



your
★ **VOTER** ★

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Summer 2021

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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. Send copy by the second Monday of the month to Terri Parks at lwvbn@lwvbn.org.

LWVBN Summer Potluck Picnic

Date: Wednesday, July 21, 2021, rain or shine
Time: 10:30 a.m farm tour with potluck picnic to follow at noon
Place: Providence Farm Collective
5701 Burton Road, Orchard Park, 14127
Park along the road or in parking lot beside the barn.



PROVIDENCE
FARM COLLECTIVE

A tour of the Providence Farm Collective will begin in the tent beside the barn. Learn about the the history of the organization and see the various plots on the farm.

They do have limited golf cart transportation for those unable to walk the terrain.

Please bring a dish for the potluck lunch at noon to share with members and friends. Food that will be affected by the heat should be brought in a cooler. Please note that there are no pork products permitted on the site.

Wear a facemask if you have not been vaccinated. The only restrooms are porta-johns. If you are running late or need to cancel, please call Kristin (716-913-7423) to let her know.

You may want to carpool.

RSVP: Please make a reservation at lwvbn.org or by calling the League office at 716-896-4898.

Join us!

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.

Letter from Our New President

Hello Everyone,

I am honored and humbled to be the new president of our Buffalo/ Niagara League.

First and foremost I want to thank Terri Parks for her excellent example of service to the League; it has been educational and exciting to work under her skilled leadership.

It is an interesting time to be involved in the League's work "to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influence public policy through education and advocacy." Our work is needed now at this pivotal time. I am looking forward to getting to know each of you and working together to ensure the continuation of our democracy.



Gladys Gifford

Judy Weidemann receives the LEE Award from Lori Robinson and Lee Tetkowski.

At our Annual Meeting on June 5, we honored two of our dedicated and steadfast members. Judy Weidemann was presented the LEE Award, created to honor Long-term commitment with Energy and Excellence. Our amazing Lee Tetkowski was there to present the award. The Joan K. Bozer Award was presented to Terri Parks by the remarkable Joan Bozer, herself. All of these inspirational women are testament to the work they have done for our democracy and a model for my activism. Thank you!

I am delighted to announce that at the New York State League Convention held June 7 through June 12 via Zoom, we received a GOTV Award of \$500 from the state League! The criteria used to evaluate the applications for the GOTV award was that local leagues were creative in reaching new populations, used new methods to reach voters, collaborated with other community organizations and developed ways to collect data to evaluate the impact of their efforts. A big "High Five" to Barbara Gunderson, Liz Zausmer and their team

for their hard work. Thank you all!

I am proud to be working with the following on the 2021-2022 LWVBN Board of Directors: Marion Deutschman, Susan Dombrowski, Shirley Joy, Liz Zausmer, Rebecca LaCivita, Alberta Roman, Mary Ann Turkla, Barbara Gunderson, Susan Czynny and Jennifer Hoffman. Thank you for your service to the League. Our first board meeting for the year will be July 12.

I hope to see many of you at the Summer Picnic on July 21 at the Providence Farm Collective.

In League, Lori Robinson

Memorial for Dorothy Westhafer

On July 31, 2021, there will be a memorial for League Life Member, Dorothy Westhafer, at the Keenan Center, 433 Locust Street, Lockport, NY, 14094 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Dorothy was an active member of the Lockport League before she moved to Grand Island and became active in our League. She was also a co-founder of the Keenan Center Arts Council. She died this past February 11.

Please contact Terri Parks if you'd like to car pool to this memorial.

League Joins Buffalo Outer Harbor Lawsuit

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara has joined with the 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor and the Western New York Environmental Alliance in a petition versus the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) and the City of Buffalo related to plans for development on the Outer Harbor. This was reported in the Buffalo News on July 24, 2021. The lawsuit notes that ECHDC hasn't followed New York State environmental laws by failing to conduct an in-depth environmental review. In addition, the City of Buffalo Common Council issued a special use permit that we contend violated the city's green code and its Waterfront Revitalization Program. Our organizations are members of the Our Outer Harbor Coalition that has been actively promoting that that the area should become a state park.

The League bases its support for the lawsuit on its positions related to the waterfront use as we have done for many years that state in part:

Support of plans for the waterfronts of Erie County (along Lake Erie and the Niagara and the Buffalo Rivers) that provide and ensure

- Year-round public access to the waterfront;
- Only such commercial development as makes appropriate use of a waterfront location;
- Development of services and facilities necessary for a variety of recreational activities; and
- Protection and enhancement of the natural environment at the water's edge.

We strongly support the use of the Outer Harbor as public parkland, where everyone may peacefully enjoy the flora, fauna, and waters of Lake Erie. Local residents who responded to ECHDC requests for comments overwhelmingly agreed, yet the agency now plans to overhaul Terminal B as an amphitheater for 8000 people and permit between 2000 and 4000 vehicles to park. We encourage our members to write letters to the Buffalo News such as Gladys Gifford, Lynda Stephens, and more recently Janet Goodsell have done.

