



Commentator, v.I, i.6

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 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

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.

Commentator v.1,i.4
 President Jean McGarry
jfmcg@hvc.rr.com
 845-336-6622
 Newsletter: Lee Ridgway
lwvlee@hvc.rr.com
 845-339-4927
 Membership: Betty Chin
Blc2003@hotmail.com
 845-331-2572

COMMENTATOR DECEMBER, 2008/ JANUARY, 2009

CALENDAR		
2009		*
JANUARY		
13	6:30 -7:30	County Observer Corps meeting at Panera's in Kingston
27	7:00-9:00	Kingston observers organizational meeting. Place TBA
FEB.		
3	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Gloria's
12	1:30-3:00	Book repair, check with Elizabeth
21	10:00-12:00	Brunch meeting on direct voting and the Electoral College at the Everett Hodge Community Center 15-21 Franklin Street, Kingston
MARCH		
4	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Gloria's
13	1:30-3:00	Book repair, check with Elizabeth
18	7:00	Discussion of the state budget with Jay Gallagher, head of Gannett news bureau in Albany, and Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNY lobbyist. Place TBA
APRIL		
7	7:15-9:15	Board meeting. Place TBA
18	10:00-12:00	Consensus brunch meeting on Golden Hill at the Town of Esopus Library in Port Ewen
MAY		
4		Board meeting. Place TBA
19		Statewide School Budget Vote
20	6:00-8:30	Annual Meeting & Pot-Luck Supper at the Town of Esopus Library in Port Ewen
JUNE		
2	7:15-9:15	Board meeting. Place TBA
7	1:00-3:30	Charter honoree luncheon at Wiltwyck Golf Club

Check our Calendar on-line at
<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org/calendar.html>
 for updated information.

Prez Sez...

In previous columns I have mentioned the significant role that our league played in promoting the adoption of the Ulster County Charter. 2009 will be a year to celebrate the implementation of our new form of government and to recognize those league members whose extraordinary efforts lead the way for its successful passage.

As president of the League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region, it is my pleasure to announce our honorees for our second Awards Luncheon that will be held at Wiltwyck Country Club on June 7, 2009. Thank you Renee Sachs for serving on the original Charter Committee Commission and working tirelessly to produce this original document. Again, thanks to Renee as well as Tom Kadgen, Cindy Bell, and Lee Cane for their vigilance in gathering and distributing information throughout the Charter transition.

Vice president and dynamo member Jacki Moriarty best expressed our decision when we chose this year's honorees. "It is important to honor our future." That said, the League recognizes that the Charter is clearly forward-looking and it is appropriate that we honor the Charter team and this revolutionary form of government that is certain to benefit the citizens of Ulster County.

Mark your calendars for June 7th. It is a Happy New Year!

Jean

Observer Corps

We are re-activating the Observer Corp to help support the Ulster County Legislature and the Executive branch in their transitions to the new form of county government. We want to cover all county committees for the first six months of the year, as well as meet with the newly elected officials and legislative leadership. The work will include going to one or two legislative meetings a month, then briefly reporting on that meeting for the *Commentator*. We may want to meet together occasionally.

We try to report in the *Commentator* what time the meeting started, what members attended, what decisions were made, what important issues were raised, and when the meeting ended. You can submit your report to Lee Ridgway by phone, (339-4927), email (lwvlee@cs.com), or postal mail at 19 Johnston Avenue, Kingston, NY, 12401. If you can't provide all the information we would like, tell us what you can.

For anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the Observer Corps or would like to know more about it, there will be a meeting at 6:30PM at Panera's on Ulster Avenue on January 13th.

We are also forming a new City of Kingston Observer Corps. We intend to coordinate with other groups that are interested in the future of the City and attend City Council meetings. That meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 27, place TBA.

Anyone who has a couple of hours a month can do it, reporting is very easy, and our presence at these meetings may make a difference. Please call Margaret Sellers at 339-3180 with any questions or comments.



**Charter Support
Committee**

January 1, 2009 was a historic day for Ulster County. Our new charter calling for a county executive form of government took effect. Our recently elected officials were sworn in, Michael Hein as first County Executive and Elliott Auerbach as first County Comptroller. Not only were these gentlemen inaugurated but a number of executive staff appointments were named as well.

It is very gratifying to know that our League played an essential role in the development of the first county charter, the campaign to promote its adoption by the electorate and the overseeing of the writing and subsequent ratification of its administrative code by the county legislature.

The League committee which functioned throughout the period under different names to reflect its different charges will rename itself again to perform in its new capacity viz. observation and assessment of the new county government. Essentially we hope to support and oversee the fledgling government which has just emerged. Our plans include meeting with the new county leadership to learn of their future plans and to monitor their progress. We will also want to observe and detail how the county legislature adapts to its new role as a policy making and financial appropriations making body. The legislature will be relieved of its responsibilities of administration of county departments which is now transferred to the office of the county executive.

We feel the first six months of the new government are critical to successful functioning and an extraordinary opportunity presents itself to all League members who wish to see the success of this new venture. Join the League Observer Corps and be a witness to history by participating for a few hours once a month.

