

## Demand legal elections

**S**pring symbolizes re-birth and, yet, as we enter the season of hope, past practices threaten our future; violations of the election law. It sounds sinister, but often, these violations are committed unintentionally and go unnoticed, even by those with great understanding of the election law. That is why it is the responsibility of the electorate to be hyper vigilant and vocal about the steps necessary to preserve democracy.

First are the school board and village elections. The summer and fall yield caucuses, conventions and petitioning drives, followed by Election Day. This year, the first county executive race in our county's history and the election of a new U.S. President will occur. New voting machines, redistricting, a dramatic downsizing of our county legislature and the continued implementation of our new county charter will also challenge us in the future.

Village elections have a special set of rules as outlined by the NYS election law, including a number of regulations, timelines and procedures to which all villages must adhere. The outdated, convoluted, counterintuitive nature of the election law leaves village elections open to misunderstanding and manipulation. It also poses a barrier for individuals interested in mounting a campaign for local elected office, as even those who are politically astute face an unfamiliar set of rules, with little support from the usual channels.

Village elections in other communities have already occurred, with the second round scheduled in June. There are concerns surrounding the late ballot counting and completion of the official canvass in a number of villages in Sullivan and Orange counties, both violations of village election law.

We have seen similar problems manifested in New Paltz, beginning with the election date change that was initially conceived as an attempt to restrict student voting power. While this is not a factor in our village elections at present, timing does pose a challenge for school board elections, which often fall during the end of the SUNY-New Paltz term. More recently, Village of New Paltz election inspectors failed to count write-in votes for all candidates last year, acknowledging write-ins for only those candidates who had "declared" a clear violation of election law at any level. I was told that the other write-ins cast were "just some student."

The selective application of election law is not, however, unique to village

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elections. In the 2007 general election, numerous votes cast in write-in campaigns across Ulster County were not counted if they were cast for an office other than the one "announced." Unlike candidates with ballot status, write-ins can be submitted repeatedly, on any line that the voter chooses, whether that is the "announced" candidacy or not. It is then the candidate's choice to accept or decline an office to which he or she is elected.

A write-in candidacy does not require an announcement and failure to announce has no bearing on whether votes are counted. A candidate conducting a write-in campaign forfeits certain privileges, such as the right to inspect voting machines. At no point does the candidate forfeit the right for his or her votes to actually be counted. The election inspectors and board of elections have no discretion in choosing which votes can be counted when cast for an eligible candidate, yet they continue to behave as if they do.

Last year, in at least two Saengerfies districts, election inspectors failed to check the mechanism that records write-in votes. When I requested an investigation, a county legislator agreed that it was problematic, but questioned me as to whether this was an efficient use of taxpayer money. I questioned him back: "Is ensuring every vote be counted a waste of taxpayer money?" While I agree that the burden on the taxpayer for re-canvassing those machines is disproportionate, if the board of elections was diligent in its adherence to the NYS election law at all times, including during the training of election inspectors and other poll workers, there would be no additional cost. The request was eventually submitted.

Sadly, we have not been able to rely on the board of elections and election inspectors to uphold the law, even though these are the very individuals appointed as guardians of our democracy. We, as citizens and as voters, therefore, must be diligent and tireless in our efforts to preserve, question and rectify our broken system at all costs and whenever necessary.

The list of relevant dates in New Paltz is available on the clerk section of the village Web site ([www.villageofnewpaltz.org](http://www.villageofnewpaltz.org)) and the NYS election law, in its entirety, is available online through the New York State Board of Elections ([www.elections.state.ny.us](http://www.elections.state.ny.us)).

**The outdated, convoluted, counterintuitive nature of the election law leaves village elections open to misunderstanding and manipulation.**



April 17, 2008

## '08 looks encouraging

I first moved to our community in 2000 as a student at SUNY-New Paltz. I quickly became active in campus activities and observed a marked disconnect between SUNY and the surrounding residential area. The "us" and "them" mentality was prevalent and many of my peers, including myself, were just as separatist as those who viewed us as outsiders and nuisances. We certainly didn't want to be associated with "townies," and we certainly acted like nuisances (at least some of the time).

During my three-year residency as a student, I witnessed a number of disturbing trends that served to uphold the status quo. Students were uninformed about local community events and community members were rarely included in on-campus programming. The New Paltz Times wasn't available on campus, and The Oracle was difficult to find off campus. Polls were available on campus for the November elections, but not village elections, and there was limited awareness of the candidates for local elected office. As a student who lived in the residence halls, my interaction with the outlying community was generally limited to ShopRite, Ames, Bistro and nightlife. There was a clear lack of communication and a disturbing level of mutual disrespect.

In 2001, things began to change.

Members of the Village Board were attempting to move village elections to the summer months, when fewer students would be present to vote. It has been suggested that this resulted from a strong showing of student support for Russ Ferdico, a candidate in 1999, as well as resentment and fear of the student population. The isolationist attempt awakened my consciousness as a community member, as it did for many others, and I began to develop my identity as a resident rather than merely a student.

In 2002, the campus was an important strategic component of many local campaigns, including the race for NYS Assembly. Incumbent Kevin Cahill and challenger Jason West both had a presence on campus, a DCI TV bus filmed and moderated questions to candidates, and NYPIRG led an enormous voter registration drive.

The rising level of political activity was further bolstered in 2003, when a slate of candidates were elected to the Village Board with overwhelming support from both students and long term residents alike. This slate included a current student, Julia Walsh, as well as a former student, Jason West, and an advocate for student rights, Rebecca Rotzler.

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The campaigns that year embodied the "us" and "them" struggle and it seemed that at the center of each platform was the unspoken issue of who should really be entitled to power. When the results of the election were read, the feeling extended beyond triumph or righteousness. It was a tangible recognition of the changing dynamic and a signal for the progress to come. I cried and cheered and, in retrospect, the events that occurred during those three years, culminating on the night of May 6, were a catalyst for my political activism and my devotion to the community that I had grown to love.

The idea that a community could embrace "outsiders" as their own was energizing and exciting. The power that could potentially be harvested by an active and informed student body was equally thrilling. And the injustice committed by those in power, attempting to stifle the voice of a large percentage of the population, was motivating.

In 2008, we now have three candidates running for village office, embodying various qualities that I believe characterize the New Paltz spirit.

There are two current students seeking to heighten their level of involvement in our community, and a long-term resident who has fought tirelessly for student rights and participation for many years, including being instrumental in the struggle to ensure that village elections would continue to be held while school remained in session.

It is encouraging that there is such a high level of interest in a special election for a brief term.

It is also intriguing, as those who so fervently sought to restrict student participation now must choose between three candidates, all of whom support student rights.

We seem to have moved beyond the "student problem" as a primary issue for debate, enabling the community to now focus on tangible, innovative plans for our future, including traffic, economics, planning and a potential restructuring of the government itself.

While my hopes in previous campaigns have not all been fulfilled, I believe that my optimism for 2008 is far from idealistic.

The growth towards a more encompassing and embracing community is inspiring and I am eager to witness a campaign that, for once, does not touch upon what rights students should and should not have in a community that is otherwise attentive to justice and fairness.

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# New hires

new paltz

If you've stopped by the New Paltz Village Hall recently, you might have noticed some familiar faces working there. Kathy Moniz — former Town of New Paltz code enforcer, planning and Zoning Board of Appeals secretary, as well as the assistant to the supervisor under former supervisor Susan Amet — has recently been appointed as a village building inspector. And Brittany Turner, a SUNY-New Paltz alumni and a former media liaison for mayor Jason West, was recently hired as the village clerk.

"It's great to be back working in New Paltz," said Moniz, who began her job on January 3. "The village is a great place to be."

Moniz, who resigned from the town two years ago to take a job in Pawling, said that while the job was interesting, she didn't like the commute. And now that she's a grandmother, it's nice to be able to work close to home.

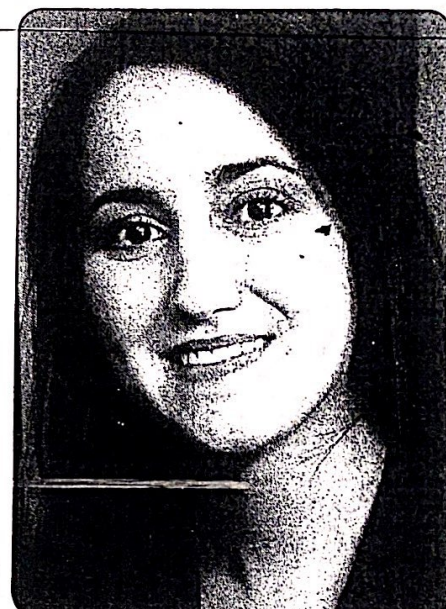
"I was offered the position of municipal administration analyst in Pawling, which meant that I oversaw the building department, the planning and zoning departments, the fire marshal and helped to streamline all of those departments and keep everyone on the same page," explained Moniz. "It was a very interesting job and helped to increase my knowledge on these issues. But when my grandchild was born nine weeks early, I craved being closer to home. I've gained two hours in my day without the commute and I just love New Paltz!"

Moniz said it was like "old home week" when she went to last week's village planning board meeting.



Kathy Moniz.

"It was humbling but also very rewarding to have so many of the people I've worked with over the years



Brittany Turner.

PHOTOS BY LAUREN THOMAS

come up to me and welcome me back," she said. Moniz believes that her eleven years working for the town, combined with her experience in Pawling, will help ease the transition to her new post in the village. "First of all, I know so many of the people we deal with," she said. "I also have 13 years experience addressing code violations."

Her golden rule? "Try and have the code violations addressed and rectified voluntarily and only go to court when absolutely necessary," she said.

