poverty) require a greater input of funds to obtain their constitutional dues, the State must support that input.

“While ultimate responsibility for adequate funding of education rests with the State, it may fulfill its obligation by requiring a local contribution to education that is reasonably correlated to a district’s ability to pay.”

There has also been a change in the position about the means of raising money, which now reads as follows:

“The State’s system of financing education should be progressive, with a higher portion of the cost paid by those having greater ability to pay. The means of raising money should incorporate the principles of simplicity and transparency, stability insofar as progressivity is not sacrificed, and exportability, either in terms of payment by out-of-state residents or by partially offsetting any increase in State taxes with a decrease in federal taxes. In general, the means of raising money should incorporate principles of horizontal equity, with similar groups of taxpayers being treated equally and similar goods and services being taxed equally, provided that such treatment neither violates other League positions nor renders a tax more regressive.

Additional funds necessary to provide the State’s children with a sound basic education should be raised through increases in the State

personal income tax implemented in a progressive fashion. Stability of income tax should be increased by creating a substantial reserve dedicated to education, sufficient to maintain uniform stream of State revenues for funding of education in times of economic downturn.”

The distribution of additional state aid should narrow the expenditures gap between wealthy and poor districts, but school districts are expected to maintain local taxes to sustain or improve their performance in meeting academic standards. Additional state aid should be used not only for basic operating expenses but for funding construction and rehabilitation of school buildings, acquiring technology and fulfilling state mandates.

“Aid for operating costs should enable school districts to provide all their children with a sound basic education...”

“The League supports implementation of educational efficiencies in the provision of a sound basic education, provided that the proposed efficiencies do not affect adequacy of education.”

“Local financial support for schools will continue to depend, in part, upon real estate taxation but several measures are essential to eliminate the inequities that unfairly burden taxpayers.

“The League supports reform of the real property assessment system on which school district taxes are based, alleviation of the tax burden for low-income individuals through such means as an increase in the

circuit breaker tax relief benefit, along with automatic annual cost of living adjustments to the maximum income provision and the maximum property value provision of the circuit breaker tax relief benefit. The League supports an equitable redistribution of non-residential real estate taxes to the schools within a region or county.

“Major efficiencies should be recognized by replacement of programs that provide residential real property tax relief irrespective of ability to pay with programs that target local residential real property tax relief to those most in need, with lower income individuals receiving the greatest relief.”

Unchanged stands on tax reform require that the reforms are:

1. Equitable in distribution of the tax burden
2. Based on uniform standards
3. State assisted, monitored and enforced
4. Easily understandable and accessible to taxpayers
5. Kept current by periodic assessments.

Public funds should be used to support public schools. However, the League would not deny public funding for existing services to students who attend private schools.

The League support efforts to use schools as community centers to integrate the delivery of social services so long as these services are funded separately from the education budget.

Tax relief programs should be limited to taxpayers with a limited ability to pay and made available on a

sliding scale according to need. Relief criteria should be automatically adjusted annually.

Work In Progress

So many projects are in progress at the national, state, and local levels that we lose sight of them from time to time. We have members at all levels focusing on them, but they drop below our mental radar if we are not careful.

Educating about D.C. Voting Rights is such a project. The LWV Education Fund has begun working on a year-long education and outreach project to build awareness across the nation about D.C. citizens' lack of full voting rights. The League is advocating passage of the D.C. voting rights act so that the people living in the nation's capital become fully enfranchised.

HAVA work continues. The League is still pushing for optical-scan machines so that there is a permanent record of ballots. DRE machines have had problems in some voting districts where they are in use. Voters in New York State are waiting to find out what machines have been approved for us.

Court Restructuring is back in the foreground as Chief Judge Judith Kaye has announced the appointment of a commission to redesign the court structure. Recommendations are due early in 2007, and we need to be aware of what they recommend.

Criminal Justice locally Tom Kadgen is chairman of the Criminal Justice Council, which is working quietly but continuously. The state League is still working on reform of

the drug laws, both treatment for non-violent drug offenders and parole of those incarcerated under the Rockefeller Drug Laws. Reform moves slowly; 473 inmates were eligible for immediate relief. 270 were able to apply for relief, and 142 of them were released. The Drug Law reform Act has had little impact so far.

First Call for Holiday Partygoers

Our annual holiday celebration will be happening as usual this year, on December 17th from 2 to 4 PM, at the home of John and Jacki Moriarty.

The Moriartys always host wonderful parties for the League: great ambience, great food and drink, and great people. Board members are responsible for the refreshments, and they are ample, varied, and delicious. How could the company be anything but wonderful when League members and their families are present?

The Moriartys live in Rolling Meadows at 267 Apple Hill Road. There should be a map on the League website, or call Jacki Moriarty for directions.



I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2007

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

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.