



Commentator, v.I, i.5

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 NOVEMBER, 2008

CALENDAR		
NOV.		
15	10:00-12:00	Brunch and Discussion of "Where Do We Go From Here"
DEC.		
2	7:15-9:15 ----- 10:00-5:00	Board Meeting at Gloria's ----- UN Briefings in NYC
10	1:30-3:00	Book repair at Elizabeth Askue's
14	2:00-4:00	Holiday Celebration at Jacki's
2009	*****	*****
JANUARY		
6	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Gloria's
13	6:30 -7:30	Observer Corps meeting at Panera's in Kingston
17	10:00-12:00	Ecological Program (under development)
FEB.		
3	7:15-9:15	Board meeting
MARCH		
4	7:15-9:15	Board meeting
14	TBA	Open members' meeting

People are needed to observe county legislative committee meetings, particularly over the next few months during transition to the new form of government as roles and responsibilities change. If you are willing to volunteer to observe one meeting a month, call Margaret Sellers for more information and decide on your assignment. Her number: (845) 339-3180. See page 2 for more details.

Observer Corps

Much of our League's time and energy has been spent on the election of the County Executive and Comptroller over this past month. See "Prez Sez" for details of what we did and who did it. The people who could not do the setup and meeting-running work did their part as attenders of the meetings, listening and asking questions, and as authors of letters to the newspapers.

Now that the election is over, the hard job of making the transition to our new county government structure is starting. Legislative committees will have changed roles and the interactions between the county executive branch and the legislative branch will need to be worked out.

Current legislative committees usually meet once a month at a time and place of their choosing. The committees are:

- Administrative Services
- Arts, Education, Tourism, and Community Relations
- Criminal Justice and Safety
- Economic Development, Housing, Planning & Transit
- Environment
- Health Services (covers Public Health Department, Golden Hill, and Mental Health)
- Human Development (Social Services)
- Labor Relations
- Laws and Rules
- Personnel
- Public Works and Capital Projects
- Ways and Means

We need to have at least 12 people as regular volunteers to attend committee meetings between Jan 1 and June. It will take about 2 to 3 hours a month to observe and summarize the meeting for the Commentator. Observers should take note of committee members in attendance, important topics, and decisions. Starting and stopping times and the date of the next meeting (if known) would be good to know. Observers who wish to write a report should send it to Lee Ridgway (lwvlee@cs.com). Alternatively, they can telephone their reports to Lee at 339-4927 and she will write them up for the Commentator.

We want ALL the committees covered. Volunteer NOW.

There are several reasons for observing these meetings. Being there provides a League presence which is valuable for our visibility as well as educating us on what the county is doing and planning and what changes have been brought about by the County Executive and the Comptroller's offices.

Times and places of meetings for the week are listed on Monday in the Daily Freeman, and Margaret Sellers sends out the schedule to interested people. The Ulster County Directory lists all the committees and their members. The Observer Corps will meet on January 13, 6:30 to 7:30 at Panero's for further instructions and coordination.

Observer Corps Other Tasks

November 15th General Meeting

We will also be arranging meetings with the County Executive, Comptroller and the legislative leaders of both parties.

Margaret Sellers will be calling a meeting of people living in the City of Kingston, to consider the possibility of a Kingston Observer Corps.

The general meeting billed as "Where do we go from here?" was held at SUNY New Paltz on Saturday morning. The topic of where we go from here was touched on, but the topics covered were largely dictated by questions and comments from the speakers and audience.

Two students, Caitlin Finn and Ben Schachter, spoke of their experience at the Democratic National Convention following their connection with the Obama campaign. They both worked at the convention, he in housing and she in security. Although they were busy, they had an opportunity to observe the process of running and controlling the convention. Caitlin is specializing in political communication and was able to analyze and understand the text and subtext of the various communications. Ben, majoring in political science, observed the process and the changes made as situations changed. The Clinton supporters at the convention were very loyal and very partisan and the dynamics were interesting to observe.

Pat Sullivan, their professor, was at the meeting and spoke of the analysis she did of the communications, and of the differences between the "millennial generation" of today's students and earlier generations. This generation is very connected to the internet, and one of Obama's strengths was his use of the internet as a way to reach young people. Internet discourse has changed the way that people get news, and it enables them to get the news they want to hear without necessary exposure to other points of view. As a result, people can select the information that supports their own belief structure. There is a wide selection of views from which to choose and people can be exposed to a wide variety of opinion if they wish.

