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LWVBN 2011 Kick-Off Meeting

Defining Public Service:

What does it *mean* to be a public servant?

David Swarts

President/CEO Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens

As a lifelong resident of Erie County and former middle school social studies teacher who served as commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles and Erie County Clerk, Mr. Swarts has a unique perspective on public service.

Tuesday, September 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Harlem Road Community Center
4255 Harlem Road, Amherst

Refreshments will be served following the presentation. If you're willing to bring one or two dozen cookies, brownies, or pastries, please call the office (884-3550) or send an e-mail to lwvbn@lwvbn.org.

League of Women Voters Mission:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

CONTENTS

<i>President's Message & Board Actions</i>	2	<i>Voter Services</i>	4
<i>Great Decisions</i>	2	<i>Transportation/Waterfront</i>	5
<i>Schedules & Office Hours</i>	3	<i>League History</i>	5
<i>Shoreline Sweep</i>	3	<i>Education</i>	6
<i>Amherst Unit News</i>	4	<i>Membership News & Form</i>	7
<i>Natural Resources</i>	4	<i>Calendar</i>	8

President's Message & Board Actions

The Issues Committee and board have begun to craft a comprehensive calendar of League activities and responsibilities for 2011-2012. This League is an extremely busy one and we welcome active participation by all members. We realize that some of our members are only able to participate through their financial support of the local, state and national Leagues. You are a very important part of the League. Your continued membership testifies that you value the work of the League at all three levels. Thank you for continuing to support the League through that membership.

The work of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara requires that we have an active membership also. I extend special appreciation to everyone who has shared her/his willingness to participate by completing the survey portion of the membership form and pledge that we will contact you to participate in the ways you indicate. We will continue to use the Voter as a way to notify members of opportunities to participate.

I'm pleased to report that the board of directors approved the following areas of board member responsibility for the 2011-2012 League year:

Joyce Bol, Voter Services	Judy Metzger, Health Care Chair
Mary M. Egan, Volunteer Coordinator	Theresa Pope, Communications/Public Relations
Janet Goodsell, Issues & Action Chair	Dorothy Tao, Communications/Public Relations Chair
Judy Huber, Membership Chair	Lyle Toohey, Board Governance
Kathleen McCormick, Voter Editor	Lynne Vallone, Local Government Liaison
Dot Brown, Issues Committee Recorder, Legislative Action Chair	

The board also approved the following board members as the board representatives on the 2012 Nominating Committee: Deborah Billoni, Ramona Gallagher and Judy Huber.

Lyle Toohey will coordinate a bylaw review committee this year. The board approved these volunteers as committee members: Theresa Pope, Lyle Toohey, Lynne Vallone and Therese Warden. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please contact Lyle Toohey at events@lwvbn.org by October 1st.

I have the honor and privilege to welcome Lenore Tetkowski, our much loved and revered Education Committee Chair, to a select group as she celebrates 50 years of membership in the League of Women Voters. Lee is a dynamo with energy that folks half her age can't match. Not only does she have energy, but she does everything well. Her activities with the League are always carried out in the most professional and positive manner possible. Her energy, wisdom and sense of humor make her a role model for us all. Thank you, Lee, for your continued leadership.

Finally, I extend congratulations to Eugene Abrahamson, who coordinated our successful holiday gift wrapping venture at Eastern Hills Mall, and to all the League members and friends whose work with paper, tape and bows made the sale a success. Their efforts earned the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara the award for the best fundraiser among the local Leagues at the New York State League convention in May.

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Joan Sillman will lead our next discussion, *Sanctions and Nonproliferation*, on Thursday, September 1 from 10 a.m. – noon at 1272 Delaware Avenue. "Sanctions have been created to curb nations in violation of international law, especially agreements concerning nuclear nonproliferation. How successfully have sanctions been applied against past violators? Is there any chance sanctions can curtail North Korea and Iran from continuing to develop nuclear weapons?" Be sure to mark your September calendar and be with us.

Bernice Baeumler

LWVBN Fall Program Schedule

- September 20 David Swarts will kick off our program year with a timely address:
Defining Public Service: What does it *mean* to be a public servant?
- October 19 Consensus Meetings for the National Education Study
- November 16 Consensus Meetings for the National Education Study

Note: There will be two separate meetings to complete the consensus process and two times for each meeting, at 1272 Delaware Avenue in the morning and at Harlem Road in the evening.