When Jean Gallucci resigned last year, the village board decided to take the position of village clerk/treasurer and split the job in two. And in August of last year, Shirley Foschay became the new treasurer. In November, Turner was appointed to become the new clerk. She began her post last Wednesday.

Her role? "Since they split the position, my role is to obviously be of assistance to anyone who comes into the office," Turner explained. "I'm also in charge of records management and coordinating the village elections."

For the past two years, Turner has been working in Albany for Family Planning Advocates, a statewide organization that handles the advocacy and legislative needs for Planned Parenthood and other family planning organizations.

Asked what enticed her to come back to New Paltz, Turner said, "What didn't make me come back? There is a very unique energy in New Paltz. It is a very positive and progressive community. I can't think of a better environment to live in and work in."

— Erin Quinn



## DON'T BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD. ENERGY ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FOR HEATING EMERGENCIES

Programs and services provided by local agencies can help with high heating costs due to cold weather. The following contact listing is designed to help Central Hudson customers who may need assistance.

### HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program)

- Provides financial grants to income-eligible households to help pay heating bills and/or utility bills

### EMERGENCY HEAP ASSISTANCE

- Emergency financial assistance for income-eligible households which have had their utility service shut off for non-payment or which have a pending shut-off.

### TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

- On-going assistance for eligible households with little or no financial resources.

Contact your local Department of Social Services for information on eligibility requirements in applying for HEAP, EMERGENCY HEAP, and TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE.

	Depts. of Social Services HEAP Department	Offices for the Aging Contact DSS
Albany County	(518) 447-7300	(518) 828-4258
Columbia County	(518) 828-9411	(845) 486-2555
Dutchess County	(845) 486-3000	(518) 719-3555
Greene County	(518) 719-3700	
Orange County		
- City of Newburgh	(845) 568-5100	(845) 291-2150
- City of Goshen	(845) 291-4000	(845) 291-2150
Putnam County	(845) 225-7040	(845) 225-1034
Sullivan County	(845) 292-0100	(845) 794-3000
Ulster County	(845) 334-5000	(845) 340-3456

Seniors over 60 years of age must apply through their area Office for the Aging, except those receiving Food Stamps, who should apply through the Department of Social Services.

Area residents in severe financial difficulty who have exhausted all other forms of public and private

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# What makes a politician?

**O**ver the past month, I have visited Washington, D.C. frequently for professional and volunteer obligations. As a former resident, it is invigorating to return to the very place where our highest level of government actually happens. This has led me to think a lot about our current elected officials, at every level, and what high expectations we have for our chosen candidate throughout the political process. Between the recent events in New York State and the critical election year, I have been compelled to evaluate these traits that I value most in an elected official.

Reliability is a more valuable quality than responsibility. Our elected officials may be extremely responsible, yet lacking the consistency and trustworthiness that creates a truly effective policy maker. When an elected official is reliable, they do not make promises that they cannot deliver on. They do not develop grandiose schemes that will be impossible to implement. They understand the balance between vision and practice, integrating the two into a seamless process that helps produce progressive change and sustain needed stability simultaneously.

All politicians are accessible when campaigning, especially if you have financial resources. But the most successful and beloved politicians are those who maintain a level of accessibility for all constituents, and do so in a genuine way. They do not regard it as another necessary voter contact, in preparation for future campaigns. They recognize it as an essential step in guiding their platforms and practices, keeping them accountable to the people they serve – the voters, their bosses, able to hire and fire in predictable cycles.

An elected official need not be an expert on all topics at all times. But they must have knowledge of the areas they influence and, if lacking, be willing to learn these topics through the lens of an open mind and a variety of perspectives. They must also always remain cognizant of the opportunities, and restrictions, that their particular position affords. Knowledge of their jurisdiction and the position itself is critical. Expertise in the form of a degree or specialization is less important than a passion for learning, recognizing that this quest for knowledge will enable them to better serve those who have given a most precious gift – the power of representing them as a sort of liaison to the often nefarious political system. They adopt an issue and use their expertise to ensure that the ideals of the populous are not perverted and pandered to.

My ideal elected official is always professional. This, of course, does not negate their right to a life outside of elected office. Nor does it require a stoic, severe autocrat who quickly becomes disconnected from the people. They too are human and behave passionately when the context warrants it. Professionalism does require recognition that this is a serious job with serious ramifications. Politicians who embody this trait work until the job is done. They channel frustrations into action and treat the job seriously and respectfully, extending that treatment to those being served. They are responsive, thoughtful and honest, a more appropriate incarnation of "professionalism"



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than just wearing a suit and having a polite demeanor on the phone. They never quit.

Commitment should not require much explanation, and yet it is one of the more infrequent traits exhibited in elected office. We see reelection campaigns that begin shortly after an inauguration. We are also subjected to the unfortunate few who treat their position as a hobby, rather than a job, showing up at will and complaining all the while. Elected officials must persevere and dedicate themselves fully to the task at hand. After all, there is much to be done! It is absolutely necessary that candidates for elected office understand the scope of the position that they aspire to and are fully willing and capable to take on that challenge. These public officials don't become involved as an afterthought to further promote their candidacy, nor do they stand for election in an effort to advance their personal agendas. Instead, they are active participants in their communities, taking the step toward elected office as a logical, altruistic extension of their ongoing volunteer advocacy.

Politics has become synonymous with power. Yet, power should be the furthest thing from an elected official's mind. It shouldn't be about what one can do in 10 years and who will need to be subverted in the process. It should be about humility; creating meaningful change in the interest of the people, improving lives methodically and fairly, and taking advice on how to best achieve these goals. As soon as an elected official adopts the "career politician" mentality, they ought to be voted out. No one is entitled to a position and that attitude prohibits exactly the kind of change we desperately need. Holding elected office isn't a right, it is a privilege and should always be regarded as such.

Integrity is probably the most subjective of the qualities that an elected official should exhibit. Each of us has a unique sense of what integrity means, colored by our personal experiences and values. Yet some components seem relatively universal. An elected official should be honest when dealing with the public, colleagues and policy issues. An elected official should also be fair, never elevating a particular person or idea in exchange for some personal gain.

Unfortunately, I have not seen more than a glimpse of these qualities in any of the candidates currently strutting on the national stage. But I am privileged to be active in a community where so many local candidates, at the state, county and municipal levels, embody these characteristics frequently and consistently. If only the national landscape more closely resembled our local landscape, perhaps the frustration and discontent that characterizes the political experience of so many would be subdued.

In my D.C., our government could actually resemble the pristine system it had the potential to be.

In my New Paltz, it sometimes does.

That vision is what empowers me to never settle for less, and that philosophy is why I'll be voting for Pete Healey for village trustee on May 6.

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## High on incumbents

**N**ew York State has one of the highest incumbency rates in the country.

Granted, there is an inherent increase in visibility, delivery and media coverage for incumbents.

However, this is a shallow explanation of the persistent and endemic re-election of incumbent candidates without opposition.

We have a system based on fear and inequity, creating an unfair advantage for those who may not be serving our best interests. The party leaders are equally beholden to the status quo, unwilling to do anything but play it safe.

The pervasive sense of entitlement, held by party leaders and candidates alike, is a dangerous condition indicative of an increasingly flawed system.

Hinchey, Bonacic, Cahill, Zimet, Rodriguez, Parette, Catalano, Nyquist, Dener. The list of familiar players is often limited and their legacies endure.

We rarely see any opposition to these candidates and leaders, leaving voters without a choice when it comes time to pull the lever (or fill in the card or touch the screen). This is not to suggest that these specific individuals deserve to be unseated. But I have difficulty believing that incumbents consistently running unopposed are reflective of the diverse beliefs comprising Ulster County.

We are quickly becoming a one-party county and are, essentially, a one-party community. With many of these same familiar faces assuming new seats in the future, the voters have a choice. Will we coronate the next successor in line or will we have a real election?

Incumbents have power and power is something to be either seized or feared. It's a lot easier to fear it, but at what cost? We have created an outrageous system of elected officials and political bosses who redraw their own districts, creating tangled, irrational maps that are a tangible representation of political favoritism.

Biased ballot access laws effectively deny a voice to minor party and inde-



## brittany turner

pendent candidates. Party affiliation becomes a personal, political and professional badge (or scarlet letter), creating opportunities for those who play nice and preventing a large number of individuals from gaining equal access to the same opportunities.

Party unity becomes synonymous with homogeny and those who speak up quickly find themselves ostracized, political pariahs for representing a view different from the party elite. Our complacency in challenging the status quo serves to reinforce it, with grave consequences for the public and our democracy.

**This is politics. We need to remove the assumption that favors to family and friends are somehow more important than acting in the best interest of constituents.**

While we are lucky to be represented by officials who claim to support change, such as campaign finance reform, little is actually being done to make it happen.

It isn't a surprise, as no one would expect those who directly benefit from the system to be the ones to create change. It is, therefore, our responsibility to take action.

It is negligent to complain about government while rubber-stamping the same leaders time and again. The voters still have some power, and it is time to take back the power we've lost.

Only the voters can rectify these problems by holding politicians accountable, and by running for office ourselves when those politicians disappoint us.

The system is stagnant and it is up to us to shake things up, even if that change is uncomfortable and difficult in the interim.

It always involves tough choices and, sometimes, it means making people mad. But we cannot

continue to recycle the same list of family and friends entitled to office.

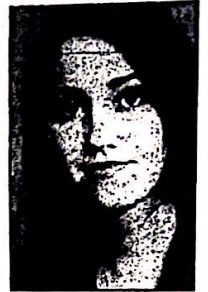
This is politics. We need to remove the assumption that favors to family and friends are somehow more important than acting in the best interest of constituents.

It is time we begin to embrace our charge as the only ones qualified to rectify a broken democracy.



