The League of Women Voters® of Buffalo/Niagara INC.

VOTER

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President's Message: League Lives Its Mission

Our League was served a subpoena late in 2010 from the Erie County Executive's office. We have been quiet about the subpoena because of the sensitivity of the material that relates to it. But the time has come to inform our membership. Soon, the ACLU and local attorneys who represent the League will act to Quash the subpoena. Therese Warden is posting articles on the League web site: http://www.lwvbn.org/ to inform our members about the subpoena and our Reentry Studies. The subpoena includes several serious violations of constitutionality. The League looks on the legal proceedings as an opportunity to uphold our democratic rights as an organization. As is stated on the web site of the League of Women Voters of the United States, "the organization remains true to its basic purpose: to make democracy work for all citizens."

Our local League Redistricting committee, ably led by Janet Massaro, has been monitoring the process for redistricting the Erie County Legislature. As Janet stated in her statement before the County Executive on June 26, 2011, "We concluded that the process we observed in the Citizens Advisory Commission, the Government Affairs Committee and the Legislature did not meet the standards League has established for fair, open and transparent redistricting free from partisan influences and gerrymandering." The downsizing of the county legislature may well be delayed for another year. The problems have been long-standing, both at the county and state level. It's clear that we cannot let another ten years pass without putting into place clearly articulated processes to address the changes that occur with every census, as well as changes brought about by legislative downsizing. There is more work for us all to do.

Terri Parks

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.

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President's Thank You

The Annual Meeting is past and the gavel has been passed. The board of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara for 2011-2012 has been elected and has conducted its first meeting of the year. The September Voter will include the roles that each board member will assume for this year. I want to personally thank Co-Presidents, Loretta Peszynski and Margaret Brunson, for their service to the League for the past three years. We all wish Loretta a complete recovery from her recent surgery.

Margaret Brunson joined the board of directors when six local Leagues merged and served on the board of directors for more than thirteen years as the first VOTER Editor and then as co-president for four years. That is a huge commitment to our local organization. We all extend to her our sincere appreciation for her long and dedicated service to LWVB/N.

We also thank our long-time Volunteer Coordinator, JoAnn Mecca, who retired from that board position, but plans to continue as an active League member. I'm sure JoAnn will help Mary (Mike) Egan, who has agreed to be the Volunteer Coordinator, a job she has done well in the past. We welcome Mike, Dorothy (Dot) Brown, Dorothy Tao and Kathleen McCormick to the board.

Terri Parks

League History: When a Tea Party Was a Tea Party

In 1926 the president of the Erie County League of Women Voters, Mrs. James VanInwagen is quoted as saying, "Even the American Revolution started with a tea party…So the Erie County League of Women Voters after six years of plodding to spread abroad knowledge of its work and aims has decided that much can be accomplished if talk is accompanied with tea." She then went on the state that "occasionally the tea party is to be featured in the League's serious program of activities."

The members taking her at her word then set out to use the tea party to reach potential members, raise funds and hear speeches and debates from candidates for political office. The variety of purposes can be seen in newspaper headlines of the day:

Hamburg-East Aurora Women Voters meet for Politics and Tea, Mrs. D.P. Rumsey Gives Tea Tuesday for Finance Group; Bridge, Tea, Speeches and Supper, Sixth District League is Planning Membership Tea.
Over time tea parties and garden parties gradually went out of favor, but we still enjoy meeting from time to time over coffee/tea and good food.

Marie Hanrahan, Historian

Summer Office Hours

The League Office will be open this summer on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. As is our usual procedure, please call Eugene Abrahamson at the office (884-3550) or on his cell phone (316-3869) to make sure that someone will be there before you go to the office. If you have any committee meetings or activities at other times, make sure you call Eugene to be sure someone is in the building to let you in. During the summer, there won't always be someone from the Food Pantry or Network staff in the building. Remember that only Eugene may arrange and schedule the use of rooms at 1272 Delaware Avenue.

Flora Summe, who worked in the office four days a week this past year, retired at the end of June from the program that assigned her to the League. We wish Flora well and thank her for covering the office while Eugene was on vacation in July. Eugene has applied for someone from the same program, but hasn't "hired" anyone yet.

Great Decisions

On Thursday, August 4, 2011, Joan Photiadis will lead the discussion on ***Banks,*** governments and debt crisis at our same time, same place. "As an immediate response to the financial crisis of 2007-08 governments around the world stepped in to bail out troubled private banks deemed "too big to fail" underscoring the interdependence between private and public finances. With the recent eurozone crisis, what have we learned so far and is it possible to ensure that future crises will not occur?" If you have questions about these changes, please call me.

