



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* May, 2008

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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

MAY

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| 13 | 6:00 to 8:30 | Annual Business Meeting with potluck supper.
Universalist Unitarian Church, Kingston |
| 15 | 3:30 to 5:00 | Commentator Committee Meeting at Lee Ridgway's |

JUNE

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| 4 | 7:15 to 9:15 | Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's |
| 8 | 1:00 to 3:30 | Susan B. Anthony Honorees' Luncheon
Wiltwyck Golf Club |

JULY

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|---|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8 | 7:15 to 9:15 | Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's |
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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 League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region 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.

Full League membership is open to all United States citizens 18 years or older. Non-voting membership is open to non-citizens. The membership year runs from June 1 to May 31. Membership dues are not tax-deductible as the League engages in advocacy on issues.

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Prez Sez...

Greetings,

This May issue of the Commentator will be the final issue in its present format. Beginning in June, our newsletter will be sent to you by e-mail or you may view it on our website. It has been a daunting task as we attempt to cut our costs, be more environmentally friendly and continue to best serve our membership.

Some of you may not be pleased by this change. In fact, some of you who have e-mail addresses asked to continue receiving a hard copy. While we are happy to make every attempt to best serve you, I would ask you to please reconsider and give the e-mail format a chance. I speak as one individual who was initially reluctant to receive newsletters and any correspondence that consisted of more than one page by e-mail. I wanted it IN MY HAND. Well, practice makes perfect and printing out correspondence allows me to hold it. Please call me if you decide that, in retrospect, receiving the Commentator by e-mail would be fine. Undoubtedly, there will be kinks to iron out as we transition into our new delivery system. Your input and patience will both be appreciated.

That said, see you at the annual meeting on May 13th. It's a great time to get rejuvenated or reconnected, all while you enjoy great cuisine.

Jean



Coming Occasions

Two festive occasions are coming up soon – one is business as well as fun, and the other is recognition for three of our most honored members as well as fun.

The first is, of course, the **annual meeting** at which we elect the officers and board, establish the budget and the agenda for the coming year, and greet all our friends and fellow-Leaguers. This also gives us an opportunity to look at what we have accomplished in the past year. It will be at the Universalist Unitarian Church in Kingston on May 13, at six o'clock. For those who don't remember, the Church is on Sawkill Road, which runs between Route 209 and Washington Avenue.

The other occasion is the **Susan B. Anthony Honorees Luncheon**, which will be on June 8th at 1:00 at the Wiltwyck Golf Club, off Lucas Avenue in Hurley. Honorees are Shirley Kobran, Emily Johnson, and Elizabeth Askue. Peter Schickele will make a few remarks and Martha Kennedy, President of the LWV of New York State will also speak briefly.

Charter Transition

In April, Cindy Bell presented the following statement to the County Legislature in regard to the process of transition to the new county charter executive form of government.

“The LWV of the mid-Hudson region wish to reiterate our support for the charter and our concerns about the transition.

The administration of our county has become far too complex to be run by the committee system. We firmly believe that under the charter, county government will operate more efficiently and more effectively.

It falls to this legislature to determine the budget for the offices of the executive and comptroller. We feel that it is essential to budget for the salaries and staffing as soon as possible. We need to attract candidates with the expertise to run a county of our size.

Last term this legislature cut its own salary and benefits to serve as an example to austerity Your sacrifice went ignored by many, but not by us. We commend you for your sacrifice. However, we ask that you do not underbudget for the upcoming changes. We realize the public's opposition to any increases in spending; however, in this case we feel that the initial costs will be repaid many times over in future savings.

We offer you our support in this unpopular but needed endeavor.

We also request that you do not deplete the legislature's staff for that of the executive and comptroller. We believe that you will need an effective staff to keep you functioning and informed

Good government necessitates a balance of power between its branches. If nothing else, the UCLEC proved beyond a doubt the folly of allowing one or two people to control the decision making for the entire county.

This is a crucial point in our County's history and we cannot afford to flounder at its beginning. We ask each of you to delve into the administrative code and ready yourself for the upcoming changes.”

Annual Meeting Agenda

This is a reminder that a number of items of business are transacted at the annual meeting. The proposed slate of officers and at-large directors was published in the April Commentator, as was the proposed budget for 2008-2009. Postcards were sent out about the proposed local studies for the coming year. You will also be asked to state your interests in what work you have time to do for the League and you will learn more about what we have done and plan to do.

