



*your*  
★ **VOTER** ★

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**LWVBN website**

[www.lwvbn.org](http://www.lwvbn.org)

**LWVNYS website**

[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)

**LWVUS website**

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

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# A Special Message for our Members and Friends

This is a stressful time for many people. COVID-19 has arrived in Western New York. There are lengthy daily updates on TV. The League office will be closed until further notice and no meetings may be scheduled at 1272 Delaware Avenue. We have canceled all events that involve League members. Volunteers for naturalization ceremonies have already been notified that there will be no ceremonies at least for the next two months.

We are especially concerned because the majority of League members are at least 60 years old. The best scenario is that few people will be directly affected in our community and we will receive adequate testing supplies to assess the threat. Keeping social distance is a very effective way to diminish the number of people who contract communicable disease. We will keep that in mind as this pandemic proceeds. Meanwhile, we will keep our members updated at [lwvbn.org](http://lwvbn.org) of any changes to this policy.

I encourage committees to meet by conference call if they have business to conduct. The April board meeting will be conducted in that manner.

*Terri Parks, President*

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### 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 Business**

We offer much appreciation to members of the Money in Politics Committee, and especially Janet Massaro, Chair, for conducting the concurrence for the LWVUS proposed Position on Voter Representation/Electoral Systems on March 9. Janet did a masterful job explaining the terminology of the electoral methods included in the position. The board has directed our delegates to the national convention to support this concurrence.

At our March meeting, the board made the difficult decision to cease printing an annual Voters Guide. The online Voters Guide at [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) provides much better information for voters as well as the opportunity to compare two candidates' qualifications and responses at the same time. There is no limit to the number of questions that can be asked for each office, but we have limited ourselves to a maximum of five. Board members felt that a better use of our funds will be to provide information to the voters we register and urge to vote. We regret that some of our members may still rely on the printed Voters Guide for information, but we felt it was time to totally support the online guide. We will, of course, contact the 350 plus locations where we distributed the printed guides with information directing them to [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org). This year, [Vote 411.org](http://Vote411.org) will be available for both the primary and general elections.

We are pleased to announce that the board selected Aaron Bartley, founder and former executive director of PUSH Buffalo, as the recipient of the 2020 Making Democracy Work Award. Aaron is most deserving of this recognition. In part, the nominating application states that "his lifelong efforts have been dedicated to social justice, influencing city residents to create quality affordable energy-efficient housing, green jobs, fair labor conditions, sustainable water management, and urban agriculture." Aaron co-founded People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo and directed it for 15 years. PUSH created the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) and Aaron served as a director there also. We look forward to recognizing his contributions to make democracy work and empower the citizens of Buffalo at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 13, at Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant.

As we all practice social distancing and keep in touch with others by phone or email, let's consider this quote from Demi Lovato, "No matter what you're going through, there's a light at the end of the tunnel and it may seem hard to get to it but you can do it and just keep working towards it and you'll find the positive side of things." Please follow the directions from our governor to keep safe and well.

*Terri Parks*

## **Great Decisions**

The April meeting of the Great Decisions discussion group has been canceled. Contact Fran Holmes at [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org) if you have any questions about this group. The Great Decisions 2020 booklet, published by the Foreign Policy Association, can be obtained from its website: [https://www.fpa.org/great\\_decisions/](https://www.fpa.org/great_decisions/).

*Fran Holmes*

## **Innovative Recycling Solutions**

The League has a history of educating the public on recycling, reusing, and reducing trash. So you may be interested to see that National Geographic magazine has dedicated its March edition to innovative solutions. To further educate ourselves on one of our League's goals, be sure to read "The End of Trash."

*Judy Metzger*

## Voter Registration Co-Coordinators for Election 2020

We are pleased to introduce you to this year's coordinators for volunteers for our voter registration efforts and appreciate their willingness to take on this important League responsibility. We are grateful for the outstanding job that Mike Egan did during the past several years. Liz McGough (716-986-4898 or [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org)) and Patti Meyer Lee (716-986-4898 or [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org)) are sharing the job this year. They will soon contact everyone who has volunteered for this effort, as well as everyone who has indicated interest on our membership survey. Please feel free to contact either of them if you want to be sure to be included in this year's volunteer corps.