# Sex ed needs new look

## brittany turner



**W**ouldn't it be great to see a headline reading "Teens Developing Healthy Relationships at Unprecedented Levels"? Instead, we have a piece written by Charlotte Richter and Shana Dixon (*New Paltz Times*, May 22) indicating that the alarming trends surrounding teen sexuality are being echoed locally.

As May is Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, I see no better time to begin focusing our attention on the health and safety of young people in our community.

It is nice to think that we live in an isolated and protected enclave where our youth are not plagued by the perils of growing up. But, not surprisingly, the informal survey conducted by these two young women proves that New Paltz is no different from other communities across New York State, which is facing staggering levels of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and teen pregnancy.

Let's look at the facts. Six out of 10 teens in New York State have had sex by the time they graduate high school. And 40,000 teens become pregnant in New York State every year. One out of every four teenage girls in the U.S. has a sexually transmitted infection. The list goes on and, unfortunately, statisticians are not omitting our neighborhoods when compiling their data.

Over the years, I have spoken to various school board candidates about the importance of sex education in our public schools. While I have done my best to provide information on the subject, school board members are generally uninformed, unconcerned or simply opposed to discussing what is perceived as a contentious issue. I disagree, finding our schools negligent when they withhold critical information from teens, which could help protect their futures, their health and their lives.

While sex educators are able to interact with students in the New Paltz Central High School, this education is provided too late, as many young people are engaging in sexual activity at earlier ages. I hope that the new board will reassess the school policy on sex education and devote attention and resources to ensuring that the students in this community are making safe and healthy decisions.

Planned Parenthood of the Mid-Hudson Valley (PPMHV) is also a key resource in working to eliminate the dangers associated with teen sex. Covering four counties in the Hudson Valley, including Ulster, PPMHV provides a variety of services to help guide young people in making safe and healthy choices throughout their lives. Its award-winning education program includes the training of peer educators who conduct outreach to classmates and friends, providing accurate information on safe sex in an environment of trust and honesty.

PPMHV also offers a number of programs geared toward parents and families, including author Bronwen Pardes discussing her book "Doing It Right: Making Smart, Safe and Satisfying Choices About Sex" on June 1 in Poughkeepsie. PPMHV, perhaps most importantly, provides reproductive health care services to teens and young adults in a safe, professional and confidential environment with sliding-scale fees. To learn more about PPMHV's services and health centers, please visit their website at [www.ppmhv.org](http://www.ppmhv.org).

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There are also legislative opportunities. The Healthy Teens Act (HTA) has been working its way through the NYS Legislature for five years. It has consistently been stalled by Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno. Sen. Bruno fails to recognize that young people need access to accurate and age appropriate information in order to make safe and responsible choices.

The HTA would establish a competitive grant program to fund age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education in community-based health centers and public schools across NYS.

Comprehensive sex education leads to teens having sex later and less frequently, with fewer partners and increased condom and contraceptive use. NYS and the federal government have spent an exorbitant amount of tax dollars on misleading abstinence-only programs, which have a proven and consistent record of failing our teens. By adopting the HTA, NYS will not only save lives but also money, reducing costs directed towards unintended pregnancy and STI. To find out how you can support the HTA, please visit [www.getthefactsNY.org](http://www.getthefactsNY.org).

We've all been there and we know how difficult adolescence can be. Amidst pressure from friends and the media, there is also the inevitable challenge of

self-discovery. I certainly made many decisions with difficult consequences. Some of us reached adulthood relatively unscathed while others continue to struggle with the results of their actions. We know who we trusted, what rules we abided by and when our irreverence got the best of us. I'm sure I speak for many when I recognize that these were rarely the sources, guidelines and situations that our parents would have chosen for us.

While much can be done to promote healthy sexuality in schools, community organizations and government, the final and most important component is in the home. Young people need to be supported, respected and nurtured. While talking to your kids about sex may be difficult, it is also necessary. The ramifications of an unintended pregnancy, dangerous relationship or life-threatening infection are far more devastating than an ongoing conversation infused with candor, compassion and the recognition that we were once teens, too.



# Glad to be a Green **brittany turner**



**A**s I write this, I am preparing to travel to Chicago where I will be serving as a delegate to the Green Party Presidential Nominating Convention. As a registered Green and former state committee member, this is an extremely exciting opportunity. As an individual completely disgusted with politics at the national level, it is both inspiring and frustrating.

The Green Party has more renown in New Paltz than many other areas in the country. While there is national awareness of the party thanks to Ralph Nader's perennial presidential candidacy and occasional Green Party endorsement, New Paltzians are in the unique position to have voted for numerous Green candidates throughout the years. Regardless of these experiences, many misconceptions persist about the party, our members and our candidates. Individuals often decry the party for being focused solely on gay marriage, environmental issues or the statehood of Israel. These are all planks in our platform but my enrollment in the party is the result of a broader spectrum for progressive politics.

Upon hearing of my enrollment, I am generally confronted with one of three comments. "How could you be a Green after what Nader has done to our country?", "But you don't look like a Green!", and, increasingly, "Why not just register as a Democrat and help make real change?"

The Nader issue, while subsiding in recent years, tends to be the question infused with the most hostility and discomfort. It is important to note that Nader has never been a registered Green and his candidacy has received mixed support from Greens more often than not. I continue to be supportive of Nader's efforts, although I will be supporting Cynthia McKinney, the likely Green candidate, in the 2008 presidential election. Many of Nader's values are in line with my beliefs, however, his reluctance to register as a member of the party does little to strengthen our movement as a whole and I see no value in supporting someone who does little to support us in return. I have no patience for arguments about Nader as a spoiler or egomaniac; those who resort to the spoiler argument have no understanding of either the specifics of the 2000 and 2004 elections nor do they understand the fundamental principles of our democracy. As for individuals claiming Nader's candidacy is more self-serving than altruistic, I challenge them to identify any candidate, especially at the national level, who could not also be shunned under the same allegations.

Many individuals are shocked when they learn of my enrollment. It has become amusing to engage in conversation with the many progressive Democrats I encounter, who are amazed when I announce halfway through that I am not a Democrat. The immediate assumption is that I am, in fact, a Republican until I clarify my Green loyalties. I am not ashamed about my lackluster commitment to environmental issues or my self-labeling as a "Social Green." The Green Party, to me, is much broader than the many single-issue third parties and I

came to this party for a number of reasons. The ten key values, combined with its positions on a variety of specific social, environmental and economic issues, make the Green Party the right choice for me. The Green Party platform, even with its many imperfections and omissions, is the closest match I have found to my personal values system, with plans and policies to implement reforms at all levels of government. Perhaps most importantly, the Green Party doesn't question my allegiance simply because my tolerance for nature is only part-time or because I'm a sorority

girl, rabid consumer and occasional major party sympathizer. There is room to find my own niche within the party, embracing the values that I already hold while pushing the party to incorporate other ideas from my personal political ideology. My party never asks me to change who I am or what I believe. It does, however, require that I think.

As my political involvement in Ulster County deepens, my motivation for participating is constantly questioned with the expectation that someday, I'll come to my senses and register as a Democrat. After all, if I truly want to support what is right, let alone run for office at some point in the future, not only is it the responsible choice but it is al-

legedly the only choice. What this argument fails to consider is that many of my beliefs will never find a voice within the Democratic or Republican parties, even at a local level. It also fails to recognize that I cannot care only about the issue of the moment. My politics are comprehensive and intertwined and I refuse to sacrifice the advancement of all for the sake of one or two. My party is me and I am my party; there is room for change and the concept of party unity for the sake of public perception is entirely foreign. The Greens promote discourse, a critical and necessary element for growth and something that the two major parties seem to regard with equal disdain. Our platform is never stagnant. Changes and revisions occur constantly, thereby strengthening the party and expanding our diversity. While some within my party may deny my voice, I am just as likely to find others who share the same views. I am also guaranteed an opportunity to at least be heard and treated with respect, compassion and understanding. This is simply not the case with the major parties, where even party leaders are ostracized whenever their lock-step falters. This is the quintessential problem with politics for the sake of power versus politics for the sake of people. If anything is irresponsible, it is this misguided logic that the major parties have come to embrace and extol.

I will proudly attend the Green Party nominating convention in Chicago this weekend. Not because I see opportunities for personal advancement or believe that a Green will win the presidency, but because the Green Party is, for me, as close as one can get to truth and justice in an amnesiac society who has no recollection that, in democracy, there's no such thing as spoils.

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## Please play fair

## brittany turner



**H**ospitals have the reputation of being the caretakers of a community. They heal those who are ailing while counseling their families and friends. One would think that an appropriate extension of this nurturing would also be granted to the workers, the very individuals who support the existence of these institutions. Benedictine and Kingston hospitals have served our region well for many years. Yet the courtesy granted to us as patients is eliminated once we become employees.

The nurses at Benedictine Hospital have been working diligently to organize a union and ensure protections for all among their ranks. Unfortunately, Benedictine Hospital is engaging in unethical tactics to prevent these workers from not only obtaining union membership but from even having an opportunity to vote on the decision of whether or not to have a union. Benedictine is stalling the organizing process and attempting to use this extra time to lobby workers and discourage union activity. The hospital is effectively silencing the voice of the nurses by taking advantage of an unfair system that is frequently manipulated to deny workers their freedom of choice. Apparently Benedictine's doctrine against choice doesn't just end at reproductive rights; it is extended to the choices made by its workers, as well.

Had Benedictine been playing fair, these nurses would be holding a vote before the end of summer to determine if membership with the New York State Nurses' Association (NYSNA) would be desirable. Instead, the hospital administration has filed a number of complaints with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), delaying this vote until the fall, if not indefinitely. These stall tactics are not in the best interest of the workers nor is it in the best interest of the community. In addition, this behavior is far more suited to the corporations and for-profit entities that

engage in anti-union activity as a regular practice.