This is a major election year and we expect to be very busy at all political levels. There are many issues and many questions. We need to be active and proactive in advocacy and fairness in voting requirements and practices.

Please attend and tell us what you think and what we should be doing.

Last month we presented the first article for Women's History month. In the course of doing the research, it was found that women have contributed to a variety of advancements in society, not just the political or military arenas. As a consequence, a second article is being presented to you, the reader.

1587 **Virginia Dare** first person born in American to English parents (Roanoke Island, Virginia)

1790 **Mother Bernadine** Matthews establishes first community of Roman Catholic nuns in the 13 colonies (Carmelite convent near Port Tobacco, Maryland)

1849 **Elizabeth Blackwell** first woman in America to receive a medical degree (from Medical Institution of Geneva, New York)

1853 **Antoinette Blackwell** first American woman to be ordained a minister of a recognized denomination (Congregational)

1864 **Rebecca Lee Crumpler** first black woman to receive a MD degree graduating from New England Female Medical College

1865 **Mary Surratt** first woman in America to be accused of complicity in assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and first woman hanged by the American government, July 7, 1865

1879 **Mary Baker Eddy** established the Church of Christ, Scientist, first woman to found a major religion, Christian Science

1885 **Sarah E. Goode** first black woman to receive a patent (for a bed that folded into a cabinet)

1921 **Edith Wharton** first woman to win Pulitzer Prize for fiction-novel *The Age of Innocence*

1926 **Gertrude Ederle** first woman to swim the English Channel

1931 **Jane Addams** first American woman to receive Nobel Prize for Peace

1932 **Amelia Earhart** first woman fly solo across Atlantic (approx. 15 hours)

1933 **Katharine Hepburn** wins first of 4 Academy Awards for Best Actress (the only actor to do so)

1940 **Hattie McDaniel** first black woman to receive an Academy Award (supporting role in *Gone With the Wind*)

1946 **Mother Maria Frances Cabrini**, first US citizen (born in Italy) to be canonized to become a saint.

1947 **Gerti Cori** first US woman to win Nobel Prize (Science) Physiology or Medicine

1952 **Julie Harris** receives first of 5 Tony Awards for *I Am A Camera* (the only stage actor to do so)

1957 **Althea Gibson** first black woman tennis champion at Wimbledon and the US Open, a feat she repeated in 1958

1959 **Severo Ochoa** first Hispanic woman to receive Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the synthesis of ribonucleic acid (RNA)

1961 **Rita Moreno** first Hispanic woman to receive Academy Award Best supporting Actress-*West Side Story*; as of 1977 first Hispanic and second person to have received an Academy Award, a Grammy, a Tony and an Emmy

1963 **Barbara W. Tuckman** first woman to win Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction *The Guns of August* and again in 1972 for *Stillwell and the American Experience in China 1911-45*

1967 **Muriel "Mickey" Siebert** first woman to own seat on NY Stock Exchange

1970 **Diane Crump** first woman jockey to ride in Kentucky Derby

1972 **Sally Jean Priesand** first woman ordained a rabbi in US

Mary Wells Lawrence first woman CEO of a company traded on the NY Stock Exchange 1975 Elizabeth Ann Seton first American born to be canonized a saint

1976 **Sarah Caldwell** first woman conductor at NY Metropolitan Opera House

1977 **Janet Guthrie** first woman driver in the Indy 500

1978 **Marian Anderson** opera singer-first woman and first black to receive Kennedy Center Honors

1983 **Dr. Sally K. Ride** first American woman sent into space

1985 **Wilms Mankiller** first woman chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

1989 **Reverend Barbara C. Harris** (Boston) first woman consecrated as a bishop of the Episcopal Church

1993 **Connie Chung** first Asian-American, male or female to become nightly news anchor of a major net work (CBS)

1994 **Judith Rodin** first woman president of an Ivy League school (University of Pennsylvania 1994-2000)

1999 **Lt. Col. Eileen Collins** first woman astronaut to command space shuttle mission

Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson becomes 18th president of RPI, first woman and first black to serve as chairman of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission; first black woman to receive doctorate from MIT in any subject

2001 **Halle Berry** first black woman to receive Academy Award for Best Actress
Ruth Simmons first black woman to become president of an Ivy League college-Brown University

2003 **Oprah Winfrey** first black woman to become a billionaire; est, 2/2008 \$2.5 billion

2006 **Effa Manley** co-owner of Negro League team, Newark Eagles, first woman elected to Baseball Hall of Fame

2007 **Dr. Peggy Whitson** first woman to command the International Space Station

Drew Gilpin Faust first woman president in Harvard University's 371 year history

Christy Ruth Walton wealthiest woman in US. As of 2/2008, est. worth \$19.2 billion dollars-part of Wal-Mart business

It would be remiss to omit the achievements of women world wide.....what follows is simply a sample.

Queen Elizabeth I, 16th century, **Czarina Catherine the Great**, 18th century and **Queen Victoria**, 19th century, each influenced her country and the eras in which they ruled.

In the 20th and 21 st centuries women have continued to make major contributions through out the world.

Marie Curie (France) 1903 first woman to win Nobel Price for Physics, repeated 1911 won for Chemistry

Sirimavo Bandarancrike 1960-65, 1970-77 prime minister of Ceylon (Sri Lanke); **Indira Gandhi** 1966-1977, 1980-1984 (assassinated) prime minister of India

Golda Meir 1969-74 first woman prime minister of Israel

Margaret Thatcher first woman prime minister of Great Britain 1979 and first person in the 20th century to be re-elected to a third consecutive term in that office

Benazir Bhutto 1988-90 elected prime minister of Pakistan, first woman to head a Muslim nation; **Khaleda Zia** 1991 first woman elected prime minister of Bangladesh

Angela Merkel first woman elected chancellor of Germany, Nov. 2005

Baroness Bertha Von Suttner-Austria 1905 first woman to win Nobel Peace Prize
Aung San Suu Kyi-Nobel Peace Laureate-Myanmar (Burma) under house detention; was not allowed to go to the ceremonies to receive the award; her sons who live in the United Kingdom accepted on her behalf

Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain is the longest enthroned female sovereign 56 years
Liliane Bettencourt (France) wealthiest woman in the world. As of 2/2008, est. \$22.9 billion dollars-owner of L'Oreal

Sources of information: see April issue. Lee Cane

Meeting on the Future of Golden Hill

On April 26th, the League held an informational meeting on the future of the Golden Hill Healthcare Facility at City Hall. About 70 people attended, and the meeting was reported in several local papers.

Richard Mathews was the moderator, and the panel consisted of Robert Parete, the chairman of the Health Services Committee of the Ulster County Legislature; Steve Kelley, who chairs the Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on the Future of the County Nursing Home for the Legislature; Sheree Cross, Director of the Golden Hill Healthcare Facility; Bette Moscovitz, speaking for the Ombudsmen; Patrick Cucinelli, a financial analyst for the State Association of Nursing Homes; and Stan Wojeiechowski, also from the state association.

The Blue Ribbon Commission (also known as the Berger Commission) required a comprehensive review of healthcare facilities, including county-run nursing homes. As a result of the report, the Kingston and Benedictine Hospitals were merged, and the legislature appointed the Blue Ribbon Panel to look at the future of the county-owned Golden Hill Healthcare Facility.

Although there is a surplus of nursing home beds throughout New York State, Ulster County beds are at 98% of capacity. Elderly people prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible, so there may well be greater demand for home care and programs outside institutions as an alternative to more beds.

Like other county nursing homes, Golden Hill serves as a safety net for county residents, which means that it

accepts people whom for-profit nursing homes might refuse because of the extra care they require.

There are serious financial issues facing the Golden Hill facility; the subsidy required from the county in 2007 was over \$5 million, or about \$20 thousand per resident. Furthermore, a site review showed that the physical plant needs serious renovation or replacement in the next few years. It is 35 years old and should be modernized for resident comfort and efficiency. Renovations were estimated at \$44 million in 2006, and a new facility was estimated at \$94 million.

Although there can be money for capital improvement from the state, the county would have to pay for the work up front and be reimbursed over the life of the improvement. Present county finances make that an unpalatable action.

