



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

your
VOTER

Volume 25, Number 1

September 2019

President

Terri Parks

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LWVB/N website

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LWVNYS website

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LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11
times a year. September
Voter copy is due
Monday, September 9.
Send copy to Nancy
DeTine at
nancy@nancydetine.com.

Countdown to Election Day:
What you need to know before you vote

Date: Thursday, September 26, 2019

Place: Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site
641 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14202

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Featured speaker: James A. Gardner,
SUNY Distinguished Professor at UB School of Law

Gardner is the eighth most frequently cited scholar in the field of election law, and a top national authority on state constitutional law.

Panel: Update on New York's Historic Voting Reforms

Sean Ryan, New York State Assemblyman

Barbara Gunderson, Voter Service Chair, League of Women
Voters of Buffalo Niagara

Jeremy Zellner, Commissioner, Erie County Board of Elections

Free and open to the public – join us!

Light refreshments will be served.

RSVP by Monday, September 23

Make reservations online at www.lwbvn.org,
send email to lwbvn@lwbvn.org or call 986-4898.

Special thanks to our co-sponsor.



League of Women Voters Mission

The League of Women Voters is a good government organization that encourages informed and active participation in the political process, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League never supports political parties or candidates.

President's Report and Board Decisions

September is the traditional month when we kick off programs for the League year. This year's program is especially compelling given the new voting laws in New York State that reflect issues the League has supported and advocated for many years. I expect we'll fill the room at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site. **We need a good count on the number of people who plan to attend, so be sure you register for this and every League program event.**

Work on the 2019 Voters Guide is progressing well. We have invited all candidates for county level offices in Erie and Niagara Counties to participate as well as candidates for Niagara Falls and Buffalo. Vote411.org goes live on September 14. **Please check to be sure that the candidates on your ballot have responded and contact any who have not done so.** Only responses received by September 14 will be included in the printed Voters Guide. However, candidates may respond after September 14 for the online version.

I'm pleased to report that Kathleen McCormick will again edit the Voter beginning with the October Issue. Kathleen edited it last from 2011 through 2014. She has much more skill than I have. Nancy DeTine continues as our able copy editor and Sally Metzger prepares the mailing. With those fine people and the outstanding articles that members submit, we will continue to have a professional publication.

The board accepted Pat Costanzo's resignation from the board with deep regret. Pat has been on a leave of absence for the past year and cannot predict when she might again be able to serve on the board. We'll miss her many contributions to the board and her thoughtful and wise suggestions and questions.

The board also approved a recommendation from the Finance Committee to return to our investment funds capital gains and dividends that we put in our checking account in 2018 in anticipation of a cash shortfall that didn't occur. Our usual practice is to reinvest these funds.

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Fran Holmes has volunteered to lead the fifth 2019 Great Decisions topic, Decoding the U. S.-China trade, on Thursday, September 5, from 10 a.m. to noon at 1272 Delaware Avenue. "Though arguably the most advanced economy in the world, the United States still uses centuries old numbers to measure trade. These antique numbers mangle understanding of the U. S.-China trade relationship, shrinking America's true economic size and competitiveness, while swelling China's. Bad numbers give rise to bad policies that ultimately kill U. S. jobs and cede market share to China. What other tools can the United States employ to counter China's unfair trade practices? There are several available yet they remain mostly unused." (Jeremy Haft) The author tries to do just that. Hope you agree and will be there.

Bernice Baeumler, 876-0672

Save the Date!

On November 16, 2019, the League of Women Voters of New York State will host its 100th Anniversary Celebration in Buffalo at The Buffalo History Museum. One attraction will be the exhibit about women's suffrage that opens soon and features the League. The state League will honor Kathleen Hochul, Lt. Governor of New York State; William Hochul, Jr., Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary to Delaware North Companies; Dr. Kathleen Conway-Turner, President, SUNY Buffalo State; and Ariel Palitz, Senior Executive Director, Office of Nightlife for New York City. All are distinguished trailblazers in their fields. Details will be coming from the state League. Join us to celebrate our past while supporting our future.

Voter Registration Efforts for September

Linda Koenigsburg has offered local colleges League assistance in registering students to vote this fall.

Tuesday, September 17: Many colleges must plan activities for Constitution Day and four have decided that registering voters is an excellent way to celebrate: Erie County Community College-South Campus, Hilbert College, Trocaire College, and Villa Maria College.

Monday, September 9, and Monday, September 23: We have scheduled voter registration events at Erie Community College-North Campus and may have possible events at several other local colleges.