LWVBN Committee Schedule

	MEETING DAY	TIME	LOCATION	EXCEPTIONS
Board of Directors	First Monday	4:30 p.m.	LWV Office	
Issues Committee	Tues. prior to Board	4:30 p.m.	Harlem Road Comm. Center	
Great Decisions	First Thursday	10:00 a.m.	LWV Office	No mtg. Jan or Feb.
Local Government	TBA	TBA	TBA	
Natural Resources	Second Thursday	9:30 a.m.	East Aurora	
Education Committee	Third Thursday	1:30 p.m.	LWV Office	
Lunch & Issues	Third Friday	11:30 a.m.	Scotch & Sirloin Restaurant	No mtg. April-Sept.
Transportation/ Waterfront Committee	Second Wednesday	10:00 a.m.	LWV Office	No mtg. June-Aug.

New Office Hours

The League Office at 1272 Delaware Avenue will be open daily from 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Eugene Abrahamson will be in the office on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Jacqueline Skinner, our new office assistant, will be in the office on Monday and Wednesday. Jackie comes to us from Supportive Services Corporation with strong computer skills. As always, before you visit the office, please call the office (884-3550) to make sure that someone will be there.

Office Wish List

The League is looking for several donated items to make our office at 1272 Delaware Avenue more comfortable: a gently used electric fan, a window air conditioner and a dorm size refrigerator. If you would like to donate any of these items, please call the office (884-3550).

Shoreline Sweep: Team Members Needed

Sally Metzger is organizing a League team for Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers' Fall Shoreline Sweep on Saturday, September 24 from 9:00 a.m. – noon, with a volunteer picnic to follow. Please e-mail Sally if you would like to join the team (events@lwvbn.org).

Sally Metzger

Amherst Unit News

The Amherst Unit voted to schedule monthly Lunch and Issues meetings from November to March. All League members are welcome to attend. We are pleased to announce that Mary Scheeder is our new Town Board Observer chair. We are grateful to Joyce Zobel for her years of dedicated service in this position. We will assist with a Candidates Forum at the Amherst Senior Center on Thursday, October 20 at 9:00 a.m. Ramona Gallagher will moderate and Sally Metzger will keep time. Please plan to attend and bring your friends. The Senior Center will provide coffee and donuts. We are also encouraging all League members to attend the 9th annual food forum, WORLD ON YOUR PLATE, October 14 – 15 at Daemen College. The forum will feature Judy Wicks, an international speaker in the local living economies movement, plus workshops, local foods, and lunch. Cost is \$25.00 for both dates. For more information, go to <http://www.worldonyourplate.org/>.

Judy Metzger, Amherst Unit Coordinator

Natural Resources

League members and friends are invited to tour the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) on Saturday, October 22 at 10:30 a.m. MAP is located on 389 Massachusetts Avenue in Buffalo. It has been recognized as one of the five most outstanding projects to address the food problem in the United States. The tour will take about one hour. The cost of the tour is \$2.00 per person. Please contact Judy Weidemann (events@lwvbn.org) to reserve your space. We encourage everyone to car pool to MAP.

Ellen Neumaier, Natural Resources Chair

Voter Services

Naturalization

Ann Marie Malachowski and Jennie Wylegala participated in the citizenship ceremonies on August 4. Judy Cassasa and Margaret Talboys will participate in the ceremonies on August 18. Thank you all for volunteering.

Candidates' Meetings

The Lackawanna Chamber of Commerce had a candidates' meeting at which Marian Deutschman was the moderator and Phyllis Banas was the timekeeper. On August 29, the Yemenite Benevolent Association is having a debate from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. at 109 Ridge Road. Three candidates for Council President and two candidates for 4th Ward Council will be invited. Laura McDade will be the moderator and Jean Flowers will be the timekeeper.

Upcoming candidates' meetings include: Amherst, October 20; Clarence, October 24; East Aurora, October 25; and Hamburg, October 26. Details as to time and place will be in the October VOTER.

WNED County Executive Debate

Laura McDade is the League's point person for a debate between Erie County Executive candidates Chris Collins and Mark Poloncarz on October 13. Details as to time and place will be in the October VOTER.

