Saugerties Democratic Committee Newsletter

April 2024

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| **Politics and Elections Because That’s What We Do** |
| **Presidential Primary: Develop That Voting Muscle**  Sometimes voter fatigue sets in before the first ballot is cast. This year, Saugerties voters will be asked to go to the polls for the Presidential primary (April 2), the Saugerties School Board and Budget vote (May 21), the NYS Assembly primary and Saugerties Democratic Committee primary, if needed (June 25), and the General Election (November 5). We cannot afford to grow weary during these challenging times. If you didn’t vote early, please flex your voter muscle on Tuesday, April 2. Be a democracy champion. Our republic needs you.    **Equal Rights Is On The Ballot**  The current New York State Constitution has left many groups unprotected from discrimination including people with disabilities, women, LGBTQ individuals, pregnant women and immigrants. In November, we have a chance to protect every New Yorker.    After the New York State legislature passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in two consecutive sessions, the ERA will be on the ballot this year. (The NYS Constitution can be amended when legislation is adopted, then passed again in the next legislative session, and approved by the people in an election.) If the ERA passes, it will prohibit discrimination by the government based on a person’s ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, creed, religion or sex—including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes. For the first time, our state Constitution would explicitly include language clarifying that discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy outcome is sex discrimination.    The ERA is supported by many groups including the Ulster County Democratic Committee, the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, the League of Women Voters, the NAACP and Indivisible. According to activists and legislatures, 75% of New Yorkers favor an Equal Rights Amendment, but many people polled are unaware that rights for women and other groups are not already protected. As the Republicans’ full-throttle attack on civil rights continues, codifying equal rights is more urgent than ever.    **AI-Generated Content, Disinformation and Elections**  Misinformation (false information not shared with malicious intent) and disinformation (false and harmful information shared with malicious intent) have been tearing at the fabric of our society.    In 2016, Russia used disinformation to spread lies and turn Americans against Americans. Today, with the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), states and voters need to be on high alert to protect our elections. This has proven to be challenging. In 2023, for instance, two days before Slovakia’s election—and during its required two-day moratorium on media and politicians’ silence about politics—an [AI-generated audio](https://www.wired.com/story/slovakias-election-deepfakes-show-ai-is-a-danger-to-democracy/) file of the pro-West, liberal Progressive Michael Šimečka was posted on social media. Not surprisingly, the beneficiary of this disinformation campaign was the pro-Russian candidate Robert Fico who won the Slovakian parliamentary election, dealing a blow to European unity in support of Ukraine. In the U.S., an AI-generated voice of Joe Biden on a robocall reached thousands of voters in New Hampshire right before the New Hampshire presidential primary.    While some states are enacting legislation to regulate the potential for AI-generated election disinformation, it is incumbent on us to be vigilant, informed and pro-active in [combatting election disinformation](https://www.security.org/digital-security/misinformation/). |

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| **Monthly Meeting News** |
| **March Saugerties Democratic Committee Meeting\***  The Saugerties Democratic Committee met in person on Tuesday, March 19, at the Saugerties Public Library. The meeting date was changed to allow parents to spend the school spring holiday with their children.    The meeting included a review of the ballot petitioning process prior to the SDC’s internal March 22 submission deadline, a report on a March 16th meet-and-greet with Congressman Pat Ryan (who will be our 2024 candidate for Congress), and a discussion on the April and June primaries.    Additionally, two ad hoc committees—SDC Bylaws Committee and the Mailing Group—gave updates and reported on proposed meeting dates.    \*For a copy of the full minutes, please email [saugertiesdemocraticcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:saugertiesdemocraticcommittee@gmail.com) or check [saugertiesdemocrats.org](https://saugertiesdemocrats.org/). Meeting schedule for 2024: Apr 23, May 28, Jun 18 (third week because of scheduled primary), Jul 23, Aug 27, Sept 24, Oct 22, Nov 26. Meetings at Senior Center. All welcome. |
| **News & Newsworthy** |
| **Violent Crime Down Under Biden**  The newsroom axiom—“If it bleeds, it leads”—has distorted our perception. We are safer today than we were in the last year of the Trump administration. According to the FBI, crime has dropped under President Joe Biden. Violent crime is down nearly 6%, with murders plunging 13.2%, rape declining 12.5%, robberies dropping 4.7% and aggravated assaults declining 4.8%. Additionally, property crimes have gone down by 4.3%, burglaries by 9.8%, arsons by 8.2% and larceny-thefts by 6.2%. Trump’s rants stoking fears about immigrants and crime don’t line up with reality. According to a 2023 [Stanford University study](https://www.nber.org/papers/w31440), immigrants are 60% *less* likely to be incarcerated than are people born in the U.S.    **Shrestha Hosts One-House Budget Zoom**  Assemblymember Sarahana Shrestha hosted an informational Zoom call with constituents about the Assembly’s one-house budget proposal (March 21). For those who couldn’t make it and want to learn what is in the Assembly’s budget proposal and how it differs from the governor’s proposed budget, here is a [link](https://vimeo.com/926351295?link_id=3&can_id=088507da700d4edfad31a341be27533b&source=email-recording-mass-call-on-assembly-one-house-budget-proposal&email_referrer=email_2254693&email_subject=_-recording-mass-call-on-assembly-one-house-budget-proposal) to the Zoom recording.    **Caring for Our Youngest Residents**  Childcare—more accurately, lack of childcare—is an important local economic development issue. An annual survey done by Empire State Development and the Department of Labor found that employers identified childcare as the most important support service needed, outpacing the need for local transportation by 10 percentage points. One employer in Ulster County explained that an administrative aide making $25 an hour quit her job after maternity leave when she discovered that childcare would cost nearly half her salary.    Translation: if young families don’t have access to reliable, affordable childcare, businesses will not be able to fill job openings. A recent [article in *Chronogram*](https://www.chronogram.com/river-newsroom/the-hudson-valleys-childcare-crisis-20367632?utm_source=Eat.Play.Stay.+Newsletter&utm_campaign=e55cc79feb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_03_29_04_00&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-e55cc79feb-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D&goal=0_371ff4d22d-e55cc79feb-150051288&mc_cid=e55cc79feb&mc_eid=2f02c54d4f) on the childcare crisis in the Hudson Valley is a clarion warning for something to be done.    According to a [Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress report](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cbff05b6404e409d8f4936fa1f3168b1), our area is a childcare desert, with the availability of childcare dwindling at a faster rate than the children who need it. In Ulster County, for instance, the total birth rate between 2007 and 2020 declined by 21% but during that same time period the number of childcare providers decreased by 45%. The report highlights the causes of the childcare crisis—unintended consequences of universal pre-kindergarten, low wages, government regulations—and offers specific solutions including subsidizing childcare, updating regulations to ensure child safety and ease of opening and running day care programs, and supporting early childhood education to train childcare professionals. |

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|        **April Community Happenings** |
|    **April 1:** Saugerties schools closed for spring holiday     **April 1:** Town Zoning Board of Appeals meeting; Saugerties Senior Center, 207 Market St.; agenda [here](https://saugerties.ny.us/agenda/zba-agenda-page); contact [bbertorelli@saugertiesny.gov](mailto:bbertorelli@saugertiesny.gov); 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.     **April 1:** Community Discussion: Utilizing Ulster County’s Housing Action Fund for Saugerties; join Housing Smart Saugerties for a discussion with Ulster County Senior Planner Kai Lord-Farmer & Town Supervisor Fred Costello on the Housing Action Fund grants to municipalities, developers and not-for-profits; Saugerties Public Library, 91 Washington Ave.; 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.     **April 2:** Presidential primary; locate *your* polling site [here](https://vic.ntsdata.com/home/ulster); 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.     **April 2:** Last day to postmark or deliver your absentee ballot for the Presidential primary     **April 2:** Saugerties Central Schools Board of Education Special Meeting (budget and personnel workshop); Saugerties High School media center; 6:30 p.m.     **April 1, 15:** Village Board Monthly Meeting; note that Apr 1 will be a public hearing on the 2024-25 village budget; Hooks Meeting Rm, Firehouse, 43 Partition  St; info at [pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org](mailto:pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org); 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.     **April 1 through April 9:** Ramadan continues; the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer (salah), reflection, and community      **April 2:** Arts in Saugerties monthly meeting; Saugerties Arts Commission; 9W Diner, Simmons Plaza; 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.      **April 3:** Community conversation on priorities for learning in the Saugerties School District; People Actively Committed to Education (PACE); Saugerties Public Library; 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.     **April 3, 10, 17, 24:** Saugerties Pickleball Club; outdoors at Cantine Pickleball Courts; all levels welcome; 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.     **April 3, 10, 17, 24:** Saugerties Sings, a non-denominational community chorus; Trinity Episcopal Church, 32 Church St. (& Rte. 9W); [fiddlestitchtoday@gmail.com](mailto:fiddlestitchtoday@gmail.com); 7:00 p.m.      **April 3, 17:** Town Board Meeting; (in-person & [Webex](https://townsaugerties.digitaltowpath.org:10234/content/Generic/View/294)); Saugerties Senior Center; contact [lstanley@saugerties.ny.gov](mailto:lstanley@saugerties.ny.gov); pre-board  6:30 p.m.; board meeting 7:00 p.m.      **April 6:** Signs of Spring; Esopus Creek Conservancy; guide Steve Hart will explore the trails and a variety of habitats to observe signs of spring; pre-registration required by emailing [searunner64@gmail.com](mailto:searunner64@gmail.com); 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.     **April 6:** Penny Social; Reformed Church of Saugerties, 173 Main St.; 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.      **April 6, 10, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 30:** The Local; 16 John St.; various music, arts and culture performances; see [calendar](https://www.thelocalsaugerties.com/calendar)      **April 8:** [Solar eclipse](https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/future-eclipses/eclipse-2024/where-when/) (partial in Saugerties); watch the eclipse and enjoy eclipse activities at the Saugerties Public Library backyard; 3:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.     **April 8:** Saugerties schools closed for unused snow day     **April 8, 22:** Housing Smart Communities Task Force; on Zoom; general info: [housingsmartsaugerties@gmail.com](mailto:housingsmartsaugerties@gmail.com); for Zoom link, email [dianebc22@gmail.com](mailto:dianebc@gmail.com); 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.     **April 9:** American Legion Post #72; cheese lasagna & meatballs dinner; 30 John St.; donate a dinner to support a veteran or senior citizen; reservations & info at 845-706-8083 or [kpendergast@hvc.rr.com](mailto:kpendergast@hvc.rr.com); eat-in or take-out; 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.     **April 9, 10:** Eid Al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking Fast), marking the end of Ramadan     **April 10:** Village Planning Board; Hooks Meeting Rm, Firehouse, 43 Partition  St; info at [pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org](mailto:pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org); 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.     **April 11:** Saugerties Public Library Board of Trustees meeting; open to the public; 91 Washington Ave.; 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.     **April 13:** “The Roaring 1820s: The Decade that Put Ulster on the Map!” [Friends of Historic Saugerties](https://fhssaugerties.wixsite.com/home) meeting; Saugerties Public Library; info: [friendsofhistoricsaugerties@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofhistoricsaugerties@gmail.com); 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.      **April 13, 14, 20, 21, 22:** Saugerties Green & Clean Days; celebrate Earth Day by pitching in on roadside cleanups throughout the town; sign-up sheet and orange trash bags available beginning April 1 at the Town Clerk Office; 4 High Street; for info, call 845-246-2800, ext. 345     **April 14:** Pancake Breakfast in support of the Andrew Mullen Scholarship Fund; R.Y.A.N. House; 19 Barclay St.; $12 for 12 and up; $10 for 7 to 11; free for 6 and under; take-out available; 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.     **April 15:** Historic Preservation Commission meeting;  Saugerties Senior Center; contact [jeremy@thingsrelevant.com](mailto:jeremy@thingsrelevant.com); 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.      **April 16:** Saugerties Central Schools Board of Education meeting; Board vote on BOCES annual budget/BOCES board members, Board sets budget for vote; Saugerties High School media center; 6:30 p.m.      **April 16:** Town Planning Board meeting; Saugerties Senior Ctr; [agenda posted](https://townsaugerties.digitaltowpath.org:10234/content/Generic/View/144) prior to meeting; for info, contact: [bbertorelli@saugertiesny.gov](mailto:bbertorelli@saugertiesny.gov); 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.      **April 17:** Town Transfer Station closed for mandatory safety training; all day      **April 17:** OnlineAuthor Talk with Xochitl Gonzalez about her newest novel, *Anita de Monte Laughs Last*; Register [here](https://libraryc.org/saugertiespubliclibrary/45441); 8:00 p.m.      **April 18:** [Climate Smart Task Force](http://www.climatesmartsaugerties.org/) meeting & Conservation Advisory Committee; via Zoom; contact: [mhodonnell316@gmail.com](mailto:mhodonnell316@gmail.com);5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.      **April 20:** Tree Identification Walk; Esopus Creek Conservancy & John Burroughs Natural History Society; Esopus Bend Nature Preserve; pre-registration required at [schorvas@gmail.com](mailto:schorvas@gmail.com); 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.      **April 21:** [Saugerties Pro Musica](http://saugertiespromusica.org/); David Rose (viola), Isabel Ong (violin), Natasha Ferny (cello); Saugerties United Methodist Church, 67 Washington Ave.; 3:00 p.m.      **April 22:** [Earth Day](https://www.earthday.org/); 2024 theme is “Planet vs Plastics”      **April 22**:Deadline to return Saugerties School Board candidate petitions;District Clerkin Superintendent’s Office; by 5:00 p.m.      **April 22—27:** Saugerties Animal Shelter Drive; Saugerties Public Library is collecting kitten food (wet & dry), cleaning supplies, paper towels, disinfectant sprays & wipes, Bleach, any dog or cat toys, peanut butter, and Benebones™      **April 22—28**: Passover; Jewish spring festival celebrating freedom and family and the Exodus from Egypt more than 3,000 years ago      **April 23**: Saugerties School Board candidate ballot position drawing; 11:00 a.m.      **April 23:** Saugerties Democratic Committee monthly meeting; Saugerties Senior Center; 7:00 p.m.      **April 23**:Village Zoning Board meeting; Village Hall, 43 Partition St.; info at [pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org](mailto:pmelville@villageofsaugerties.org); 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.      **April 24:** Saugerties Chamber of Commerce Mixer; Planet Networks, 32 Partition St.; 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.      **April 24:** Village Historic Review Board; Village Hall; 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.      **April 26:** Saugerties Arts Commission meeting; Town Hall, Building Dept Conference Room, 4 High St.; info at [arts@saugertiesarts.org](mailto:arts@saugertiesarts.org); 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.      **April 27:** Saugerties Senior High School clothing drive; Saugerties H.S. bus circle; 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.      **April 28:** Spring Bird Migration; Esopus Creek Conservancy & John Burroughs Natural History Society; guided walk through woodlands and wetlands in the Town of Saugerties; pre-registration required at [schorvas@gmail.com](mailto:schorvas@gmail.com); 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.      **April 28 (***please note in Kingston***):** Ulster County Democratic Committee Spring Brunch; keynote by State Senator Michelle Hinchey; info and tickets [here](https://ucdems.org/2024-spring-brunch); Wiltwyck Golf Club, 404 Steward Lane, Kingston; 12:00 noon         **R.Y.A.N. House** [Support Group Meeting Schedule](https://www.raisingawarenessrun.com/r-y-a-n-house-schedule/) at 19 Barclay Street, Saugerties (ongoing)         *Check Saugerties Democratic Committee* [*website*](https://saugertiesdemocrats.org/) *for calendar updates.* |