September 24, National Voter Registration Day: We will register voters at the Buffalo Urban League and at one additional college that day and would welcome more venues. **Please contact me at lqvoter@verizon.net if you can suggest a site where we can register voters that day.**

Many thanks to the members of the Voter Registration Team (VRT) who have worked diligently this year to update our voter registration materials and directions to comply with the new voting laws, especially Barbara Gunderson, who will chair this effort from now forward as part of her Voter Service Chair duties. Thank you also, Linda Koenigsburg, Ramona Gallagher, Tina Prygon, Liz Zausmer, BJ VanDerwater, and Janet Goodsell. We will meet on October 29 at 4:00 p.m. at 1272 Delaware Avenue to assess our efforts and begin to set goals for the coming year.

Terri Parks, Coordinator

Naturalization Ceremonies

On May 30, Sharon Cramer and Terri Parks welcomed 103 new citizens at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery – 101 returned their voter registration forms. At the Buffalo History Museum on June 13, Kate Wagner and Ramona Gallagher welcomed 40 new citizens – 39 voter registration forms were returned. On June 19, Janet Goodsell and Judy Weidemann welcomed 25 new citizens at the International Institute – 23 forms were returned. The USS Little Rock was the site for the ceremony on June 27, when Ramona Gallagher and Deborah Shiffner welcomed 53 new citizens, and 50 voter registration forms were returned.

Karen Keaton and Deborah Shiffner welcomed 51 new citizens on July 3 at the U.S District Courthouse, and 50 of those candidates returned their voter registration forms. The Burchfield Penney Art Center was the site for the ceremony on July 18; Kathleen McCarthy and Janet Massaro welcomed 61 new citizens, and 56 returned their voter registration forms. The City Campus of Erie Community College hosted the ceremony on July 31, with Judy Weidemann and Michele Greco welcoming 100 new citizens.

Pat Wille, Coordinator

BMHA Election Services

Summer months are typically extremely busy, with many sites experiencing both nominations and election procedures. This summer has been an exception, with no input from any of the BMHA housing aides. In fact, one scheduled nominations meeting was canceled by a housing aide with no explanation at all whether nominations were held or not. There are housing sites that are overdue for elections, but nothing had been forthcoming from either the presidents of the sites nor the housing aides themselves. Since I first began writing this article, we did receive a call for a nominations meeting. We are making plans to implement the request.

The last occasion when we were out to a site was at LaSalle in July. So few residents attended that the meeting was canceled. This was the second attempt by the housing aide to garner support to establish a resident council at that site. Thank you to Nora Mikes and Marianne Poprosky for attending as leader and interpreter respectively.

Alan Dozoretz, Chair

Money in Politics Update

Evaluating Fake News

It has been less than 10 years since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, which permits unlimited campaign spending by corporations, landed like a bombshell on the campaign finance reform community. It's less than five years since the League reaffirmed its support for campaign finance reform, defined political corruption, and announced its goals to achieve reform. Yet in just the past few years it seems that political campaigning has turned completely on its head.

We have witnessed such rapid technological change and the all-consuming role of social media in forming political opinions that we find ourselves in a new and unfamiliar place. How do we respond to a world in which it is impossible to distinguish between truth and falsity, and when hyperpolarization dominates political discourse? We are not alone – citizens, journalists, media experts, lawyers and academic scholars are all weighing in.

This update includes questions posed by two political scientists we've met before during our study of Money In Politics: Cass Sunstein, Robert Walmsley University Professor at Harvard University, and Richard Hasen, Professor of Law and Political Science at University of California, Irvine.

Professor Sunstein asks at the outset: "From the standpoint of the First Amendment, does truth or falsity matter?" He reminds us that the Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that intentional falsehoods are protected by the First Amendment unless they cause serious harm. The risk to the court is "a chilling effect, that an effort to punish or deter falsehoods might also and in the process chill truth." We might ask: Will the Supreme Court be an ally or an adversary in deliberating other campaign finance legislation?

Professor Hasen shifts attention from the courts to election law to address the problems of "fake news." He asks: "What can be done consistent with the First Amendment to ensure that voters can make informed election decisions despite a flood of virally spread false and misleading speech, audio, and images? How can the United States minimize foreign disinformation campaigns aimed at American elections to sow social discord via bot armies? How can voters obtain accurate information about who is trying to influence them via social media and other new forms of technology?" And an important final question: "Will voters on the losing end of a close election trust vote totals and election results announced by election officials when voters are bombarded by conspiracy theories ... and when foreign adversaries target voting systems to undermine confidence?"

We will discuss these questions at our next committee meeting at 1 p.m. on Friday, September 20, at the League office. We look forward to having you with us.