*Barbara Gunderson and Terri Parks*

## How to Request an Absentee Ballot

We aren't sure whether we'll still be practicing social distancing by April 28, the date of the New York State presidential primary (and the special election to select a representative in the 27th Congressional District). It may well be prudent to request an absentee ballot, which can be mailed in, so we don't have to meet and greet each other at our early voting or polling place. (We also don't know whether the Boards of Elections will suspend early voting for this election.) Here's what you need to know to get an absentee ballot:

**In Erie County**, you can call the Erie County Board of Elections at 716-858-8891 or go to [www.elections.erie.gov](http://www.elections.erie.gov). On the website, you'll see a large red sentence about mail-in voting. Click on the sentence, and you can download an absentee ballot application form. You need to have the application postmarked by April 21, 2020, and you need to mail your ballot by April 27, 2020. You can deliver the application in person by April 27, 2020, and you can also return the ballot in person to the Erie County Board of Elections at 134 West Eagle St., Buffalo, by April 28, 2020.

**In Niagara County**, you can call the Niagara County Board of Elections at 716-438-4040 (Republican) or 716-438-4041 (Democratic), or go to [www.elections.niagara.ny.us](http://www.elections.niagara.ny.us) to request an absentee ballot application. Go to the absentee ballot box and click it, and you can download an absentee ballot application form. You need to have the application postmarked by April 21, 2020, and you need to mail your ballot by April 27, 2020. You can deliver the application in person by April 27, 2020, and you can also return the ballot in person to the Niagara County Board of Elections at 111 E. Main St., #100, Lockport, by April 28, 2020.

I was in a high school classroom recently with David Boyd of the Buffalo NAACP. He told the students, "Voting isn't just a privilege or a right; it's the civic duty of every American citizen." In this time of uncertainty about the actual health of our fellow citizens, let's proudly exercise that civic duty, even if we need to do it from home.

*Barbara Gunderson, Voter Services Chair*

## Naturalization Ceremonies

*Due to coronavirus precautions, all naturalization ceremonies have been cancelled for 60 days beginning March 14. Candidates will continue to be naturalized using an administrative process. As we learn more, we will update our volunteers. Thank you for your support in this important civic responsibility!*

On February 6, 2020, Janet Goodsell and Josette Cunningham greeted 49 new citizens at the U.S. Courthouse and registered 48 new voters. Kathleen McCarthy and Kate Wagner greeted 31 new citizens and registered 34 new voters at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site, recruiting new voters from the audience. Our results are 107% for the month of February.

There were two naturalization ceremonies at the U.S. Courthouse in March. On March 5, in conjunction with Robert Hellwitz from the Erie County Board of Elections, Cheryl Leff and Deborah Shiffner greeted 51 new citizens and registered 50 new voters, and on March 12, Deborah Shiffner greeted 52 candidates and registered 50. Our March percentage was 97%.

*Deborah Shiffner, Coordinator*

### Recap: January 30 State Budget Program

On January 30, LWVBN presented New York State's Whopping \$6.1 Billion Budget Deficit before about 40 people at Chef's Restaurant. Dr. Fred Floss, Jr., Chair of the Department of Economics and Finance at SUNY Buffalo State, led a panel which also included E.J. McMahon, Founder and Research Director of the Empire Center for Public Policy, and Ronald Deutsch, Executive Director of the Fiscal Policy Institute.

Floss showed an overview of Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed 2020-2021 operating budget and stated there are several ways to present budget data. Comparing New York's \$1.7 trillion budget with countries of the world, he noted that the state ranks 12th or 2% of the world economy. Floss included other comparisons and cost category breakouts. His PowerPoint presentation is posted on our website.

McMahon explained that the state's tax revenue is heavily supported by the richest New Yorkers, who are mostly concentrated in New York City, Long Island and Westchester County. He impressed us with his ability to grasp data and, during Q & A, recited figures from memory. The Empire Center tends toward conservative interpretations.

Deutsch generally agreed with facts presented by the other two panelists, including Medicaid budget cost overruns. He suggested the governor and state legislature consider raising taxes on persons with income levels of \$100 million per year and higher. He also recommended reducing state expenditures in such areas as economic development, which has a poor track record for job creation and retention, despite promoters' claims. The Fiscal Policy Institute tends towards progressive positions.