We want our caretakers to be paid fairly and treated respectfully, as the community consistently receives compassionate treatment from the workers themselves. Benedictine Hospital is only concerned about profit and an unfair standard where workers are forced to bear the burden of economic uncertainty. Rather than allow these nurses a choice in representation and bargaining, Benedictine is refusing to give them their rights.

The Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation (HVALF), in conjunction with NYSNA, has launched a letter writing campaign to the Board of Directors of Benedictine Hospital. Community members, nurses and elected officials are participating in this campaign, which does not call for automatic support of a union. Instead, it respectfully requests that the leadership of the hospital allow workers to make their own decision in choosing representation, without interference, intimidation or exploitation.

Many of the board members of the hospital are leaders in our community, and I expect them to lead by example. These deceptive and destructive challenges to the NYSNA vote are counterproductive and will create hostile relations between the hospital, community and its workers. Especially in light of the impending merger, I am urging Benedictine to give these

nurses a fair opportunity to make their own decisions regarding union membership and withdraw the objections immediately. Allow these extraordinary individuals to make their own choice by extending the same standard of care and consideration to Benedictine employees as it does to Benedictine patients. And please, above all, play fair.

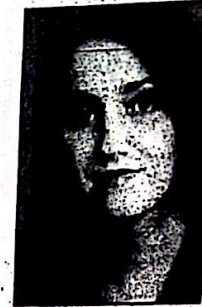
Learn more about the situation at Benedictine, or to submit your own letter, please visit [www.unionvoice.org/campaign/Benedictine](http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/Benedictine).

**Benedictine Hospital is  
only concerned about profit  
and an unfair standard  
where workers are forced  
to bear the burden of  
economic uncertainty.**



## County leaders should be above tricks

## brittany turner



**L**ess than 100 days until the November elections, and it is business as usual. We have different names and, in some cases, new offices and yet the politics remain the same.

Len Bernardo, a candidate for county executive, has allegedly been mailed thousands of black ants in an act of political intimidation. Supporters of Elliott Auerbach, the Democratic candidate for comptroller, are on a rampage to squash any criticism of their chosen one. The political junkies have come out en force to bombard fairgoers with political propaganda and giveaways (including the resurrection of Sponge Bob). The rumor mill is buzzing, fueling the delusions of those in the inner circle, who so desperately dream of being political operatives. And the bloggers have escalated their usual snarkiness to heated attacks and cross-commenting. Yes, we are definitely past the 100-day mark.

Much of the debate locally stems from the two new offices, county executive and county comptroller. Mike Hein, Len Bernardo and Allan Wikman have all announced their intention to be the next county executive. New Paltz local and former candidate for town clerk, Will Maksuta, has also announced, but has been silent since his original announcement. Elliott Auerbach and James Quigley are also eagerly campaigning for the comptroller position. In all of the noise that comes along with an active campaign, however, I've heard very little about concrete positions on how best to deal with the problems facing our county.

While this is all familiar territory, I have to wonder what the point is. Instead of hurling insults, allegations and threats, wouldn't it be better to focus on policy plans and implementation? For once, couldn't we emphasize the qualifications of candidates rather than harping on meaningless partisan or, worse,

personal attacks? While it may sell papers or boost website counters, it is a detriment to these newly formed offices and continues to negatively impact the perception of our political system. We want voters to be more active and involved, but who has the patience for such nonsense?

It is time to put things back in perspective. All politics is local and we have a rare opportunity to shape the legacy that will be left by our first county executive and comptroller. I hope that the usual negative campaigning has merely been the death throes of an old and ineffective method of politicking.

Instead of bickering over booth placement at the fair, start focusing on something real. These positions are too important for the candidates and their teams to lower themselves into the usual abyss of unwarranted hostility. Each candidate surely has a vision for the future of Ulster County and must seize this opportunity to cast away lingering bitterness, embracing a shared future that is characterized by hope, optimism and professionalism.

I want to see our candidates talking about real issues, real solutions and real qualifications. It is an insult to the voters to promote a system where elections are an insider's game, with a winner takes all mentality and campaigns that will stop at nothing to undercut the other guy.

There is a very real possibility that the seats will not necessarily add to Ulster's Democratic majority, and it is critical that these races establish a pattern of compromise and shared ideas. Instead

of debating, this time let's try a discussion. Infighting and theatrics have no place in this race; leave that to the County Legislature. We want more from our executive and comptroller.

**For once, couldn't we  
emphasize the  
qualifications of  
candidates rather than  
harping on meaningless  
partisan or, worse,  
personal attacks?**



## Ethics for sale

## brittany turner



**L**ast Wednesday, another chapter in the drawn-out saga of the Ulster County ethics law was closed. The legislature, in a bipartisan show of support, voted to bring the amended law to another public hearing at 6:30 p.m. on September 3. The revised law now reflects a number of changes, including the applicability of the law to county legislators and Board of Elections Commissioners. This is a critical improvement to the law, which previously exempted the two groups by specifically identifying the Board of Elections Commissioners and using convoluted language on "county-wide" officials to exempt the legislature. Without the inclusion of these offices, the law was an example of corruption and self-interest. Even with them, it still has a long way to go. The law is far more comprehensive than previously drafted versions, but the existing revisions remain highly contentious and discussion of additional revisions has essentially ceased.

It has been suggested that an ethics law should not be a priority for Ulster County. I disagree. After all, without ethics, what do we have? This issue has been so heavily politicized by the Democrats that it is difficult to see the underlying need for such legislation. That does not negate its necessity, however. Both supporters and opponents have made the ethics law about personalities rather than issues. With the public hearing looming, it is imperative that politics and agendas be removed from the conversation.

A growing argument against the passage of the law explores the very nature of serving in public office. Some have argued that it is a part-time position, and that what one does beyond the scope of a position should be "off limits." The reality is that the voters do not elect individuals who they believe will act as part-time officials. They expect their representatives to take the time needed to get the job done. Our legislators do not punch a clock nor do they work a set schedule.

While I disagree with the assertion that public office voids any expectation of privacy, this seems to be the belief of the majority. Many opposed to the law insist that individuals should not be restricted in their personal lives. As a logical extension, these same individuals should also be critical of the extreme guidelines regulating activity by Ethics Board members. I have yet to hear critics of the law take issue with this section. I also find it interesting that the individuals hiding behind this argument are some of the first people to judge actions that other public figures take in their private lives.

Another long-standing debate pertains to laws being created and implemented with specific individuals in mind. The controversy over Commissioner Parete's position has been manipulated to bolster this argument. If one individual can cause such divisiveness within the majority, imagine the ramifications of having such a high concentration of power lie with someone who actually takes

advantage of this power.

Some officials are fundamentally corrupted by access to power. It is the responsibility of government to create appropriate guidelines, restricting the misuse of power. This should be done without consideration of a particular individual holding a particular office at a particular time.

Regardless of the origin of the law, it has highlighted areas where potential conflicts of interest and impropriety could exist, or may exist in the future. No matter how this problem came to light, something must be done to correct it. That is precisely why exemptions should not be put in place to protect any particular office. It is simply bad policy making and creates a legacy that will inevitably fail the citizens of Ulster County.

In addition, the appearance of impropriety is often just as damaging as actual impropriety. We must restore people's faith in our political system. Eliminating opportunities for these appearances is as meaningful as eliminating unethical behavior. The personal attacks on Commissioner Parete, various legislators and Ethics Board members have no place in the discussion. We need to focus on the purpose, not the people.

On Wednesday, a number of amendments were offered as an alleged compromise. This included the removal of both the Commissioner and Legislature again, as well as an option to grandfather individuals currently serving, against the recommendation of the Ethics Board. This is not compromise; this is bullying and bad politics. The legislature should not use amendments in an attempt to force the agenda of those opposing the law. Some legislators even voted against the public hearing, a childish decision that amounts to sour grapes. For or against, it is the responsibility of our elected officials to look out for the interests of their constituents. This most certainly includes the opportunity to be heard. I caution these legislators from becoming so embroiled in personal disagreements that they begin to make unethical decisions themselves.

The Ethics Law remains far from ideal. Improvements could be made in a number of areas, including the sections dealing with nepotism and gifts to elected officials. However, with the inclusion of the Legislature and Board of Elections Commissioners, the law has been greatly enhanced.

I encourage Ulster County residents to attend the public hearing on September 3, taking advantage of an opportunity that some legislators have attempted to restrict. I hope our elected officials will finally begin to listen, leaving personal agendas at the door.

As Legislator Loughran stated on Wednesday, some people actually believe that an ethics law is the right thing to do. It isn't just about politics for everyone.

**I hope our elected officials will finally begin to listen, leaving personal agendas at the door.**



# 'After 2 a.m.' campaign relies on half truths

## brittany turner



**T**he hours of 2 a.m. and beyond boast some of the best infomercials, stargazing, ideas, diner trips and nightlife. And I can't help but wonder how many of those proposing a 2 a.m. bar closure have ever conceived children in the wee hours of the morning. Surely some good has happened at this time of night.

The group proposing a 2 a.m. bar closure across Ulster County defies the desire of many residents, business owners and law enforcement officers. They claim to be concerned with public safety, yet they advocate for a law change that will have a detrimental effect on the interest of the public. Well, some of public.

For the sake of their convenience and comfort, they are willing to restrict freedoms and risk the safety of those enjoying our community, as residents or as visitors. I'm not sure whose best interest they're looking out for, but it certainly isn't mine. Their arbitrary time selection and unfounded comparisons simply demonstrate further cause for embarrassment and undermine their altruistic sentiments, exposing the self-serving motives behind this endeavor.

Tom Nyquist's countywide proposal was rejected in 1970s. He alleges that times are changing. I agree that times are changing, but it isn't toward a trend of prohibition. We are in an era of 24-hour everything. Keeping the bar closure at 4 a.m. is certainly in the pattern of the real "changing times."