Pat Sullivan also spoke of the role that gender had played in the campaign discourse. Joe Biden avoided gender references in his debate with Sarah Palin. Hillary Clinton was subjected to some inappropriate questions from reporters about her likeability and she largely avoided playing the gender card, which Sarah Palin used a number of times. Comparing the debate between Bush and Ferraro in the '80s to current debate shows little difference in gender discourse.

Robin Yess, a member of the LWV who ran for State Assembly in the just-past election, spoke to some of the things that voters are not aware of and which are not called to their attention by the media. Fiscal management at a level lower than crisis proportions is not often considered, and the advantages that incumbents are given are "below the radar" for most people. Endorsements by newspapers can be made

without all candidates being interviewed, for example. Letters to the editor from candidates are not printed by some newspapers as a policy, while incumbents receive publicity through news articles. There is no accountability for the way in which special appropriations (pork) is spent. The current method of assigning districts is controlled by the body whose districts are being assigned, allowing incumbents to make their districts extremely safe. These are all problems that the electorate must be aware of and address, and she looks to the new generation of voters to help address them.

One dispiriting note was raised by Ben and Caitlin. The college students, although inspired by the federal campaign, did not vote in the numbers that were hoped for, and many who did vote only voted the top of the ballot, not knowing anything about the congressional representatives or the people running at the state and local levels.

As to where we go from here—that's a topic for another meeting.

-- Lee Ridgway

December 14: Holiday Party

Invitations will be going out soon for the holiday party at the Moriartys. Save the date and be prepared to come from 2 until 4 PM at the Moriarty's house at 167 Apple Hill Road in Hurley. You do not need to be reminded of the good food, the good company, and the opportunity to see the busy League members in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. We need a time to talk to each other without worrying about planning, scheduling, timing and coordinating. We've finished the hard work involved with the election, and there will be enough happening after the New Year to keep us very busy. Let us take a deep breath and relax for an afternoon. As always, we are grateful to the Moriartys for taking on the party and providing the location and the hospitality that we enjoy so much.

Study on the National Popular Vote Compact

A national study entitled "THE ADVISABILITY OF USING THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT AMONG THE STATES AS A METHOD FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT" was adopted at the LWVUS Convention in Portland last month. (Basically, this calls for the abolition of the electoral college and the election of the president by popular vote). The deadline for coming to consensus is May 1 2009.

LWVNYS had already started such a study, but it really belonged at the national level. All of the LWVNYS NPV study materials, which are a good place to start, can be downloaded from the LWVNYS site www.lwvny.org. The actual LWVUS NPV study and consensus questions will be put together by a national NPV study committee.

Our local League board has discussed this study and feels that we should participate in it. Cindy Bell has agreed to head our local study group when it gets underway. Let Cindy Know if you wish to participate.

The text of the Compact, describing the way the NPV will operate, is available on the LWVUS website www.lwv.org. The LWVUS NPV Study Committee is conducting their business by email and free conference calls and will produce study materials, including pros and cons, for posting on the LWVUS Web site later this fall.

Members of the LWVUS National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact Study Committee are:

Carolie Mullan (TX) (LWVUS Board Liaison to LWVNYS), Chair
Gail Dryden (CA)
Barbara Klein (AZ)
Sue Lederman (NJ)
Carol Mellor (NY)
Jack Sullivan (CA)

Each League should have someone in their League subscribe to the email list for the national NPV study. One does not sign up from the same page as all of the other League sponsored email lists. Instead sign up at:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=National_Popular_Vote_Compact&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=157&ContentID=11960

OR you can find it indirectly by going to:

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

For Members - Projects and Programs - National Popular Vote Compact - NPV Study Discussion List. Enter the email address that you wish to use to post emails to and/or receive emails from other Leaguers across the country who have also signed on to the list. You will be sent an email confirmation to which you need to reply. Once you are signed up, you can manage your subscription type (how you receive mail - individually, daily digest, etc.). As explained on the LWVUS web site about discussion lists:

This discussion list is a tool for League members to use to engage each other in conversation about the study process, resources, pertinent state and local legislation and/or information, and ways to best educate members and communities. Because the study is strictly educational, discussion on this list on the pros and cons of the issue is not appropriate.