The governor has proposed a Medicaid redesign team. Panelists pointed out that his proposal has not been officially adopted into law, and that early suggested team members represented health care entities, including unions and facilities. The governor has proposed a new Environmental Bond Act – with a nod to Mother Nature, but with only a vague description, no details.

Check out the posted January 30, 2020, PowerPoint presentations to learn more about Governor Cuomo's proposed 2020-2021 state budget. The target date for budget adoption is April 1. The legislature weighs in as part of budget negotiations. Stay tuned to media outlets for more information. Also check websites of our think tank presenters: <http://fiscalspolicy.org/> and <https://www.empirecenter.org/>.

*Lynda Stephens*

### Welcoming New Members

We welcomed several new adult members in the last two months: Nina Lukin, Liz McGough, Sally C. Lennertz and Gail Michaels.

We also welcome the six outstanding young people who applied for Students Inside Albany this year: Sierra Luke, Colin O'Neill, Allison Marie Siegmann, Jenna Deutschman, Gerianne Rodger, and Kevin Bassler. The League is honored to include you all in our membership. We're incredibly sad to report that this year's Students Inside Albany Conference has been canceled. There is too much uncertainty about when or if schools will reopen this spring. It will be a stressful time for students and teachers.

We hope all of you will consider working with us this year on our efforts to register voters and get out the vote.

### Call to the 2020 LWWUS Convention

The convention will take place at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, D.C., from June 25 to 29. We are entitled to four delegates and currently have three people who have expressed interest. The League will pay a good part of a delegate's expenses that include the \$360 registration fee, and room rentals of \$199 per night that can be shared by two people. If you are interested in being a delegate, please contact Terri at [lwwoter@verizon.net](mailto:lwwoter@verizon.net).

## Vote411.org is Live!

The candidates for the Democratic primary for the office of president of the United States have responded to the League's request to participate. Learn what they have submitted to our online Voters Guide now. Everyone can read about the candidates at [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org). Only registered Democrats can vote in the primary.

The state League is advocating to delay the presidential primary until the June 23 primary for state and local elections.

## We Need to Count Everyone in the 2020 Census

### What is the census?

The census is a count of every person who lives in the United States and its territories. The U.S. Constitution requires this count every 10 years. Your response is a civic duty.

### Why?

Your responses inform where more than \$675 billion is distributed each year to communities nationwide for clinics, schools, roads and more. That translates to \$2,600 for each person who is living in our county at census time. The census also determines the number of representatives each state will have in the House of Representatives and is used to redraw legislative district lines.

### When?

The first invitation has been mailed to residents. You can respond online or by phone or wait until the you receive the paper questionnaire at the beginning of April. In May, the U.S. Census Bureau will begin following up in person with households that have yet to respond.

Responses to the 2020 Census are safe, secure and protected by federal law. Your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court in any way – not by the FBI, not by the CIA, not by the DHS, and not by ICE. Your responses can be used only to produce statistics.

### How?

You may call the Census Bureau at 844-330-2020 to complete the census or complete it online at <https://my2020census.gov>. It takes only a few minutes and one person from your household completes it for everyone who is living at your address on April 1, 2020.

During the 2020 census, the Census Bureau will never ask you for:

- Your Social Security number.
- Money or donations.
- Anything on behalf of a political party.
- Your bank or credit card account numbers.

If someone claiming to be from the Census Bureau contacts you via email or phone and asks you for any of these things, it's a scam, and you should not cooperate.

This information was provided to the attendees at the League's program on March 12, 2020, by Amy A. Brombos, Supervisory Partnership Specialist at the New York State Regional Census Center. Amy told us that there are still openings for census enumerators. If you or someone you know would like to earn \$20 an hour, complete the application at the website below and someone will call you.

<https://recruitment.2020census.gov/ats/careersite/createprofilelite.aspx?c=census&site=1>





LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

# Save the Date

For an interactive & engaging seminar  
Marking the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment  
enshrining women's right to vote

**Embracing the Past  
Empowering the Future**

Saturday, August 22 - 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
Daemen College  
4380 Main St., Amherst, NY

Hear from noted speakers & participate in topical workshops

Sponsored by the Western New York Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee