



## LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region, August 2006

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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

#### AUGUST

1	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
2, 9, 16, 23	9:30 to 11:30	Yard sale pricing at Elizabeth Askue's
4	10:00 to 12:00	1 <sup>st</sup> Charter School study at Emily Johnson's
9	7:00 to 9:00?	UC Legislature vote on charter
22	10:00 to 12:00	2 <sup>nd</sup> Charter School study meeting at Emily's
26-27	9:00 to 3:00	Yard Sale at Elizabeth Askue's

#### SEPTEMBER

5	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
12	Noon to 9:00	Primary Election Day

#### 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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Commentator, August 2006

Prez Sez...

Greetings,

I suppose every incoming president of every organization stops to reflect a few seconds asking, "How did I get here?" For me, it started about 10 years ago when Cindy Bell told me what a great group was involved in the local League of Women Voters. Yes, I knew the reputation of the league but knowing that there were people who were welcoming and accepting was important to me. I was also concerned about time commitments to the league. "No problem," my good friend Cindy assured me. "You commit to the league whatever time you are able to give. There is no pressure." This sounded rather appealing since at the time I was teaching full time (still am) and I had two teenaged boys at home.

I attended my first annual meeting with trepidation. After all, these gals (and guys) were a savvy, informed group. What could I possibly offer them? Feeling like a fish out of water those first few minutes after I arrived, a smiling face approached me and said, "Hi, I'm Elizabeth Askue. Welcome." Still flashing that famous Elizabeth smile, she continued "You know, we could use a Publications chairperson. It doesn't require much time and it is an excellent opportunity to get involved." And so began a very rewarding journey. I have since chaired voters service, membership, and served as treasurer.

To all my mentors: Jacki, Lee R., Lee C., Renee, Gloria, Shirley, Emily, and of course Elizabeth and Cindy, thank-you. I urge all members, old and new, to share the rewarding experience of being involved with the league. If a smiling league

member asks you to serve on a committee or help out with the yard sale, please say yes. Whether you take small steps or decide to leap in, you too can have a rewarding journey

----Jean

### Correction to Annual Report

One gigantic "OOPS" and profound apologies to Voters Service and the misled members who read the annual report this year. The report erroneously said that we had not distributed the state Voters' Guide. This was not true—in fact we distributed 20,000 of them in Dutchess and Ulster Counties. Students from the Kingston High School stamped return addresses, and members did the distributions to schools, libraries, town halls and other locations. Lee Cane supervised the distribution, and Karen Goertzel worked with the high school students. This was a major Voters Service effort, and it was a serious oversight on the part of the annual report editor to not only exclude it but to give a rationale for not having done it. Please make a note of the needed addition and recognize this Voters Service effort.

It's the Yard Sale! Bring your contributions now and come to the sale in August.

## Consensus and Concurrence

At the annual meeting, a question was raised about the difference between consensus and concurrence. According to the LWV manual "In League" they are both parts of the same process. Consensus is the method by which we define our position, and concurrence is chapter agreement to a position. The exact words are:

**"Consensus/group discussion** is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall "sense of the group" as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a membership meeting or a series of membership or unit meetings."

**"Concurrence** is the act of agreeing with—or concurring with—a statement or position. A decision-making technique used by the League for some time, concurrence can work in several ways. Groups of League members or League boards can concur with (1) recommendations of a resource committee or a unit group; (2) decision statements formulated by League boards; or (3) positions reached by another League or Leagues."



Yard Sale has toys  
for sale

## Impact of Alcohol and Substance Abuse on Ulster County Youth

A brief history:

The New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) publishes a state wide report every other year called "The Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System" (PRISMS) for Alcohol and Substance Abuse.

In its reports of 1996, 1999, and 2001 (covering the years 1994 through 1999) OASAS deemed Ulster County to be the worst county in New York State (55<sup>th</sup> of 55) to have its youth undergo some major consequence as the result of drugs.

In 2001 OASAS stopped rating the counties against one another; however, the reports of 2003 and 2005 did not indicate that any progress was being made that addressed this problem.

Our local League began a study group to investigate this phenomenon. Our findings were somewhat ambiguous. The State and local experts that our study group interviewed could not determine whether or not a more than normal substance abuse problem actually existed in Ulster County or whether these numbers reflected the high degree to which our county enforces and identifies substance abuse incidents. However, there was data that conflicted with this opinion.

Having reached an impasse of this nature we referred our concern to our State and County representatives and suspended our study group, but kept inquiring if anything had been done by our county agencies to address this matter.

Sometimes the League can get some action without going "Into Action".

Ulster County's Director of Mental

Health, Marshall Beckman, has just received a \$150,000 grant from The Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to create an Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator Program to attempt to reduce the incidents of alcohol and substance abuse among our youth.

Kudos should be given to Mr. Beckman for finding the necessary funding in these times.

--- Tom Kadgen

### Charter Chatter

July 14 may be Bastille Day in France but it was Ulster County Charter day here in Kingston. The draft charter which was lovingly developed and nurtured by the Ulster County Charter Commission during the period from September 2004 to the end of March 2006 was transferred to the Efficiency, Reform and Intergovernmental Committee for such amending as they deemed fit in anticipation of presentation to the full body of the County Legislature on August 9, 2006 for its approval or rejection.

The ER and I Committee, chaired by Gary Bischoff, has been conducting a series of meetings, open to the public (as was done by the Charter Commission), to review and effect changes to the charter that might result in its improvement. Meetings were lively as the solons were well informed, respectfully contentious and asking good questions.

### The Yard Sale:

Please bring your spare items by  
August 15<sup>th</sup> to  
Elizabeth's.



Suggestions were made by the County Attorneys as well. Those who had served on the Charter Commission, who were in attendance, were asked to participate in clarifying and justifying some of the provisions of the draft. Some of the departments who were affected by the changes resulting from a County Executive form of government offered alternate recommendations. In the end everything that had been forwarded for consideration was resolved a little after 7 PM Friday, July 14, 2006. A document was decided upon that was not substantively different from that which the Commission had produced, yet reflecting well debated changes, and it was approved. A big hurdle was negotiated! (We did not sing the Marseillaise)

On July 24 the ER and I Committee will hold a workshop on the new proposed Charter for the whole body of the County Legislature. The LWV Charter Committee will attend.

If you have never attended a meeting of the County Legislature try to make the one on August 9. It should be stirring.. ----  
Renee Sachs



Contribute furniture  
to the Yard Sale! And  
buy furniture there.

**Clocks and bibelots**

**Furniture of all kinds**



Pictures



Small appliances



That still work



Jewelry

Rings, earrings

Brooches

Necklaces



Bring Before, then Buy

China



Glassware



Cameras

binoculars

accessories



Well, almost anything really...

Books, toys, linens, videos,

DVDs, records.....

To Elizabeth Askue's in Hurley.  
Call 331-3418 for directions or  
for help transporting goods.

Sale is August 26 and 27.

Be  
come

sure to  
and buy!



### **Board Planning Meeting**

The board held its annual planning meeting on July 15<sup>th</sup> to consider projects for the coming year. As a result, we will make further efforts in two areas of importance: review and revision of our bylaws and strengthening and emphasizing our observer corps. These are being worked on starting now and you will hear more details.

### **Observer Corps**

The LWV Observer Corps has taken on a “new look.” Because of interest in the meetings on the proposed Ulster County charter more League people have been sitting in on the committee hearings and discussions taking place in the Ulster County Office Building. We are planning to breathe new life into the Observer Corps with League members attending and reporting when appropriate on meetings of the governing bodies in their area including the various boards of education. If you can commit some time on the corps for anywhere from one to twelve meetings please consider it. I am planning to telephone some of you and will be waiting to hear from those of you who would like more information or are ready to participate. My telephone number is 338-8079 and I look forward to talking with you.  
---- Gloria Plasker

**Remember your good second-hand items for the yard sale!**

### **HAVA Implementation**

**HAVA** stands for the Help America Vote Act, and is meant to make voting easier and more reliable for voters in the US, so that scandals about election fraud become a thing of the past. Because New York State has had difficulty in deciding on what new voting machines to use, full HAVA implementation is not going to be done in Ulster County for the primary and general elections this fall, which is a disappointment. The good news is that there will be a “Plan B” machine suitable for people with physical challenges available in the Ulster County Board of Elections office for any who need it. Although this will be the only such machine in the county, it will be there and transportation to the Board of Elections will be made available. The details will all be announced at a date closer to the primary election.

The Board of Elections at 334-5740 can answer any questions or concerns you may have. We applaud the steps taken so far and look forward to the 2007 complete implementation of HAVA.

### **E-Mail Addresses**

We have 66 members who have not given us e-mail addresses. Most of these members probably just don't have an address, but if you do and haven't given it to us, please do so. Even if you do not want us to use it for routine matters, let us know what it is for our records. Many thanks!

## Charter Schools

When the charter school legislation was proposed in 1998, the League opposed the original bill on the ground that it would divert public resources from public schools and on the ground that there was inadequate separation of church and state. The original bill did not denominate charter schools as public schools. In response to the League's efforts, some of its objections were resolved by the Charter School Act of 1998, but the issue of funding was not addressed.

The issue of Charter Schools is most important to all of us who value the best education for our children while considering the most effective and affordable way of providing this. The recent proposal for increasing the number of Charter Schools from one hundred to two hundred and fifty in New York State indicates the push for Charter Schools. The League continues to be concerned about funding since the Charter School Act of 1998 did not address it.

Now that Charter Schools have been in operation for a few years other questions arise such as:

1. What has been the financial impact of charter schools on the home school district and how can this be minimized?
2. Have charter schools impaired the ability of the traditional public schools to educate their children?
3. What has been the benefit of operating the charter schools in the area of student achievement and increased motivation and can this benefit be increased?

4. Are charter schools serving all of the students, including the special education population?
5. What has been the oversight of charter schools and has it been adequate to assure achievement of charter goals?

The charter school study is attempting to find answers to these questions and we will explore all sides of the issue. New York State has both successful and unsuccessful charter schools. It is our intent to find a balanced view of the charter schools movement. We will be presenting our findings at the September membership meeting.

If you are interested in joining the study, call Emily Johnson at 338-3554.

--- Emily

## Primary 9/14 Election Information

Registration dates for the election:

Mail application for registration must be postmarked by 8/18 and received by 8/23 at the Board of elections.

In person registration must be done by 8/18.

Voting by absentee ballot: application for absentee ballot postmarked by 9/5. To apply in person for absentee ballot 9/11. Posted ballot must be postmarked by 9/11. Ballot can be delivered in person by 9/12 to the Board of Elections.

## Regional Training Seminar

The LWVNYS is pleased to present the 2006 Ida Trager Regional Training Series in five areas in NYS. The Capital Area workshop will run from 2pm to 7:45pm on September 14. We are looking for space for 20-40 participants. In addition, we will

need to make arrangements for a simple meal with beverage plus a coffee setup for the break.

There is a \$5 fee per registrant. The state League picks up all other expenses. If you are interested in attending, let Jean McGarry know. Location will be announced when known.

### State Board Nominations

Every two years, the members of the League of Women Voters of New York State elect their Leaders for the next board term. The nominating committee invites, welcomes, and depends on nominations by League members and local League boards.

The process begins **now** with the formation of a slate of nominees, which will be presented at Convention 2007. Candidates for the LWVNYS Board should be:

- \* Committed to the mission of the League
- \* Experienced local League leaders
- \* Skilled in organizational development
- \* Cooperative, responsible, results oriented, visionary

In accordance with our current bylaws, the positions to be filled for the 2007-09 term are:

- \* President
- \* Vice-Presidents for Advocacy & Issues, Membership, Voter Service, Development
- \* Secretary/Treasurer
- \* Directors (Legislative, Citizen Education, Grassroots Lobby & Membership Outreach)
- \* Nominating Chair and two members.

Think about candidates now and if you have suggestions contact Jean McGarry for the next step. Deadline for recommendations is **November 15, 2006.**

Remember, you may nominate any number of candidates-including **YOURSELF!**

### Membership News

Shirley Kobran is now not only home but is doing very well. She is feeling much better and is able to get around her house and do her chores without exhaustion. She is even going to Cape Cod to celebrate her son Gary's birthday! She is also looking forward to picking up her league work after her holiday and expects no difficulty in doing her share, and for Shirley that's always more than her share!

Shirley has been a mainstay of the league for many years, and we look forward to having her completely well again. Her optimistic spirit has sustained us through the years and continues to do so.

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Currently Member(s)?:

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

Telephone: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (eve) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) Household Membership (\$65)

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (*tax deductible*.)

(Please send a separate check which **MUST** be payable to *NYSLWV Ed Fund*) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If you are upgrading to a Household Membership, please include the name and email address of new members

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 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:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

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