Some NY Leagues have already hosted NPV educational meetings by using the LWVNYS NPV materials. LWV Schenectady held a NPV education meeting on September 10th. Christopher Pearson from National Popular Vote presented the mechanics of the NPV compact. Channel 16 public access TV recorded the event for LWVNYS and the recording on DVD can be purchased & shipped for \$10. Contact the LWVNYS office to get a copy.

Check our web site periodically for updates on the NPV study: <http://lwvny.org/npv.html>.

Prez Sez

Greetings,

By the time you read this, we will have elected the first County Executive and Comptroller in Ulster County. The League played no small part in this endeavor. In case you need a reminder, please read Tom Kadgen's message to all of you:

Members

Our local league has played an extremely important, albeit anonymous role in Ulster County's future.

- We had a voice in the creation of the document itself (Renee Sachs was appointed to the Charter Commission)
- We campaigned for it.
- We helped with the funding of the campaign for it.
- We developed an award winning Trifold in support of it.
- We handed out campaign material and planted lawn signs for it.
- We monitored the ballot count for it.
- After its approval:
 - We monitored the Administrative Code being created.
 - We met with legislative leadership to voice our concerns.
 - We advocated for the Administrative Code before the legislature.
 - We produced and distributed a trifold brochure to help voters understand what they would be voting for.
 - We presented the public with informational forums about the changes to the government this would bring.
 - We presented candidate forums to introduce them to those they would be voting for.

Kudos to all.

And additional Kudos to:

- Cindy Bell for heading our Charter Transition Committee and moderating the forums under pressure from a rejected and more than somewhat rude candidate.
- Renee Sachs for co-chairing the Charter Transition Committee and for her many contributions to the creation of the Charter document itself.
- Margaret Sellers for her adopted suggestion to include a budgetary expert for the legislature.
- Lee Cane for her efficiently organized distribution of both trifolds throughout the county and the team of volunteers she assembled.

I doubt that the public will ever learn of, or appreciate, our role in this chapter of our county's history, but WE will.

All things considered: We did a damned good job!

Proud to be a member.

Tom Kadgen

Prez Sez continued

Incredibly impressive, isn't it? I am enormously proud of all that was accomplished on the west side of the Hudson River.

But, we are the League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region. Dutchess County, we need to know about your meetings. We need to know about your leaders. We need to know your concerns. We need to get energized on the east side of the river. Help us cross the bridge.

Jean

Member News

We have a new member, **Beth Hanigan**, and we hope we will meet her at our scheduled meeting on November 15 and our **Holiday Gathering** on December 14.

Robin Yess, another recent member, spoke at our meeting on November 15 about some of her experiences running for office. Look for her new-member-biography in our next issue.

Manna Jo Green has rejoined the League.

Members are reminded that the new bylaws of our League call for all members who have not rejoined by September 15th are to be dropped from the rolls. Since our membership year starts on June 1st, this ought to allow enough time for people to pay their dues.

Sadly, our former member, **Jill Hudler**, decided some time ago that she did not have time to be active in the League and was therefore not rejoining.

The book repair group has started meeting again on the second Wednesday of every month as a general rule at Elizabeth Askue's. **Elizabeth Askue, Fran Hofler, Shirley Kobran, Viola Opdahl, Lee Ridgway, and Dorothy Schuler** met on November 12. Elizabeth announced that the group so far has repaired and given away over 13,000 children's books and is going strong. Anyone who wishes to participate is welcome, the job is not difficult, and the company is great!

Lee Cane and her husband Len celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary over a ten day period recently. Lee has been a very diligent member of the Observer Corps, as well as organizing our distributions of voters' guides and Charter information.

Jean and Jim McGarry's granddaughter, Ashlyn, attended the last of the candidates' meetings for the county executive and comptroller. She is already four years old and very charming and self-possessed.

Emily Johnson is back from her trip to New Mexico.

A Word of Warning

**Our Constitution is in actual operation;
everything appears to promise that it
will last, but in this world nothing is
certain but death and taxes.**

Benjamin Franklin

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

Name:

Currently Member(s)?:

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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)**

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Mid-Hudson Region
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Kingston, NY, 12402

November 2008
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