



your
★ VOTER ★

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President

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LWVBN website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11 times a year. Summer Voter copy is due Monday, June 14, 2021. Send copy to Terri Parks at lwvbn@lwvbn.org.

Democratic Primary for Mayor of the City of Buffalo

Candidate Forum

Date: Thursday, June 10, 2021

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Join us to hear directly from the candidates! Invited are:

Le’Candice Durham: Ms. Durham’s vision is to strengthen the relationship between the government and the people it serves. Her credentials, background and detailed platform can be viewed at <https://lecandicedurham.com>.

India Walton: Ms. Walton’s platform is centered on people and rooted in love, with the belief that equity and justice are essential. Details about her background and credentials can be viewed at <https://indiawalton.com>.

Byron Brown: Mr. Brown is running for a fifth consecutive term. His campaign website is <https://www.byronbrown.com>.

Special thanks to our partners:

Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council • Buffalo Urban League
NAACP Buffalo Branch • National Action Network
VOICE Buffalo • WNY Peace Center

Join us!

To register, email us at lwvbn@lwvbn.org.

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

How do I summarize my past ten years of League activity? It has been exhilarating, exciting, enlightening, energizing, and even exhausting at times! Many of you have heard me say that I never expected my retirement would involve political action. And now, I have a very difficult time keeping my opinions about political figures and issues to myself and cannot see myself stepping away from the work of the League. It has been an honor to serve as the League president and work with the finest women and men I know – people who dedicate much time and energy to educating us all about important issues and encouraging every citizen to vote in every election.

It would be wonderful to be able to state that the work of the suffragists has been accomplished! It will be truly accomplished only when every citizen in this country has the right, access, and ability to vote without suppression by restrictive laws such as those recently passed in Georgia and Florida. Our democracy is at risk! The forces that prevailed in the last four years remain active. We need all members to work with us as we work with the state and national Leagues to confront the current challenges.

It is crucial that the League becomes a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization through membership and collaboration. We have made great strides in that direction this past year, especially in programming, through the “Fighting for our Vote” series and in our work for getting out the vote. We must do more. As Claudia Brind-Woody, Vice President and Managing Director of Intellectual Property at IBM, notes: “Inclusivity means not just ‘we’re allowed to be there,’ but we are valued. I’ve always said: smart teams will do amazing things, but truly diverse teams will do impossible things.”

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

The group will meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, June 3, via Zoom to discuss Chapter 3 in the 2021 Great Decisions book: **Brexit: Taking stock and looking ahead**. The Foreign Policy Association, which sponsors this discussion group nationwide, says this about the topic: “With the ‘Brexit transition period’ coming to an end this year, the United Kingdom will formally leave the European Union at the start of 2021. With negotiations between the two entities continuing to stall, what does the future of Europe and the UK look like? Will the UK survive a possible Scottish vote to leave? Who will step up and take command of Europe now that Angela Merkel is out of the spotlight?” Pauline Dyson will lead the discussion.

Contact Fran Holmes at lwvbn@lwvbn.org for additional information.

Fran Holmes

Welcome New Members!

The Membership Committee is pleased to report that our League now numbers 236, including the following new members: Cynthia Havey of Buffalo, and Nancy and Joseph DiStasio of Williamsville. Welcome to our League family! A reminder that our membership renewal process will commence in June – we hope that all of you will continue your commitment to the League and all the fine and important work it does for our community.

Lori Robinson and Mary Ann Turkla, Co-Chairs

Save the Date

For an interactive & engaging seminar
Featuring Historian Sally Roesch Wagner
& esteemed panelists

**From Suffrage to the ERA
Equity, Resilience, Activism**

Saturday, October 2 – 10 a.m.-noon
Daemen College
4380 Main St., Amherst, NY
In-person & zoom access available

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

Healthcare Committee Update

Our thanks to all who responded to our email blitz by taking action to call New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and urge her to move the New York Health Act out of the Senate Healthcare Committee. Please refer to that email and continue to take action as requested.

At this writing, single payer health insurance has passed the Assembly and is still in committee in the Senate. It must get to the Senate for a vote before the Legislature adjourns in June. The bill, when passed, will provide universal, comprehensive health coverage for all New Yorkers from birth to death.

The United States remains the only country in the developed world that does not have a system of universal healthcare. With passage of the New York Health Act, our country could be on the road to changing that unhealthy condition. No one would need to fear going without health care coverage if they leave a job – especially in the middle of a pandemic. To get a copy of this bill call the Assembly Public Information Office at 518-455-4218.

Our Healthcare Committee continues to form. One organizational question is how to approach different healthcare issues. One thought is to create “point people” who want to focus on particular issues that affect health – for example, violence/trauma/early childhood, environment/climate change, drug addiction/mental health, immunization/Covid-19, etc. I am sure you could name more. My current focus is single payer healthcare and there will be others.

We welcome you to check us out at our next meeting at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, June 25, via Zoom. Send your interest and email address to lwvbn@lwvbn.org and I will send you the Zoom link.

Thank you all for participating in the important work of LWVBN!

Alberta Roman, Co-Chair

Gerontocracy and Public Policy

LWVBN has a discussion group that meets monthly via Zoom, with members suggesting articles for discussion. In April, the two recommended articles focused on the issue of gerontocracy, in particular concern about our country's elderly leadership. At 78, Joe Biden became the oldest president. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is 80, as is Majority Whip Jim Clyburn. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Chuck Grassley are 87 years old. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is 78. The list goes on. Is age an impediment to governing?

The number of Americans over 45 increased by almost 25 million since 2000, so it's not surprising that older Americans hold positions of power. Other countries have an increase in the older demographic, but they don't have those numbers in their legislative bodies. The average age of members of the House at the beginning of the 116th Congress was 57.6 years; of Senators, 62.9 years.