Joyce Bol, Voter Services Chair

Transportation/Waterfront

Janet Massaro and JoAnn Mecca attended the Erie County Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) meeting on July 19. A motion to accept Benderson Development Company as the preferred developer for the Donovan Building was approved. A committee previously approved plans to reuse the building for office space with the first floor for retail and restaurants. Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown spoke in favor of the motion noting that Benderson has a good reputation, the building will be put on the tax rolls, and the project will attract other development. ECHDC board member David Colligan also spoke in favor of the motion pointing out that no Class A office space has been built downtown in many years. During the public question period, League members noted that the Donovan Building is the former site of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station and asked if the ECHDC board had considered using it or another site in the Canal District for a multimodal transportation center. ECHDC board chairman Jordan Levy thanked League members for the questions and said that he is working with Representative Brian Higgins on just such a facility.

The ECHDC board also approved a motion to accept a NYS Department of Transportation Supplemental grant for the Buffalo Harbor Bridge. ECHDC president Thomas Dee gave a brief history of the money spent on the bridge project to date. Approximately \$4 million was spent on the Environmental Impact Statement and design work. The bridge will cost another \$70 – 100 million to construct. Construction money has not been secured yet. New York Power Authority funds cannot be used for bridge construction.

Beginning in September, the Transportation/Waterfront Committee will meet on the second Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. from September – May, at the League office. Gladys Gifford will chair the committee.

JoAnn Mecca

League History: The Florence Simms Unit

The newspaper headline read “Industrial Women Voters’ Program”. The article went on to state that “The Florence Simms Unit of the Erie County League of Women Voters which was organized last winter (1928) and which represents girls in industry will begin an active program of legislative study with special reference to labor laws.”

Miss Louise Gugino, chair of the Florence Simms Unit, put forth their program in the newspaper article “An Active Program of Legislative Study with Special Reference to Labor Laws as They Affect Women in Industry”. It was not uncommon for Leagues to study labor laws and regulations during the 1920-30s, but this is the only mention of a League unit founded for a specific study topic. The unit is also unusual in that it was named for an individual.

Who was Florence Simms? Florence Simms (1873 – 1923) was a social reformer and YWCA leader. Temperance and women’s rights commanded her interest during her college days at DePauw and she continued to champion women’s rights throughout her life. Through her YWCA position, she concentrated on women and children in the workplace and the inhuman conditions in which they often worked. She traveled extensively throughout the United States urging organizations such as the YWCA to recognize the need to educate women about labor laws and collective bargaining.

The national League joined the YWCA and groups such as the National Women’s Trade Union to carry out the ideas in Florence Simms’ message. Our local unit reached out to area women involved in industry to become members and study the laws and legislation that particularly concerned them.

Marie Hanrahan, Historian

Common Core Standards and Assessments in Public Education

Should there be consistency in what to expect from schools as a student moves from one part of our country to another? An important part of our CONSENSUS QUESTIONS ON EDUCATION deals with the issue of Common Core Standards and Assessments. Here is a synopsis of the LWVUS material by Janelle L. Rivers.

Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), each state has been allowed to develop its own tests and standards approved by the U. S. Department of Education. Although federal law requires every state to publish its annual school report of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the 'proficiency' category varies widely from state to state. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as The National Report Card, shows more correct state-to-state comparisons, but it works with large samples of students, and many school systems are too small to be included. When comparing these two sets of test results, it becomes clear that states have set very different standards for themselves. Public education in the U. S. has traditionally been a local responsibility. Until recently, the nation has not had a consistent set of academic standards for K-12. If state standards vary, then opportunities and expectations will depend on where students to live. Deep concern arose recently after international comparisons of American 15 year-olds' achievements in academic subjects with those of other developed countries showed them lower than many. But in low-poverty American schools results were good. While other developed nations have poor children, the U. S. has a much higher proportion and a much weaker safety net.

WHAT IS THE 2010 COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS (CCSI) INITIATIVE?

It is NOT a federal government initiative. It is a collaborative effort of the National Governors Association, Common Core Initiative 2010 and the Council of Chief State School Officers. They worked with teachers, school administrators and experts plus over 10,000 public comments to develop a standard to prepare students for college and the workforce. All states except Texas and Alaska, and D. C. and the Virgin Islands supported this. These K-12 standards provide grade specific targets in many subjects.