-Renee Sachs

**Ways and Means
Committee Report
11/5/08**

The Ways and Means Committee was convened at 4:45 by Chairman Alan Lomita and adjourned at 5:30. All committee members were present as well as members of the county administrator's and county attorney's offices.

Announcements were made regarding appeals by departments and the legislature to the tentative 2009 budget (November 5 & 13) and on November 17 the legislature will vote on budget amendments.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to resolutions on various topics from establishing the county equalization rates for 2009, to authorizing county treasurer to accept bids for private sale of county owned property, to transferring funds for the DSS to provide mandated services, etc. Most were passed.

There was considerable discussion on the resolution dealing with whether the county would charge back to the towns for the cost of election support. It was decided that this matter will be addressed at the November 12 meeting giving Bea Havranek of the County Attorney's Office and Art Smith of the County Administrator's Office an opportunity to prepare clarifying material.

A similar review will be given to the resolution dealing with creating a volunteer incentive program for county emergency service volunteers.

--Lee Cane, Observer Corps

Human Services

Chairman Gregorius convened the Human Services Committee at

**Committee
11/24/08**

4:49 on 11-24-08. All members were present except for Legislator Terrizzi. Commissioner Rodriguez and members of the DSS management group were also present.

Initially, the committee dealt with resolutions involving pre-school and early intervention matters handled through the Services Division. Two were sponsored by the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC): one was a memorializing resolution in support of an amendment to Article 89 of the State Constitution, which if approved, would require school districts rather than DSS to finance the cost of such schooling. Legislator Provenzano proposed an amendment requiring the county attorney to review the amendment and arrange to have language explaining the reason for such. Both the amendment and the resolution were passed.

The second resolution dealt with another proposal sponsored by NYSAC for the state to revise the law dealing with the cost of the early intervention program by having the state and third party insurance pay more. This was passed.

A final resolution dealt with approving payment of overtime by transferring funds from the Food Stamp Bonus Awards monies previously received by local DSS. Passed.

Legislator Provenzano requested that a letter be sent to Sue Barnes, the Coordinator of Food Stamps, commending her and her staff for doing a "great job."

The next part of the agenda dealt with explanations for any surplus in DSS budget, e.g., due to 30 day lag in payments, and the status of contracts not in place, generally due to language that had not been agreed to (Cornell Cooperative Contract, which expired 2 months ago, is being worked on, but is an example of such).

Considerable discussion ensued on the state of the contract with the Salient organization. This was a program purchased by the county about 3 years ago. Once operating it would allow local DSS to determine if clients with specific problems were being treated differently with respect to the medications prescribed, determine why and proceed to deal with the matter. It appears that though there are trained staff and Salient has twice sent a training representative, there is still a problem in using the program locally. Legislator Loughran emphatically stated he wanted a date when our district would be using the program appropriately; did not want to come month after month and hear this same commentary. Commissioner Rodriguez said that would be February; he would have to hire some one to handle the program trained in program nuances, and any problems would necessitate referral to the DOH Inspector General.

The county participation rate in the RISE program (previously called ACCESS or PACE) was discussed. This program is administered in conjunction with UCCC. UCCC is much more satisfied than it has been in recent months as more DSS clients are attending. The new director, Kathy Keyser, seems to have helped considerably in improving the situation.

The district's overall participation rate places UC DSS at the bottom of the list statewide. Ms. Hunlock, Director of Temporary Assistance, explained that there are on-going changes in the meaning of the

definitions that the district must follow. The district has taken steps to try to improve the participation rate, i.e., calling in 250 clients to review what can be done to involve them in education, jobs, etc.

If the district does not achieve the required participation rate it can lose state funding. According to Commissioner Rodriguez there is a "war" between the state and federal governments. If the participation rate is not met by the state, then the federal government can impose a penalty on the state, which in turn penalizes the districts. Chairman Gregorius advised Ms. Hunlock to keep the Committee up to date on this problem.

Other matters dealt with by the committee were: acknowledgement of a letter from the County Administrator that all non-essential expenditures not necessary were suspended for the remainder of 2008; overtime will be necessary including Saturdays to handle increase in the number of HEAP applicants (Commissioner expects to receive an additional 10% funding to handle these costs); Commissioner advised that the agency is beginning to see applicants seeking help who are part of the credit card crisis.

In connection with the HEAP program, the Commissioner requested approval to use some of the funding remaining from other programs to communicate with the public about the changes that are expected soon, i.e. for emergency HEAP only, a family of 4 may have an income of up to \$56,312. The committee did not agree and indicated that it felt there were substantial resources that he could use (such as radio, TV, weekly and daily newspapers) to inform the public about these changes.

Chairman Gregorius indicated that there would be no meeting in December, unless otherwise notified.

Meeting adjourned 6:30.