While Nyquist may see no reason to party until sunrise, it is the right of those legally eligible to do exactly that if they so choose. And last time I checked, the sun never rises at 4 a.m. in New Paltz - changing times or otherwise.

Supposedly, this scheme has been researched for months and the majority of bars in New York State close at 2 a.m. or earlier. I did a little research of my own and in the course of a few hours realized that this is definitely not the case. There are 32 counties with bars that close after 2 a.m. at least one night of the week, out of a total of 61 counties in New York State. Of those closing earlier, many close at 3 a.m. or have a staggered schedule, closing an hour or two earlier on weeknights.

In the counties surrounding Ulster County, only Columbia and Delaware counties have hours different from the 4 a.m. closure, with Columbia County bars closing at 3 a.m. only on Sundays and Delaware County bars closing at 3 a.m. nightly.

Albany, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan and Westchester Counties all have 4 a.m. closing times. In the instances where bars close at 2 a.m. or earlier, there are frequently different hours for Christmas Eve, Good Friday and other religious holidays. The outdated intent behind these laws is obvious. Perhaps tying bar closures to religious holidays is an appropriate next step for this group, followed by complete prohibition. I'm not sure what definition was used to constitute a majority, but it certainly doesn't reflect the facts.

The group also claims to be concerned about young people, as a 2 a.m. closure will result in less "nuisance" and "violence-related incidents." Again, the facts seem to have been overlooked. The majority of violent incidents occurring during this period, as highlighted by incoming police Chief Joe Snyder, occur in private homes. Violent crimes are occurring behind closed doors, not in public. When they do occur in public, they are dealt with quickly and professionally by our outstanding New Paltz Police Department. Having intoxicated individuals around earlier in the evening is not to the advantage of anyone's children, as families and younger people are more likely to be out in the community and driving during these hours.

Susan Zimet suggested that the earlier closure will result in people going out at 10 p.m. instead of midnight. With many SUNY-New Paltz classes ending at 9:30 p.m., it isn't just a matter of "changing their schedule." While I appreciate Zimet's disdain for a practice that is "messing up" my "biological clock," I do not need her assistance to determine what time I should go to bed.

I don't need her to institute a county-wide wakeup call, either.

I have the obnoxious clock on top of the van den Berg Learning Center to deal with already. At age 18, and most certainly age 21, people are more than capable of deciding an appropriate bedtime. Plus, if the concern is what younger people are exposed to, do we really want intoxicated people out at 10 p.m. instead of midnight? With that logic, we should be encouraging attendance at happy hour, something that will apparently serve the public well.

The incentive for Nyquist and Danskin is clear - they live in the Village of New Paltz, albeit off the beaten path of Main Street and away from SUNY-New Paltz. Zimet's motivation is murkier, with her residence across the Wallkill River being miles away from the nearest bar.

According to Zimet, the mother of two young adults, she is more concerned about the impact on her children as she does not want them surrounded by drug addicts and underage drinking. She is also concerned about "those people" who visit from Newburgh and Poughkeepsie. Her final concern, in a throwback to her days as supervisor, stems from the additional police officers required in the evening, something communities like Rosendale and Gardiner do not require.

I am certain that the individuals using heroin are not doing it in the middle of P&G's or Murphy's and, even if they were, there wouldn't be a marked increase between the hours of 2 a.m. and 4 a.m.

If Zimet believes that her college-age children have never been exposed to or participated in underage drinking, then she is simply in denial. As for "those people," I'm not sure what demographic "those people" are and I'm unwilling to even venture a guess. But if she's so worried, perhaps building a wall or electric fence is a better solution.

**Violence, vandalism,  
rape and drug use have  
no correlation to a 4 a.m.  
bar closure.**

Finally, her argument about the staffing needs of the NPPD is not congruent with her belief that there are mobs of drunken individuals terrorizing Main Street. The additional police force is needed anytime there is a greater concentration of people, not because of rampant gang wars, drug dealing and date rapes. Send these individuals home at an earlier hour, where many will find their way to house parties and vehicles, and there will be a much more serious situation that poses an added danger and will be difficult to monitor and enforce.

As long as people are in public, their misbehavior is restricted.

Violence, vandalism, rape and drug use have no correlation to a 4 a.m. bar closure and I won't hold my breath for this group to produce data that proves otherwise. They use facts only when it suits their argument and throw any semblance of rationality aside. There is, however, a correlation to alcohol abuse and that problem should be addressed in a manner that will actually be meaningful and productive.

Most bar-goers, in my experience, drink over the course of the evening with very few remaining until

last call. When I am at the bar at 4 a.m., there are generally 30 people or less still present, save "big" weekends such as graduation eve. There is a steady exodus between the hours of 1 a.m. and 4 a.m.

Moving last call up two hours will result in a flood of people into the streets, a verifiable disaster for public safety.

For those who do take things too far, I'd rather have them in a supervised environment than in homes or dorms where alcohol poisoning may go unnoticed and untreated. People aren't going to stop drinking at 2 a.m. just because the bars close. They will instead do so earlier, faster and with more alcohol in a secluded environment, posing a greater danger to themselves and those surrounding them. Binge drinking is most alluring to the very individuals who are least able to drink responsibly. The more restrictions we place on them, the more enticing underage and binge drinking becomes, with the situation becoming that much more perilous. We need to address that problem without forcing this type of alcohol consumption underground.

In the group's haste to get some attention, they neglected to contact a single bar owner, but claim to have their interest at heart. Zimet goes as far as saying that it will save them staff costs. Unless something dramatic has occurred with Nyquist's "changing times," I believe it is up to bar owners to develop a budget and manage staff accordingly.

If the bar owners wanted to voluntarily close earlier, they would. Clearly, there is an advantage to remaining open and I think the staff would agree, if only they had been consulted.

I am extremely uncomfortable with this group deciding what is best for many in our community. I have never seen Danskin or Nyquist out at a bar, and have rarely seen Zimet out past 10 p.m. If she was, she was probably with me.

As someone who regularly enjoys the nightlife that New Paltz has to offer, I assert with confidence that underage drinking and illegal drug use are not prevalent at the bars, especially not in comparison to the house parties that begin and end well before 2 a.m. Since facts seem to hold little weight with this group, I doubt the numerous personal accounts they'll be bombarded with will have much impact, either.

I personally invite them to join me any Friday or Saturday night so they can see for themselves. If they want to combat underage drinking, crack down on underage drinking. If they want to combat illicit drug use, crack down on illicit drug use. If they want to combat violence, crack down on violence.

If, however, they want to restrict the freedom of others to enhance their own finicky lifestyle, I suggest they seek residence elsewhere. There are many advantages of living in a vibrant, thriving, youthful community and there are drawbacks, as well. If it's too much to handle, perhaps it is time to move on.

Zimet, Danskin and Nyquist do not constitute a groundswell. While they hope to gather 1,000 signatures, a Facebook Group protesting their efforts has attracted more than 440 members in less than three days and has over 500 invitations pending. This group is primarily made up of college students, permanent residents and recent graduates living and playing in our community.

A large portion of this group is surely underrepresented, if not altogether absent, from the petitions collected by Zimet, yet they make up a significant percentage of our population. With opposition to this effort mounting, I believe the efforts of the 2 a.m. group are misguided, unfair, antagonistic and wholly unrepresentative of the diverse community that draws (and keeps) so many of us here.

Remember, it was not that long ago that some of the same individuals attempting to curtail a part of the college experience also tried to deny students an opportunity to vote in village elections.

Zimet wants a discussion but she's going to end up with a war.

"Nothing Good Happens After 2 a.m." seems to have forgotten who populates this community. They also seem to have forgotten their youth.

I wish them luck in their future political pursuits - they're going to need it. If there's any question, just pay a visit to election District 9. Schedule some time to stop at the bar afterwards, because a stiff drink will be in order.

As for the whippersnappers and hooligans, we'll stick with our shenanigans and tomfoolery.



# Reforms are needed to make elections sacred

## brittany turner



**W**hen I think of elections, I think of something sacred. I think of the thousands who have dedicated their lives to ensuring that our electoral process is fair and accessible, treating the voices of the people with the honor they deserve. However, many seem to have a different view of elections, either as an opportunity to advance the personal agenda of a select group of people or something that is irrelevant in the lives of many.

Each county in New York State has a board of elections (BOE) responsible for overseeing and organizing most elections. (A few village elections, such as our own, as well as school boards and others are not necessarily administered by a county.) An equally important duty of these agencies ought to be education and preservation for our electoral system. Unfortunately, these components frequently receive a lower billing to the daily operations of a political machine.

One of characteristics that make a democracy stand apart from other forms of government is the ability of the people to choose their representatives. Leadership in a democracy is, in theory, truly by the people, for the people, a system that has drawn much criticism and is often imperfect in its conceptualization and implementation. The boards created to oversee the core of our democracy should be incorruptible and impervious.

Unfortunately, Ulster County Board of Elections has repeatedly failed to protect this consecrated process as dutifully as may be warranted. While there is a looming change in leadership for the Democratic Commissioner at the BOE, I do not believe that these problems lie with corrupt or party-minded individuals who have taken advantage of their power. Instead, it appears that the problems at the BOE stem from carelessness and ignorance – two faults that have no place within the very institution responsible for protecting our delicate elections.

In the most recent primaries, there were at least two instances of unacceptable acts by the Ulster BOE.

The first was related to a list request from a "minor" party leader. List requests are extremely routine at the BOE and something that should be simple for the staff, the supposed experts.

Instead of providing the list for Kingston and New Paltz Greens, the BOE provided a list of Working Families Party enrollees to Green Party organizers.

In an additional act of incompetence, the BOE consolidated the Kingston Working Families Party members into a single district without notifying any members or party leaders of the change in polling site.