Bernice Baeumler, events@lwvbn.org

Communications Survey

We'd like to learn how we're doing in communicating with our membership through the Voter and our League web site. We'd also like to get your opinions about possible changes. Please complete this short survey and mail it back to the League office (1272 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY, 14209) by August 5th. If you prefer, you may complete the survey electronically by going to the Survey Monkey link (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BW7N3DF). It will only take a few minutes. Your input will help us provide you with the information that is important to you.

Kristin Allen, Webmaster & *Kathleen McCormick*, Voter Editor

1. Please check all the following features of the Voter that you find useful or interesting.

- ❑ Calendar
- ❑ Events
- ❑ History articles
- ❑ Committee news
- ❑ Unit news
- ❑ National and State information
- ❑ Current study information
- ❑ Other (please specify):

2. Please assess the Voter with the following ratings:

	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Ease of finding articles using the table of contents					
Quality of the writing					
Timeliness of articles					
Pleasing layout					
Accurate information					

Comments:

3. How can we improve communication with you through the Voter?

4. How many issues of the Voter do you prefer?

- ❑ 6 issues per year- bimonthly
- ❑ 10 issues per year-monthly except one combined issue in the summer and one combined issue in the winter

Comments:

5. Please rate the importance of the following types of information to be included on the LWVBN web site.

	Very Important 1	2	Somewhat Important 3	4	Unimportant 5
Background material and information resources relating to our current issues					
Reports of attendees of public meetings or non-League events					
Listing of public meetings and hearings on topics relating to our current issues					
Positions taken by LWVBN					
Actions taken by LWVBN					
Advocacy for specific action					
Discussions about topics relating to our current issues					

Comments:

6. List the three things that you feel should be most prominent or easy to find on the web site.

7. What additions do you think would attract non-League members to our web site?

8. If we create a secure, members only site, which of the following do you think you would use?
   - ❑ Blog with opportunity to comment
   - ❑ LWVBN Bylaws
   - ❑ Board Minutes
   - ❑ Other (specifiy):

9. Is there anything else you would like to see on the LWVBN web site?

10. Please make any additional comments about LWVBN communication with members. You may include your name if you choose.

Voter Services

Naturalization
Mary Hanrahan and Delight Dann participated in the naturalization ceremony on July 14th.

Political Candidates' Meetings
The following meetings have been set: Amherst, October 20th; Clarence, October 24th; East Aurora, October 25th and Hamburg, October 26th. More information on time and place will be published in the September VOTER.

County Executive Debate
Laura McDade has been told by WNED-TV that there will be a debate for Erie County Executive on October 13th.

Volunteer Moderators
Units needing moderators for candidates' meetings or debates can contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Mike Egan at maryegan@roadrunner.com. Alyson Hyde has already agreed to moderate Hamburg's candidates meeting.

Joyce Bol, Voter Services Chair

Natural Resources

Upcoming Events
We will visit the Massachusetts Ave Project (MAP) this fall. We are planning a tour of their gardens and tilapia farm with lunch at a local restaurant during prime harvest time. We also will tour the Larkin Building, possibly including nearby gardens. The building is another example of what can be done rehabilitating a historic building, bringing an area that formerly needed some loving care back to a vibrant life. The tours are open to all Leaguers and friends. Keep an eye out for the dates!

Update on Hydrofracking
At Governor Cuomo's request, the Department of Environmental Conservation released a preliminary revised draft of the state's guidelines for the gas drilling industry. The draft guidelines protect the watersheds of New York City and Syracuse, but not of Western New York. They do not mention the cumulative impacts of fracking thousands of wells across the state, nor how to treat toxic and potentially radioactive fracking waste. The revised guidelines also include an inadequate public comment period. They can be reviewed at http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/75370.html.

New EPA Ruling Makes It Easier to Breathe
Helped along by LWVUS' somewhat controversial television ads (we thought they were wonderful!) the strong new clean air rule will slash air pollution from power plants, save lives and make the air healthier to breathe for people in the eastern United States. The new "Good Neighbor Rule" will put tighter limits on acid-rain causing sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. These pollutants are carried across state borders and contribute dangerous levels of particulate and smog pollution in downwind states.

Ellen Neumaier, Natural Resources Chair

Education

LWVUS Education Study Consensus

It's time to prepare for the LWVUS Study Consensus on "***The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education***." We plan two general members' informational meetings on the consensus questions in the fall.

The scope of the League's national study is broad. It includes the history of the federal involvement in public education, funding and equity issues, and the common core standards/assessments which are now required for many grant programs. Historically we have always had national standards written and funded by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and by organizations like the National Council of Teachers of Math. However the LWVUS study will focus on how these new standards, called Common Core State Standards, will be used by the federal government.