--Lee Cane, Observer Corps

Meeting Date Changes

The last issue of the *Commentator* listed a general meeting for January. This meeting will not take place because we all need time to get over the holidays and the start of the new year. It did not list a February meeting, and there will be one on February 21st, at the Everett Hodge Community Center 15-21 Franklin Street, Kingston. It will be a brunch meeting to discuss the possible abolition of the Electoral College, a position that the national LWV favors. The last *Commentator* contained information about it.

The meeting in March will be on the New York State budget problem, whether there is a budget at that time or whether it is late yet again.

Other new items appear in the calendar for April and May. Times may change and the places have not been firmed up yet however, save the date - at least until further notice! Be sure to check our website calendar for updates

Luncheon at Wiltwyck

The president announced in her column that there will be a luncheon on June 7th at Wiltwyck, and its purpose is to honor the people in the League who worked especially hard to make it happen and to make the public understand it. We were far from alone in this endeavor, but we are proud of our part in it, particularly the part

Meet Robin Yess: A New Member Profile

Renee Sachs played in being on the Charter Development Committee.

Tom Kadgen always goes to Maine in June, and therefore will not attend, but his role was an important one as well. Cindy Bell worked on adoption of the charter from the beginning and Lee Cane was our genius of distribution.

Robin Vaccai Yess presents as a confident young woman with a lot of momentum who sets her goals and energetically pursues them.

There aren't too many "family compounds" that we are aware of in the Ulster County area, but Robin and Louis Yess and their family come about as close as anyone to that concept associated with the Kennedys. They live on approximately 14 acres, mostly in Esopus and partly in Lloyd surrounded by other Yesses in adjacent locations, creating an unusual family closeness.

Robin was born and raised in Dutchess County. As a teenager, she and her family migrated across the Hudson and she subsequently graduated from New Paltz High School. She met and later married her husband, Louis, in New Paltz. He is a self-employed carpenter/contractor. They have two daughters, one fourteen and one twelve years old.

Following high school, Robin continued her education at Ulster County Community College and years later completed her degree in finance at Empire State College. From 1985-87 she was a sales assistant at Merrill Lynch brokerage. She was also employed by the First Albany Corporation and while there achieved a broker's license. She is currently a Certified Financial Planner and conducts her own business. She takes 30 hours/yr. of continuing education to maintain her certification.

Robin is an active Republican and was asked by the party to run for a seat on the Ulster County Legislature in 2007. As a candidate she advocated for tax reform, and finished a "respectable fourth" from a field of seven vying for three seats. She found running an educational experience, having met many people and absorbed much wisdom on the campaign trail. She believes strongly "in doing things for the right reasons" and she sets a high bar for her own election ethics (e.g. no association with negative campaigning). She and Louis are raising their daughters to respect honesty and she tries to set an example.

Robin believes in term limits because she feels it is in the public interest to make room for new ideas and people. She holds that politicians should not be lobbyists before or after public service and that campaign contributions should be from individual donors and in limited amounts. She is not in favor of public funding for political campaigns because she feels taxpayers should not spend money on a candidate whom they might not know well or whom they do not support for public office. She said that people are disillusioned with politics.

Robin joined the League because she wanted to associate with people who encourage political education. She is busy studying local, county, and state budgets, working with summaries that are available from various policy organizations.

“Taxpayers deserve prudent management of taxes” and she has found examples of duplicated processes in government, including Board of Election practices.

She also feels that New York State and local practices are “business unfriendly” and that agencies that work with economic development need to be streamlined. The necessary follow-through to accomplish this, she stated, does not seem to exist. Other detriments to business she cites are “big tax liability, expensive workmen’s compensation, and red tape.”

She ran an unsuccessful but “creditable” campaign for the state Assembly this year. She did not feel that she was discriminated against as a woman. She did cite a situation in which she was not given the opportunity for an interview by a local weekly before it endorsed her opponent. She interprets that as an example of prejudice against the challenger and automatic support of the incumbent.

Robin believes that both campaign finance and redistricting reform are essential. For the moment, she is devoting her energy to local grass roots causes such as property tax issues.

-- Renee Sachs

December 14: Holiday Party

Holiday cheer and the Moriartys. They seem to go together. As usual, drink and food were abundant, varied and sumptuous. Relaxation and easy conversation were the order for the day. Thank you Jacki and John for again opening your beautiful home for the League's annual holiday party.

Member News

Welcome to our new members! Diane Devine has joined the League, as have Anne Strain, Tracy Bartels, Cindy Glozier and Roberta Cerniglia, Andrea Havnaer, and Beth Hanigan. The Redemptoristine Nuns have also joined as a group.

There are a number of people out there who ought to be members, and we are counting on current members to find them and invite them in. Our studies at local, state, and national levels shed light on the issues we study and now more than ever we need a population that can understand the balance between economic and social needs, industrial and environmental needs, personal rights and public safety.

I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2009

Name:

Currently Member(s)?:

Address:

Telephone: (day)

(eve)

Email:

I/We enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) Household Membership (\$75)
Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (*tax deductible*;) for our use
(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 receive *Commentator* online____ or will read it 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)**

League of Women Voters
Mid-Hudson Region
PO Box 3564
Kingston, NY, 12402

December 2008 / January 2009
Commentator