Neither a mailing nor a sign at the original polling site was provided and even poll workers seemed unaware of the change, unable to help direct WFP voters to the appropriate location.

While the first mistake may simply be a result of human error, the second is in clear violation of the election law, which is explicit in these matters. This is compounded by the recent complaints filed against the BOE for similar inconsistencies when dealing with local Democratic Party seats, which were heard in court shortly before the primary with the judge ruling against the BOE.

"Pure independent" candidate for county executive, Allan Wikman, has also filed a challenge to the BOE's decision regarding the validity of the 1,776 sig-

natures on his petitions, to be heard on September 23 in Kingston.

In last year's general election, there was another gross oversight, this time in the counting of write-in votes cast in the Village of Saugerties and City of Kingston (and these are merely the sites where known errors occurred).

In Saugerties, there were a number of write-in votes cast, which were not reflected on the final canvas as votes cast or votes voided – they simply weren't counted at all.

Similarly, in the City of Kingston, write-in candidate Lisa Cuten only had votes counted for mayor, the race for which she had "declared," ignoring any votes cast for Cuten for other offices.

The entire point of a write-in vote is that it is up to the voter to decide; if elected, an individual has the option to accept or decline the office for which they were chosen. Poll workers do not have the discretion to determine which votes are counted for which candidates in which races. A complaint was filed with the BOE on the Saugerties issue, but has yet to be corrected or even acknowledged.

The problems within the BOE sacrifice the quality and accuracy of our elections with each election cycle.

I rarely interact with anyone who would characterize his or her experiences with the BOE as professional, informative or consistent.

The disparity of knowledge among various staff members is vast and the public bears the burden. While a change in leadership will certainly silence those who take issue with a commissioner, this change is not enough if it occurs in isolation.

We need a substantial overhaul at Ulster's BOE, holding staff accountable for shoddy work and rewarding those who are consistently stellar in their public service. We need better training not only for staff but poll workers in all elections, especially in light of the new voting machines debuting this year for disabled voters.

Lastly, we need an act of the legislature to change the face of our BOE. While the Democrats and Republicans are well served, unaffiliated (NOP) and "minor" party voters have no representation within the BOE.

Of 107,982 active voters in March 2008, only 66,252 were enrolled with a "major" party.

So 33,891 active voters were unaffiliated and 7,839 were enrolled with "minor" parties. These voters are underserved on a regular basis and are subject to unfair practices with little recourse.

The BOE must be restructured to have numerous part-time commissioners, with representation not only for the Democrats and Republicans, but also "minor" party enrollees and unaffiliated voters.

This will also allow for the hiring of staff that are not members of one of the two "major" parties, a traditional practice that is unfair and against the best interest of our county.

These steps will not only help insure voter access and involvement but will also help lay the groundwork for future progressive electoral reforms in New York State.

The beauty of a democracy is the diversity of voices – Ulster County should guarantee that they are all heard.

**The BOE must be restructured to have numerous part-time commissioners, with representation not only for the Democrats and Republicans but also "minor" party enrollees and unaffiliated voters.**



# Write-ins could change New Paltz Town Hall

## brittany turner



It's late October and things in New Paltz have gotten interesting, again. But the turn of events this time were quite unexpected. With the Democrats running another shoe-in for elected office, a massive fumble by Corinne Nyquist has led to a race that is, in essence, a free-for-all. Is it possible? Could New Paltz, for once, see a truly democratic election, where all Town Board candidates are on a level playing field?

Will the reign of Nyquist finally end?  
Will Susan Zimet defy her own crusade for ethics and seize the chair, giving another example to bolster the "do as I say, not as I do" adage?

Will we finally have a non-Democrat seated on the Town Board? The possibilities are endless, creating our own political saga reminiscent of a telenovela.

The explanation of casting a write-in vote in the *New Paltz Times* alone is cause for excitement.

For those of us heralding the benefits of write-ins for years, it is almost humorous to see it gaining so much attention at the behest of a Democrat's campaign.

Never garnering much attention, write-ins have been left to organizers and outsiders, offering tutorials within our own ranks and having our voice marginalized as a "throw-away" vote.

While I'm glad to finally see a widespread effort to educate voters (in the last year that this specific form of write-in will even be available), it is absurd that a candidate who was virtually guaranteed a spot on the ballot and a stroll into office has spurred the attention.

Democrats and Republicans have it easy in the current system. Through a less-rigorous petitioning process and a caucus nominating structure, ballot access is a given.

For the rest of us, it is a struggle and we often turn to write-ins as an option to express our political beliefs.

After all, we're considered less important by candidates, parties and the law, and as such we are relegated to a lesser form of voting, often failing to even have our votes counted and recorded properly.

But not this year.

This year there is hope. We have at least three Democrats running for the Town Board seat: Jeff Logan, the anointed Democratic candidate; Bob Hughes; and, as rumored, Chris Hasbrouck.

I'm confident a few others will sneak up at the last minute. This isn't where the hope comes from, though. Using a write-in to the advantage of a party that has botched their perpetual grip on our government just seems wrong to me.

Write-ins have never been good enough for them; why should we let them take advantage of it now? Obviously, their leadership is inept (and I'm being kind here), but they are the ones who chose that leadership.

I hardly think a reward is in order and I don't feel particularly sympathetic to their plight. The Dems have ballot access - we don't. And until they consider comprehensive election reform, I'm not going to support either major party, especially not as a write-in.

Hope comes from the rest of us. It is my hope that the remnants of a Re-

publican Party have gotten together and identified their candidate, although Butch Dener's freebie for Nyquist's careless error suggests that such a feat is unlikely.

It is my hope that the students, Greens, Libertarians, Conservatives and others have done the same.

And, most importantly, it is my hope that this time people will finally vote for someone who will represent them in government.

If people believed they were adequately represented right now, the letters page of the *New Paltz Times* would be barren. So what's stopping us?

There are plenty of locals who have been cast aside previously who may warrant a second glance.

Jason West, Rebecca Rotzler, Butch Dener, Len Loza, Margaret Human, Justin Holmes, Jeff Fonda and Sarah Kremer all spring to mind.

How about local gadflies like Ira Margolis, Terence Ward, Dorothy Jessup or the elusive Malone Vandam?

Perhaps you'd feel more comfortable with your mother, husband, brother, best friend or even your dog.

There's bound to be someone in our community who is often sidelined for any number of reasons, not the least of which is the hierarchy of eligibility.

But this time they actually have a shot. You don't need their consent. You just need to write them in. If elected, they'll decide whether or not they

would like to take office.

Look at the surprise sweetheart we've found in Pete Healey, the underdog who has seized the reins and is standing up for issues the Dems (and Greens, to a certain extent) have ignored.

Wouldn't it be nice to mirror his successes on the Town Board?

I don't care what party our next board member is from, as long as they don't support the status quo.

Our government is stagnant and in a manifestation of her worst fear, Corinne Nyquist has given us the opportunity to shake things up.

Let's take advantage of her accidental gift and actually follow through.

Vote for the person you've always wanted to vote for.

It isn't about strategy - it isn't about the lesser-of-two (or three or four) evils.

It is about who you believe will truly represent you and, in a race that's been blown wide open, I'm sure a few more candidates will emerge.

And, even if they don't, that's exactly the point.

Everyone is a candidate when it comes to writing someone in, so do what feels right. This time it'll be up to the voters to decide who the candidates are, not the parties.

If you're holding your nose and looking the other way as you vote Row A or Row B, don't fill that last slot with another party hack.

Hope has been co-opted at the national level this year. Let's reclaim hope and actually vote it locally.

This is what democracy looks like. Who knew we'd have the Democrats to thank!

**Our government is stagnant and in a manifestation of her worst fear, Corinne Nyquist has given us the opportunity to shake things up.**



## Mr. Caldwell has a good day

## brittany turner



It's Inauguration Day and I'm home sick. I've been battling pneumonia for weeks and I couldn't have had worse timing. Normally, I'd be going to work and keeping myself busy with various meetings and appointments. Sick, though, I've been homebound and bedridden, without the energy to do much except sleep and watch TV.

That's where the bad timing comes in. The last four days have been around-the-clock Obama-vision. As a basic cable subscriber (I get about 25 channels), it is impossible to escape the spectacle that is splattered all over the network news. I guess the only high point is that I don't have CNN – infomercials inevitably take over the airwaves at some point and I am given an Obama reprieve.

There are certain catchphrases, trivia and anecdotes that are hammered over and over. Being in Washington, D.C. is a "once in a lifetime experience." This is an "historic moment."

"Barack Obama's call to service to honor Martin Luther King Jr.! Live at 5!"

"Obama has a better limousine than George W. Bush. It's 6 feet high!!!"

This is all really important stuff! Except that the historic, once-in-a-lifetime experience is something that happens, without fail, every four years. And that Barack Obama's "Call to Service" on MLK Jr. Day has been happening for 15 years, without Obama's help. And seriously?! It's a car.

There's a small cadre of resistance bitterly updating our statuses on Facebook. Not only am I home sick, but I'm also sick of Obama. At least the latter doesn't require hospitalization, but it's still an icky feeling.

Cindy Sheehan sent an invitation to join her in a pledge: "If Obama declares an end to the \*#\*%ing phony "war on terror," brings our troops home from Iraq AND Afghanistan; repeals the USA Patriot Act; restores habeas corpus and prosecutes George and Dick ... I WILL SHAVE MY HEAD and give my abject apologies to all the Obama maniacs. This is my promise to you."

I don't think we're going to see too many shiny heads running around. After all, Obama looked awfully chummy with George in that fabulous new limo. Plus, while Cindy's groups usually swell in size pretty rapidly, this group is stalled at 99 members. Oh, right ... everyone who usually thinks critically and holds our elected officials accountable is off being historic in D.C., not griping on Facebook.

Of course, not all of Facebook is griping. One friend posted the update "just saw Obama while on a booze run. He waved, we screamed, he laughed and my night is made."

More than a few are critiquing Michelle Obama's ... bold ... choice of outfit. There are also text message updates from all those who are MIA. Some are expected, "The numbers, the power, it is overwhelming" and the obligatory "This is pretty awesome – just wish you could be here with me!"

Some make me smile a bit more, "I could've sat on my porch if I wanted to freeze to death and not actually see anything."

It's like TMZ over here, and I'm Harvey Levin. The problem, though, isn't that I don't have enough updates. It's that the man isn't even president yet and I am completely burned out. Maybe I'm being slightly unfair; I was quite sick of him before the overblown inaugural festivities. It was

the overblown primary, overblown campaign and overblown election that probably did me in. Rev. Rick Warren pontificating about treating other humans with respect isn't improving my mood, either.

Ideally, I'd turn off the TV and go back to bed. But I can't seem to close my eyes before the phone starts ringing again. I'm getting messages about Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream in action and I try to hold my tongue, barely refraining from a host of retorts. I simply note that King wanted a change agent, not a change salesperson; King embodied hope, he didn't

market it. I'm getting messages about how this is the most exciting day "EVER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" I'm getting teary congratulations, as if this day is any sort of victory for me.

It's hard to always be the cynic. You're an outsider and a curmudgeon and when everyone else is ecstatic, unified around one issue or individual, nobody really wants to talk to you anymore. Or, conversely, you're the recipient of a deluge of messages – with friends and family assuming you're feeling as inspired as they are, cringing all the while. You don't set them straight – let them have their moment. I have my self-righteousness and it helps me sleep at night, but it's still a pretty lonely bed. Perhaps the only meaningful call was my wake-up call this morning. After ignoring a

number of calls from my mother and going back to sleep, I finally picked up, managing to croak a "Whatttt? I'm sleeping."

David Caldwell called. I can't summarize who David Caldwell is, or what this means, I couldn't do it justice. Suffice to say David Caldwell is a dear family friend who has lived in Holly Springs, Miss. for over 80 years. He has been a black man in Mississippi before, during and after the Civil Rights movement. He is a proprietor of blues, with a profound understanding of not only their origin but also their truth. This morning, he called my mother. We hear from Mr. Caldwell through rare correspondence during the year, including his annual Christmas card, which is received with much excitement and nostalgia. There was also our annual road trip to Mississippi which, sadly, has become an infrequent event, the last drive occurring on a Katrina relief mission that coincided with my birthday.

Today was different. Today, Mr. Caldwell called. "Greetings from Holly Springs! This is Mr. David Caldwell and it is a glorious day!" His effusive and glowing extolment of a day he never believed he'd witness brought my mother to tears. And while my mother has a bit of the Obama-mania herself, it also brought me to tears.

It doesn't mean anything to anyone outside my family. But it is more important than if Barack Obama himself called. And if it's a glorious day for David Caldwell, I can muster a tiny bit of hope. If it's glorious for Mr. Caldwell, then there is something truly glorious in this day for all of us. It may last for only a minute or a few hours, but I'll appreciate the glory of Mr. Caldwell's day. This inauguration isn't about Barack Obama anymore – it's about Mr. Caldwell. I'm willing to be silly and naïve, momentarily sharing in the joyous emotion of someone so cherished. And I'm willing to return to my cynicism, warmed and softened just a little by a Deep South breeze traveling over 1,000 miles, carrying a little piece of home and, with it, a little piece of hope.

**Barack Obama's "Call to Service" on MLK Jr. Day has been happening for 15 years, without Obama's help.**



## Obama does not get my hosanna

## brittany turner



**W**ith the close of another year, many are looking towards 2009 with unbridled optimism. And why shouldn't they? The much-touted last day of the Bush regime rapidly approaches and we have elected the candidate of hope. Unfortunately, I haven't been caught in the hope movement, but maybe it isn't such a bad thing.

When someone promises hope, I want to believe. I want to have faith and I want to be able to follow, without questioning or resisting. Perhaps I'm just not wired that way. Or, perhaps the message of hope is dulled and hollowed by the reality of another corporate candidate obtaining extraordinary power. With millions raised from big business, it's fair to assume that there are dues to be paid and, unfortunately, the ramifications fall on those of us who have never entered corporate boardrooms and have little to gain from the exchange of money for ideology.

In fact, the interests of my friends and family are in direct contradiction to these massive corporations. Instead of swallowing hope, I'm left with the same feeling generated by the last presidency. I am not disappointed, because I never bought into the "Obamamania." But I am queasy and unsettled, apprehensive about the things that really matter yet may fall through the cracks or, worse, have already been bought and sold.

We will not see the creation of a national health care system. Ultimately, we will not see the creation of a "fair share" tax system. We will not see bold advancements in reproductive rights, electoral reform or equal rights. From what I can tell, we will not see anything that even suggests the groundswell of hope that supposedly carried Obama into office. Because maybe it wasn't hope. Maybe it was fear, frustration, bitterness and, as always, money.

Barack Obama has named Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State. Someone who he acrimoniously derided during the primaries is now suddenly qualified to hold one of the most important public offices in our federal government.

Neither candidate would've been my choice and yet, somehow, I'm stuck with both.

Barack Obama has also chosen Rev. Rick Warren to deliver the invocation at his inaugural celebration. Warren has been an outspoken activist against equal rights for same-sex couples, serving as a spokesperson for the campaign

against Proposition 8 in California. Is this really change?

This is the progress that many devoted time, money and votes to bring about? I know, I know, many of our local progressives are also rabid fans of incrementalism. But at some point, we need to create change. We need to take chances, change opinions and do the right thing. Obama's been elected - he doesn't need to pander to the "middle of the road" voters.

He needs to be true to his base and values by serving as that instrument of change.

Disappointingly, he is also a politician and those two things are a direct contradiction to one another. Most of our politicians are simply incapable of embodying the principles of change and progress. After all, the next election is never far away.

Locally, I believe Ulster County elected a good person for county executive. Yet we have also implemented a flawed charter for our county, with ramifications that may extend far beyond those originally envisioned.

In Dutchess County, we have seen the impact of a powerful executive who plays party politics like no other. Even intelligent, savvy and well-intentioned Dutchess legislators have been un-

able to successfully challenge their executive in the most recent budget proceedings.

Will goodness enable Mike Hein to transcend a system that is problematic, at best, before it has even been enacted? Can we count on him to prioritize and re-evaluate our dysfunctional county government? And will he be able to persevere while serving the interests of Ulster County, instead of a small group of ardent supporters? These questions are yet to be answered and while I am hopeful for a positive outcome, my hope is extremely restrained.

So, as we count down the days until 2009, reveling in our new administrations and pat ourselves on the backs for being such good liberals, enduring eight years of allegedly unequivocal hell, think about what we are really celebrating.

Do we really have something to be hopeful for? Or did we just grow too tired of asking questions?

The message of hope is dulled and hollowed by the reality of another corporate candidate obtaining extraordinary power.



# Taking chances

## brittany turner



**S**ome are offended and once the Board of Election's canvass on November 14 is final, I suspect that Jeff Logan's likely victory will birth even more spurious tantrums and self-righteous indignation over my previous candidacy for New Paltz Town Board. So be it. It isn't about me; it's about anyone or anything perceived as a threat to the comfortable way of life we have, with the in-crowd basking in extraordinary power while everyone else knows their place and keeps their mouths shut. I've been yelled at, lied about, threatened and degraded and I couldn't care less. There are a few things that needed to happen and I'm glad I could play a minor role in bringing them about.

It's about time issues that the rest of us care about were touched on, if only for a moment. Neither Democratic candidate deigned to consider the issues important to renters, for example, until it was gift-wrapped and placed into their laps. And it's fairly obvious that no one else has been willing to touch the bar closure issue until it became clear that it was directly correlated to student votes. Rental issues, unification, jobs, development and transportation need to be talked about, by every candidate in every municipal race. We've got to stop letting people skate by on one or two issues that will get them enough votes and demand that our officials be well rounded and competent in a variety of arenas rather than the one or two hot issues of the moment. Government is slow, but not that slow, and a bevy of other equally important challenges are sure to arise during any one official's tenure. We need to start asking what the people in power have actually done for us and begin evaluating all future candidates through that lens. My guess is that, save the rare exception, we won't come up with much. Being a Democrat isn't a qualification, and those who have been elected based on this criteria do a phenomenal job of demonstrating how little party affiliation actually means to getting things done. In fact, our Democratic super-majority is one of the biggest impediments to real progress. Any time one party has near-absolute power, we are headed for trouble. I think we're about to see this played out on the national stage, and we've seen it in New Paltz with Republicans, Democrats and maybe someday Greens. Any way you look at it, single-party rule is bad and we need to take chances in order to begin mixing things up.

It's about time at least one candidate prioritized the younger members of our community, even if it amounted to strategic pandering and will probably prove to be fleeting. No matter how nauseating it may be for some, the reality is that there is a large percentage of our population that is essentially ignored in our local governments. Enough is enough. We don't tolerate ageism as it relates to our seniors and I'd like to see that same tolerance extended to the New Paltz transplants that reside here, even if it is only for a few years. Perhaps if students felt welcomed and represented in our community, more of us might actually stay.

It's about time someone ran as an independent candidate, removed from any

party affiliation and no longer beholden to the ambition of an isolated group of individuals. Yes, I know our Village elections are "non-partisan," but we all know what a sham that is. The elections occurring in the microcosm within the Town are as highly politicized as any other, if not more so. Like it or not, everyone in our community deserves a voice, a vote and representation in our government. Since our elected officials are obsessively enamored with

their power, there is zero willingness to consider alternatives such as proportional representation, unification or a host of other options that would bring some real democracy into New Paltz. Over 4,000 of us are not Democrats, but we are rarely afforded a choice by the "official" candidates. Well, maybe now people can actually start choosing. They know how to cast a write-in (even though the tool itself will be changing, the principle remains the same). People can stop tossing their vote to some candidate never heard of or, equally unfortunate, not voting at all because, really, there isn't much

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point.

Many don't like what I did or what I say and I don't mind in the least. It's our right to run for elected office just as it is the right of any voter to support whomever they want. I've already been labeled a "spoiler," and it's a badge I will wear proudly. We have spoiled officials, spoiled candidates and a spoiled system that is failing many in our community. If there's anything else I can do to help spoil that system, I'll gladly participate. I've inevitably "stolen" the Town Board seat from someone more deserving than myself, but it's difficult for me to reconcile this logic. It's almost amusing to think that anyone actually deserves elected office more than someone else, but it's actually a scary thing. This is what leads to impropriety, corruption and the general nastiness that pervades most communities every August through November. I'm not about to engage in the perpetual "spoiler" debate; it's like abortion, in the sense that no one is going to convince anyone else to come to the other side. And I think the more important conversation on spoils shouldn't be about what's happened in the past, but what is happening with each decision our governments make. The spoiling of our community lies with the choices our officials make, the priorities they establish and the people they answer to. Are we confident that everything is being done in the altruistic spirit of public service? If not, we need to take action. And if we don't, we are perhaps even more at fault than anyone thrust into the limelight during the acquisition of public office.

I don't want to thank everyone who voted for me, or everyone who cast a write-in vote. But I do want to acknowledge everyone who voted for a candidate that they actually wanted. This small action is perhaps the biggest force moving us towards a system of fairness and justice, and the individuals who did that know it. They don't need my thanks or acknowledgement, nor do they need anyone else's, because they are secure in the knowledge that a vote based on faith is a vote that is never "wasted."



# Despite origins, Thanksgiving is an opportunity to reflect

## brittany turner



**T**hanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday. The dismal origins of the day aside, it is important that we have a time dedicated to evaluating and recognizing the many things for which to be thankful. With the inconveniences, difficulties and tragedies that life sends our way, it is easy to become bogged down in fear, regret and remorse, losing sight of the things that really matter. My family has made it a tradition to gather around the table on this day annually, each of us speaking to the multitude of people, things and situations for which we are truly grateful. While those sitting at that table have changed during the years, their presence is felt always and increases at this special holiday. We honor their legacies by maintaining traditions and prioritizing time spent with those we love.

My family and friends are always at the top of my list. We have certainly had our share of troubles, like any family, but I always have an environment that is supportive, loving, compassionate and, when needed, firm, something which should never be taken for granted. I am glad to have two wonderful parents who love me unconditionally, a caring sister and brother-in-law and an incredible partner, who surpasses my every hope on a daily basis with a love that is beyond compare. I am surrounded by warm, intelligent and generous friends who never lead nor follow; they stand beside me in times of great joys and great sadness, offering strength during adversity and sharing in laughter during felicity. These extraordinary individuals are far too numerous to name, but I strive to let each of them know how important they are in my life. They inspire, protect and challenge, and they are sincerely cherished.

My job will also make the list this year. I consider myself not only lucky to be employed during a time of economic hardship, but also for the good fortune of going to work each day with excitement and interest in the tasks I am completing. The privileges of being clothed, fed and housed are also easily forgotten but are extremely meaningful, especially in consideration of those who have less than these basic necessities. Our simple pleasures may be unnoticed during our daily routines and it is critical that we pause to recognize the many enhancements to our lives. I do not consider myself a religious person, but believe I am blessed to have such incredible comforts. In a holiday season that becomes weighed down in materialism, activity and entertainment, the serenity offered by this reflection is indeed priceless.

I also value Thanksgiving as an opportunity to not only express gratitude for everything I have but to also meditate on those who have less. Any reader of this column knows that I am spurred to action by nearly everything I am passionate about, and that includes philanthropy, ensuring that the season of giving really is about just that: giving. While I derive great pleasure from giving to those I love, the peace and contentedness found in offering support for someone else is unparalleled. The spirit of philanthropy should not be reserved only for the

holidays, but this is a perfect opportunity to refocus on this value and extend our generosity to those we may never meet, but will benefit from sharing in our prosperity.

This year I will be devoting additional support to the Workers' Rights Law Center of New York Inc. (WRLC). Already on my standing list of favored charities, extra support for the WRLC is important this year given the economic challenges that face many in our community, especially during a recession. The work of the WRLC is critical, providing legal representation and education to support low-wage workers, who are often exploited and abused by their employers. These individuals do not ask for handouts; they simply desire the same rights in the workplace that already benefit many of us. The law center is currently under pressure, as are many non-profits, with cuts to funding that it has come to be reliant upon and a slowing of general support. Most recently, the WRLC took on the daunting task of representing 19 Newburgh factory workers who were illegally fired after a union organizing effort incited by the numerous OSHA violations in their workplace. Most of these workers were eventually rehired, but the work of the law center is ongoing and extremely valuable to those in our community who are dedicated workers with few resources and even less respect. The individuals represented by the WRLC are our "invisible workforce." I know so many in our community are engaged in issues surrounding justice and equal rights, both locally and globally, and it is important to remember that these types of violations and sweatshop conditions are also present in our own backyard.

When basking in the warmth of lights, libations and love, I hope we can each take time to reflect on the countless sources of bliss in our life. I hope we will also recognize that even as we grapple with the sacrifices necessitated by unsteady times, we empathize with those who may lose the little they have and do our part to make this season more comfortable for someone else. We have many living among us who may be cold, hungry, grieving or struggling. It may not always be visible but it remains ever-present. Whether you give a canned food item to a pantry, spare change to a volunteer or provide a more generous gift to an organization of your choosing, please make the effort to ease someone else's troubles. It's surprising how much this small act of kindness may ease our own angst, as well. Large or small, a personally meaningful gift may make an enormous difference to someone else. And when one person is uplifted, the entire community benefits exponentially.

To find a non-profit charitable organization that matches your interests, please visit [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org). To learn more about the WRLC, please visit [www.workersrightsny.org](http://www.workersrightsny.org) or call 331-6615.

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## Where do we go from here?

## brittany turner



**F**or those of us that support the elimination of unnecessarily restrictive and convoluted election laws, student participation and an open electoral process, the election of Brian Kimbiz to the New Paltz Village Board is a victory. For those of us who want improvements for our community, progress and restructuring, and checks and balances for a terminally ill government, this is devastating. Many of us fall into both categories and that might help explain why it all makes me so nauseous.

I have long been an advocate for student participation in local politics. I have also been a strong advocate for write-in campaigns, as I believe the arbitrary rules governing ballot access and the petitioning process are pointless and unnecessary. Being able to jump through a few hoops doesn't qualify someone to hold office; being unfamiliar with the silly process shouldn't disqualify someone from being a valid candidate. There are, however, many situations where the write-in candidate is not only incapable of jumping through those silly hoops but is also a horrendous candidate. This is the case with Brian Kimbiz.

We all remember the Julia Walsh fiasco and many of us cringe when thinking back to the horribly misguided decision we made in the voting booth on May 6, 2003. Did our community survive? Absolutely. Was it a painful, miserable and frustrating experience? Extremely so. Is it something I believe we can weather again, especially considering the existing board makeup? I am doubtful. Could it be worse? It pains me to say it, but yes. And it gets worse right now.

Many are unfamiliar with Trustee Kimbiz. More can be read about him, in his own words, by visiting [www.NewPaltzGreens.org/kimbiz.html](http://www.NewPaltzGreens.org/kimbiz.html), but I'll include a few highlights here.

On the Brian Kimbiz for Village Board Facebook group, Brian proudly proclaimed: "THE BOARD IS COMPOSED OF 6 MEMBERS - THE MAYOR, DEPUTY MAYOR, AND FOUR TRUSTEES." Six members? Really? Kimbiz continues in a flurry of grammatical errors and caps lock, explaining that the SUNY New Paltz population is 6,000 students - a number equal to or greater than the population of the Village - who deserve representation in

our town. Yes, "town."

In his Green Party questionnaire, Kimbiz indicates areas of concern, such as traffic, offering an in-depth analysis that concludes with his proposed solution:

"I am not sure, but I believe either making more roads or increasing flow on certain roads are both bad ideas." Kimbiz' position on taxes? "I think high taxes are bad." While Kimbiz has no position on unification, as he is waiting to "better hear both sides of the issue," his interchangeable use of Village and Town when referring to his office, focus and initiatives seems to indicate that the Town and Village have already merged, at least in his own mind. After all, why differentiate between the two if they basically have the same name?

In addition to Kimbiz' positions, he also commits to serve as "a great lesion between tenants/landlords" and can improve the relationships between SUNY and municipal government since he is "coming from the SUNY...to the other." Kimbiz will surely prove to be a thoughtful and accessible trustee, as he has promised to guarantee transparency in government through use of his smart phone and his "tech savvy," which will "have a large influence on getting very close to [him]." His tech savvy will apparently serve only those who support him, however, as I have been blocked from interacting with Kimbiz on the very social networking websites he intended to use in achieving his goal of open government.

As for the future, we can expect that the Dungan/Gallucci reign will continue unfettered, with rather catastrophic consequences. We can expect that without Trustees Zierler and Healey, the maniacal schemes of these individuals will magnify unchecked. We can expect that Village employees will continue their work, except this time without allies or security. We can expect that there will be no progress, no open communication and no innovation.

And if my assessment is correct, we can expect that Julia Walsh can finally pass the "Worst Trustee" legacy onto Trustee Kimbiz. Congratulations, New Paltz. We got the government that we deserve.