Janet Massaro, Chair

Board and Committee Meeting Times

We are striving to have all committee meetings listed in our monthly calendar in the Voter. Some committees don't meet on a set day each month. We request that committee chairs send Nancy DeTine, Voter Copy Editor, and Nora Mikes, Webmaster, their meeting dates and times so they may be posted on the Voter Calendar and website calendar. These meetings are open to all League members and we welcome your participation.

| | Meeting Day | Time | Place | General Exceptions |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Issues/Program Committee | 1st Tuesday | 4:00 p.m. | Harlem Road | |
| Great Decisions | 1st Thursday | 10:00 a.m. | League Office | no mtg. in Jan. or Feb. |
| Board of Directors | 2nd Monday | 4:00 p.m. | League Office | no mtg. in Dec. or June |
| Local Government Committee | 2nd Wednesday | 1:30 p.m. | League Office | |
| Money in Politics | 3rd Friday | 1:00 p.m. | League Office | |
| Education Committee | 4th Thursday | 1:30 p.m. | League Office | no mtg. in July or Aug. |

Our Nuclear Times: Article 19

An Underground Tale: Chapter 6

"What kind of a place is this? There are no cookbooks!" Ms. Splinter yawned. "I'll think of something..." To start, she dropped a U-shaped nail into a huge pot of water. The water instantly boiled and sent up billowing clouds of steam. It was really a magic nail and it kept the water boiling forever.

Ms. Splinter thought of her grandma, God bless her soul, who had passed away in 1954. Every Saturday night grandma would make a hearty soup for relatives and neighbors to keep them from quarreling. Her ladles of soup became known as the "ladles for peace." She freely shared her recipe, copying it a hundred times or more by hand. Rumors claimed the recipe spread around the globe. The soup was marvelously, incomprehensibly addictive.

Ms. Splinter couldn't remember even one ingredient of her grandma's soup. So, she asked her small four-legged friends for help. A squirrel and a chipmunk collected lots of acorns; the caps made perfect tiny bowls. A mouse and a rat scurried in with little bags of grains. The raccoon, naturally, brought stolen eggs for egg-drop noodles. The opossum, porcupine, and woodchuck hauled in a heap of roots, already chopped. The beaver dragged in branches with tasty leaves. For a moment, everyone turned their backs when the usually friendly skunk entered with a contribution. Then the cotton-tailed rabbit hopped in with proper, black-and-white checkered cloth napkins. The table was set. Everyone chatted and waited.

Ms. Splinter stirred and stirred the thick soup with a large wooden spoon. She tossed in a handful of salt, dug from the deep geologic layer of an evaporated ancient sea. The soup boiled and boiled. Some alphabet noodles in the pot formed clusters, like the N, S, and C. The letter N wandered off to join an R and C, but decided to then join the D and A, only to give up its place to an S. Ms. Splinter, who was a librarian and a crossword puzzle whiz, was perplexed. When the letters jumped out of the pot, she jumped, too, then poof! Everything vanished.

NOTES

- 1) U is for uranium, 92 on the Atomic Table of Elements. Its U-235 radioisotope is used as a nuclear fuel in power reactors, in nuclear bombs, and in weapons.
- 2) In 1954, the United States Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, also known as "Atoms for Peace," to "promote the private development of atomic energy." But data about nuclear hazards was suppressed, and mathematical calculations were unsupported. Also, there were assumptions that nuclear power is only a technological issue. [Nuclear Power and Public Policy, K.S. Shrader-Frechette, 1980.]
- 3) Twenty-three mammal species were identified within a 16 kilometer (ten mile) radius of the WNYNSC in the summer of 1966. [Department of Energy report "Western New York Nuclear Service Center Study," Appendix B, 1978.]
- 4) NSC = Nuclear Service Center, today's West Valley nuclear waste site. NRC = Nuclear Regulatory Commission, a federal agency. NDA = NRC-licensed Disposal Area. SDA = (New York) State-licensed Disposal Area.

Barbara Frackiewicz

As we look forward to celebrating the 19th Amendment in August 2020, here are memorable words that Carrie Chapman Catt spoke in a speech when the amendment was ratified on August 26, 1919:
"The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guarantee of your liberty. That vote of yours has cost millions of dollars and the lives of thousands of women. Money to carry on this work has been given usually as a sacrifice, and thousands of women have gone without things they wanted and could have had in order that they might help get the vote for you. Women have suffered agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it!"



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September 2019

Tuesday, September 3, 2019, 4:00 p.m.

Issues/Program Committee

Harlem Road Community Center

Thursday, September 5, 2019 10:00 a.m. – noon

Great Decisions

League Office

Thursday, September 5, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Voters Guide Steering Committee

Panera's at Main and Union in Williamsville

Monday, September 9, 2019, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

League Office

Thursday, September 12, 2019, 11:00 a.m.

2020 Centennial Celebration Committee

League Office

Wednesday, September 11, 2019, 1:30 p.m.

Local Government Committee

League Office

Friday, September 20, 2019, 1:00 p.m.

Money in Politics Committee

League Office

Thursday, September 26, 2019, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

League Office

Thursday, September 26, 2019, 5:30 p.m.

Countdown to Election Day

Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site

Please remember to wear your League badge to all League events.