Do we need standards? Early childhood experts, focused on development of children from K-3 have varied in their degree of support. Some worried that standards may be too narrow. The U. S. Department of Education has not required adoption of the standards to be eligible for federal funds. However Race to the Top (RTTP) required adoption of these standards to qualify. Arguments against adopting Common Core Standards: cost and difficulty, sovereignty of states. A state may add 15% to the content of the standards.

WOULD RIGOROUS STANDARDS IMPROVE ACHIEVEMENT?

There is no statistical connection between state scores on NAEP and the quality of state standards. Educators say that improvement in real learning occurs only when standards are implemented along with an aligned curriculum, accountability, professional development, autonomy for school leaders, and best teachers.

HOW WILL THE COMMON CORE BE ASSESSED?

New tests based on mastery of new curriculum are needed. The federal government is NOT planning a national test for this purpose. The U. S. Department of Education had a competition for newly designed 'comprehensive assessment systems' aligned to Common Core. Both winning proposals attempt to track individual student progress toward College Readiness. Both will enable cross-state comparisons.

HOW WOULD SCORES FROM COMMON CORE BE USED?

Staff development for teachers and administrators would help find ways to use resulting information to adjust instruction. It is very important to interpret test scores in conjunction with other information about individuals. There is much concern about use of test scores for evaluating teachers. Should rewards or sanctions be based on tests? Top educators caution against relying on test results as a major indicator for evaluating teachers. Too many other factors affect scores.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO ACCOUNTABILITY?

Under NCLB of 2001, states are required to report test results. Schools that fail to make AYP face onerous sanctions, which include: 1) offering tutoring, 2) allowing students to transfer to successful schools, 3) restructuring the school by converting to a charter, replacing principal and staff, or turning school over to control of private management or the state.

The future of public education in the United States has become uncertain. Common Core creates an opportunity to achieve consistency and raise standards. Revision of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) looms ahead and the role of the federal government in supporting and regulating public education could be redefined in many ways.

**League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara Membership Registration Form
July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012**



Make checks payable to LWVBN. Return to LWVBN, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209.

Check one category. Dues to local, state and the national affiliates are included in each category.

\$ 65 Individual Member July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012

\$100 Household (2 members living at the same address)

\$ 75 Carrie Chapman Membership

\$ 90 Elizabeth Cady Stanton Membership

\$100 Susan B. Anthony Membership

\$ 30 Student Membership

Enclosed is an additional donation of \$_____

This is a renewal.

This is a new membership.

This is a membership for a former member who is returning to the League.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please e-mail me the LWVBN bulletin: LWVBN Voter.

The First Year I joined the League

Unit Interest
(Optional)
<input type="checkbox"/> Amherst
<input type="checkbox"/> Buffalo Metro
<input type="checkbox"/> Clarence

Cut Here

Membership News

Twenty-six Leaguers renewed their membership at the Annual Meeting in June. They were given a new League button as a gift.

Welcome to new members Joyce Glowinski of Williamsville and Joan Sarow of Orchard Park.

Renewal letters were mailed in mid July. Thank you to all the members who have since sent in their dues. If you have not yet renewed, remember our membership year begins on July first of each year. We would appreciate it if you could send in your dues as soon as possible. A renewal form is included in this issue of the VOTER for your convenience.

We need you in the coming year. Work has begun on the Election Guide and already the League has committed to conducting five "Meet the Candidates" forums. Once the November elections are over, we will again produce *They Represent You*. And again, we will be doing Gift Wrapping at Eastern Hills Mall, which will bring us recognition and much needed funds.

Looking forward to meeting you soon.

Judy Huber, Membership Chair

The League of Women Voters:

Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Join the LWV and help shape the issues that keep our community fair, vibrant and strong.



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SEPTEMBER 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 GREAT DECISIONS 10:00 a.m.	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	12 BOARD MEETING 4:30 p.m.	13 PRIMARY ELECTION DAY	14 TRANS/ WATERFRONT 10:00 a.m. LOCAL GOVERNMENT 1:15 p.m.	15 EDUCATION 1:30 p.m.	16	17
18	19	20 SEPTEMBER KICK-OFF MEETING 7:00 p.m.	21	22	23	24 SHORELINE SWEEP 9 a.m. - noon
25	26	27 ISSUES 4:30 p.m.	28	29	30	

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