LWVUS Study Consensus Background Material

LWVUS Education Study Committee members are researching and writing background papers to help Leagues educate members and communities about the issues. If you receive this Voter electronically, you may click on the title and connect directly to the following articles on the LWVUS web site.

Common Core Standards and Assessments by Janelle L. Rivers, PhD

Early Childhood Education, Equity and Funding by Pat Aaron

Funding and Equity Issues by Jean Pierce

Role Of Federal Government In Public Education: Historical Perspectives by Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins and Margaret Hawkins Hill

See an excerpt from the *Funding and Equity Issues* article on page 7.

Books for Study Consensus

If you read one book to prepare for our discussion of the consensus questions, the Education Committee highly recommends Diane Ravitch's "The Death and Life of the Great American School System".

Other suggested reading:

"The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future" by Linda Darling-Hammond

"Why School?" by Mike Rose

"Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy" by David Mathews

"Education Now: How Rethinking America's Past Can Change its Future" by Paul Theobald

The next meeting of the Education Committee will be August 18, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. in the League Office.

Lee Tetkowski, Education Committee Chair

Reminder: Please notify the League Office, lwvbn@lwvbn.org if you change your e-mail address, Grassroots Lobby Coordinator, Elsa Bondar, events@lwvbn.organd also Kathleen McCormick, events@lwvbn.orgif you receive your VOTER electronically.

Funding and Equity Issues in Public Education

Here are some excerpts from National League material for the Education Study.

Before the 1950s, federal involvement in public education was almost nonexistent. In 1954 the Supreme Court decision declared that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional. In the 1960s federal policy attempted to place equality of opportunity at the center of the nation's social welfare policies. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was followed by President Johnson's education plan, which became the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) in 1965. Part of this outlawed allocating federal funds to segregated programs.

As part of ESEA, Congress authorized a study on educational equality in the United States. The resulting 1965 report, Equality of Educational Opportunity, found student background and socio-economic status were more important in determining educational outcomes than differences in school resources. This study has had a lasting influence in debates on housing and busing integration policies, preschool education, voucher payment levels, and charter schools.

At first, ESEA was intended to give additional resources to districts serving many low-income families without federal involvement as to how the resources would be used.

Two major programs began. Title I provided for the education of low-income students. At present, Title I is part of No Child Left Behind and is funded at $14.6 billion. Title VI provided grants for "handicapped" children. As the definition of "handicapped" broadened, in 1970 Title VI was revised, and was separated from ESEA. It became the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees free, appropriate education to children with disabilities from birth to age 18 or 21. Congress set a goal of providing 40% of average cost. IDEA is part of No Child Left Behind. Last year IDEA used $11.5 million.

ESEA did not provide general federal aid to public schools. Instead it gave "categorical" support, aid targeted to specific student population such as low-income students. A fundamental premise was that state and local education authorities had failed to ensure equal educational opportunities and required federal intervention.

By the 1970s this emphasis on equity led to smaller racial differences in reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. However in the 1980s there were many cuts in programs targeting urban and poor rural schools and healthcare. ESEA goals have changed over the years, and funds have been used for a variety of purposes.

Unfortunately our schools have become re-segregated. Almost 3⁄4 of Black and Latino students attend schools predominately non-white. The racial achievement gap never returned to that of 1988.

Since 1990, rather than looking at equity, there has been a focus on adequacy, whether a state is providing local districts enough for a basic education. The weighted per-pupil estimated costs are $9,641 according to a 2008 study. This is $566 more than the average spent per student on a national basis. In 30 states, additional revenues would be needed to reach that model.

The federal government adds less than 10% to local education budgets, yet it contributes significantly to the rules for how the funding is used. Nearly half of the K-12 education funding in the United States is intended to come from the states, from a combination of income taxes, fees and other taxes. However in some states, which contribute much less, local property taxes are heavily relied on.

Adapted and excerpted from *Funding and Equity Issues* by Jean Pierce on lwv.org <http://lwv.org>

Lee Tetkowski, Education Committee Chair

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SUMMER 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
7/24	7/25	7/26 **ISSUES 4:30 PM**	7/27	7/28	7/29	7/30
7/31	8/1 **BOARD MEETING 4:30 p.m.**	8/2	8/3	8/4 **GREAT DECISIONS 10:00 a.m..**	8/5	8/6
8/7	8/8	8/9	8/10 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT 1:15 P.M.**	8/11	8/12	8/13
8/14	8/15	8/16	8/17	8/18 **EDUCATION COMMITTEE 10:00 a.m..**	8/19	8/20
8/21	8/22	8/23	8/24	8/25	8/26	8/27
8/28	8/29	8/30	8/31			

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