Eve Peyser, the 27-year-old author of the first article, blames the two-party system, which makes it easier to retain a seat than to acquire one. Young people lack the resources, connections or pipeline to run for office. Name recognition, incumbency and past accomplishments keep many of the oldsters in office for decades. The focus in our discussion was: What happens when decision-making ability is jeopardized?

The second article, by Jane Mayer, addressed the specific issues facing Senator Dianne Feinstein. Mayer described several significant examples of the onset of dementia that may be interfering with Feinstein's ability to be effective in her position as chair of the Judiciary Committee. Democrats use a seniority system for committee chairmanship. To deal with the Feinstein problem, limits have been placed on the number of chairmanships a senator can have. As a result, Feinstein relinquished that senior position. Her term of office ends in 2024.

Some older senators have indicated that they will run for another six-year term. Term limits aren't likely to solve the problem, and we would lose institutional knowledge in the process. Mandatory retirement is another alternative, but our group was stumped about identifying a specific age. One suggestion was to set a retirement age by law and review it every decade to see whether effective longevity decreases or increases. Would legislators vote for limiting their individual power, status and identity? Could the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution apply to members of Congress? This amendment says that if the president is unable to do his job, the vice president becomes the president or acting president.

How would decline in competency be monitored and enforced? Should this be required for all powerful positions, including the Supreme Court? We could then suffer an earlier loss of a justice with the credentials and perspective of a Ruth Bader Ginsburg. A younger person may emerge with those qualities. However, there is no assurance that a young person of such quality will be the successor. (The article pointed out that Representative Matt Gaetz is 37 and Senator Josh Hawley is 41.) You could leave it up to voters, but they may be unaware of the limitations of their representative and would still prefer the incumbent to the challenger. Note the instances where those who are indicted get elected.

With longevity and other changes in our society, such as the delay in wealth accumulation of young people, we need better planning for our later years. We need to yield to the younger generation and anticipate a new phase of productive, stimulating learning and sharing of knowledge. This depends on physical and financial health as well as attitude. Continuous learning and adjustment to change are a fact of life. If you would like to join us for another lively discussion, call or email Marian Deutschman for further information.

Marian Deutschman



2021 NYS Primary Election Dates and Deadlines

June 12 - 20: Early voting period

Tuesday, June 22: Election day and last day to postmark absentee ballot

Our Friends in Washington on Matters Nuclear...

In my last three years of significant involvement at the West Valley nuclear site, I have come to value two underappreciated federal institutions: The Inspectors General (IG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Early on, I discovered that the IG of the Department of Energy (DOE) had published oversight reports about many of the nuclear sites undergoing cleanup by the DOE's Office of Environmental Management. They usually emphasized the big, expensive site, Hanford in Washington State, but side comments about West Valley helped me understand the failings of government in awarding and overseeing contracts. These reports usually flew beneath the radar of news reporters (and even my savvy environmentalist colleagues). They did not contain salacious reports of personal corruption by political appointees, simply dull, everyday mismanagement. Certainly, the West Valley contractor and agencies were not going to draw our attention to such reports!

More recently, the GAO visited the West Valley site. They met with many different people and asked pointed questions. Even in my lowly position as your new representative on the Citizen Task Force (CTF), I took part in one of the Zoom meetings last summer. Of course, they met with NYSERDA, the New York State agency involved along with DOE in the work of remediating the site, learning of NYSERDA's concern about a 2019 leak of transuranic waste (TRU) from a container stored outdoors (most such waste is under cover).

The 44-page GAO report was released online in January as GAO-21-115, "NUCLEAR WASTE: Congressional Action Needed to Clarify a Disposal Option at West Valley Site in New York." It was addressed to the relevant committees of both the House and the Senate – Energy, Armed Services, and Appropriations. Besides a general updating on progress at the site, the report made a strong recommendation that Congress get off its duff and come up with a plan to store transuranic waste because without one, the cost and schedule of the cleanup are affected, in addition to safety.

The report seems to me to invite public advocacy on the same issue, so I have taken the lead in asking for the CTF to write to Congress, and am working on a first draft as my first major action there. The letter is going through a process of discussion and revision in the CTF now.

Pat Townsend

In Memorium

We are deeply saddened at the passing of John Segman, who was a League member for many years and attended countless League events. Dr. Segman, who died on May 6, 2021, had a private practice as a clinical psychologist and was Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Daemen College. His wife, Arlene Miles, is an active member of our League. Memorials may be made in his memory to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

June & July 2021

Note: Due to social distancing and stay-at-home practices, meetings are subject to change and may take place via phone or computer. Please contact the committee chair for the latest information.

Tuesday, June 1, 4:00 p.m.

Program, Issues & Events Committee

via Zoom

Thursday, June 3, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions

via Zoom

Saturday, June 5, 10:00 a.m.

Annual Meeting

at Ilio DiPaolo's

Wednesday, June 9, 4:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee

via Zoom

Thursday, June 10, 6:30 p.m.

Candidate Forum

via Zoom

Tuesday, June 15, 7:00 p.m.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

via Zoom

Thursday, June 17, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

TBA

Friday, June 18, 1:00 p.m.

Money in Politics Committee

via Zoom

Monday, June 21, 7:00 p.m.

GOTV Committee

via teleconference

Friday, June 25, 2:30 p.m.

Healthcare Committee

via Zoom

Wednesday June 30, 7:00 p.m.

League Discussion Group

via Zoom

Thursday, July 1 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions

via Zoom

Tuesday, July 6, 4:00 p.m.

Program, Issues & Events Committee

via Zoom

Monday, July 12, 4:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

via Zoom

Wednesday, July 14, 4:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee

via Zoom