Sheree Cross has been Director of Golden Hill for six years, and told the audience about the routine. There is a separate wing for Alzheimer patients. Short term care is available as well as long-term care. There are arrangements for residents at various levels of infirmity. Personal care is provided as needed, and residents eat in the dining room or in their rooms. There are choices of various activities (such as crafts) supplied by the staff. There are two beauty parlors and a gift shop, and physical and occupational therapy sessions. Visitors are welcome, and they can take residents out if they are well enough.

In addition to a staff of nearly 400 people in 11 departments, there are 70 volunteers who contribute some 9000 hours of work every year. Golden Hill has an excellent reputation and meets known requirements.

Bette Moskowitz described the role of the ombudsmen and spoke of how well Golden Hill staff works with the two ombudsmen there to resolve complaints and improve residents' lives.

The financial arrangements for funding nursing homes are extraordinarily complex and outdated. The basis for costs has been 1983 and is only now being revised to 2002. This should improve reimbursement from the state and federal governments when the changes are complete.

Currently, the amounts paid to nursing homes by the state are very difficult to calculate and there are too few financial analysts in the state Department of Health to determine and allocate the funds that have been budgeted but not yet distributed. State and federal money has been held up because of calculation problems and because some states have used federal money for purposes other than health care. With the change in the basis year, money should be greater, but the timing is not definite and counties have obligations to pay operating costs as they come due.

In response to a question, Steve Kelley said that the Blue Ribbon Panel hopes to have its report and recommendations out by early June. It is being worked on now. He noted that the committee members were all at the meeting and expected to use the public comments in their deliberations.

The League's local study group continues to meet in hopes that the situation will be clarified and that a solution can be found which is satisfactory to all interested parties and is within the financial constraints under which the county has to operate.

LWV President's Fighting Words

"This is a disgraceful decision by a court that has no credibility on election issues. The court has shown once again that it does not respect voters," said Mary G. Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Because of the procedural status of the case, there was no record on which the Court could judge how great the burden of a photo ID requirement would be on voters. Nonetheless, the three key justices found that the burden was not "excessively burdensome." This finding is "intellectually as well as morally bankrupt," Wilson said.

"There is a concerted effort in this country to disenfranchise legal voters and, unfortunately, this Supreme Court has joined those ugly efforts," Wilson said.

This is a "bad decision for our democracy," Wilson asserted. "Just because the Supreme Court says a bad policy is constitutional doesn't mean legislatures should adopt it," she said. "The League of Women Voters will be fighting against these limitations on democracy in the states and, when necessary, in Congress," she said.

"It is simply disgraceful when the Supreme Court refuses to protect the constitutional voting rights of Americans," Wilson said.

"We can no longer look to this Supreme Court to ensure fair elections," Wilson concluded.

Voter Information Online

A message from Mary Wilson, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States:

The League of Women Voters has all the information you need at VOTE411.org – the one-stop shop for all your election information needs, including a nationwide polling place locator, voter registration tips, important dates, and much more.

Today, I'm inviting you to visit VOTE411.org and click on "Sign up" to receive special [VOTE411](http://VOTE411.org) alerts that will keep you in the know about general and state-specific information on all the aspects of the election process. There is no other single resource that provides this level of comprehensive information.

For 88 years, the League of Women Voters has provided communities across the country with a wide range of voter education tools - and this year is no different. Please take advantage of all [VOTE411](http://VOTE411.org) has to offer by [signing up for email alerts today!](http://VOTE411.org)

LWV National Convention

Convention 2008 is being held in Portland, OR from June 13-17, 2008 and has the theme *Reaching New Heights Together*. The official copy of the Workbook for the LWVUS 2008 Convention is ready and [available on the LWVUS Web site](http://www.lwvus.org).

Among our various events and speakers is an exciting panel on global climate change. In the spirit of reducing our environmental footprint, as well as reducing postage fees, we are making the Workbook available to all Leagues via download from the LWVUS Web site. Read and download the entire Workbook or read or download individual sections of the Workbook. Copies will not be mailed. However, there will be printed copies available when you arrive in Portland for Convention.

At Convention, there will be additional exciting speakers such as former OR Governor Barbara Roberts speaking on women and running for office as well as former OR Governor John Kitzhaber speaking on health care – areas we know are all of major interest to League members!

Our local League does not expect to send any delegates to this convention in Portland, although it would be a valuable experience—aside from the carbon footprint of flying!