In a statement for the League to the Common Council on June 1, 2021, Gladys Gifford said, "Terminal B plans require complete overhaul . . . Introducing large number of autos to the area for public events brings gridlock and congestion, not to mention the upkeep, trash collection and policing . . . Surely the building at Terminal B can be repurposed to attract groups of manageable size whose creative activities build on the natural features of the Outer Harbor—perhaps an urban version of Artpark? This could be civic investment that celebrates neighborhoods and promotes cross-cultural understanding for the region."

In earlier comments to ECHDC, Gladys Gifford said, "The lack of a proper Environmental Review and resultant plan will irreparably damage the critical habitats already present at Buffalo's Outer Harbor, jeopardize future ecological improvements, as well as lead to privatization of these public shore lands."

Please check the links on our website, www.lwvbn.org for more information about this effort.

Terri Parks

Great Decisions: *The Korean Peninsula* by Scott Snyder

The Korean Peninsula is facing a defining era. Attempts by South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump to repair the rift between North and South have lost any momentum as Pyongyang continues to test long-range missiles for its nuclear weapons program. As the rift between the U.S. and China grows further, South Korea may end up in the middle of the two superpowers. What does the future hold for the U.S. relationship with the ROK?

The Great Decisions discussion group meets the first Thursday of every month from March through November at 10:00 a.m. We are currently meeting via Zoom. Contact Fran Holmes for more information.

Fran Holmes

Membership News - Time to Renew

The Membership Committee is pleased to report our membership now includes the following new members: Quinn Decicco of Amherst and Karen Moronski of Buffalo. Welcome to our League family!

A reminder: our membership renewal process has begun. Be sure to send in your renewal form, a check made out to LWVBN and the survey at your earliest convenience. If so inclined, you may choose to become a Carrie C. Catt member for an additional \$10 or a Susan B. Anthony member for an additional \$25. We hope all of you will continue your commitment to the League and all the fine and important work it does for our community.

Mary Ann Turkla, Membership Chair

Democracy in the United States is at Risk

The LWVBN Discussion Group met on June 30 via Zoom. One of the articles we read said that President Biden was seen carrying around the book by Steven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblatt titled *How Democracies Die*. I read it more than a year ago. It's worth the read for many reasons. The authors say that democracies erode slowly in barely visible steps. There are four behavioral signs of that erosion highlighted by the authors: When a politician 1-Rejects the democratic rules of the game, 2-Denies the legitimacy of opponents, 3-Tolerates or encourages violence, 4-Indicates a willingness to curtail the civil liberties of opponents, including the media. Members of our group felt that our democracy is on the brink!

The article we read by Susan Glasser, "American Democracy Isn't Dead Yet but It's Getting There", cites the voter suppression bills, Senator McConnell's focus on blocking 100% of the Biden agenda, the significant number of those who are still enthralled with Trumpism, and the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. We don't believe that we are seeing signs of a healthy democracy ready to combat autocratic tyrants. Levitsky & Ziblatt envisioned continued polarization, flouting of political norms, and an increase of institutional warfare.

Thirty percent of Republicans say the U.S. is so off-track that patriots may have to resort to violence. Our social networks incite emotions as Biden is attempting to de-escalate by trying to take anger, animosity, heat and rage out of American politics. This infuriates some Democrats who want a stronger pushback.

The second article by Steve Phillips, "Party of White Grievance Has Never Cared About Democracy", claims that whichever party is rooted in fears, anxieties and resentment doesn't care about preserving democracy. Republicans appear to be standard bearers of the modern day Confederate cause. The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments didn't convince those who see us as a white nation. The author states that 82 percent of Republican voters are white. How do we repel efforts to destroy democratic institutions? Seeking compromise hasn't worked. We need the full force of the federal government on the side of equality, justice and democracy for all races. Congress must act or voting rights will slip away. We need passage of the For the People Act to protect our democratic process. Ending the filibuster may be worth the risk. National committees that are dependent on corporate dollars control parties. Wealth disparities are a real threat to democracy.

Our group lamented that there is no unified vision. We fear more domestic violence and terrorism. The country is so divided that we're likely to choose to do the wrong thing. Trumpers address grievances that have crowd appeal. Interest in Trump's old message may be declining but his supporters have to be reckoned with. Except for 2020, voter turnout is abysmal. We have a great need for education in media literacy, critical thinking and civics to have a highly engaged public. Some countries, such as Australia, have penalties for not voting. If you do not vote at a state or local government election and you don't have a valid reason, you will be fined \$55. Some of our states purge people from the rolls solely because they have skipped voting in several consecutive elections and they have not responded to a letter asking them to confirm where they live.

Our next meeting is on July 27 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Please send articles worthy of a good review and then join us for the discussion.

Marian Deutschman



From Suffrage to the ERA Equity, Resilience, Activism

The Western New York Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee will present an engaging and transformative seminar featuring noted historian Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner and esteemed panelists who will examine the past, present and future of the women's movement. The two-hour event on Saturday, October 2 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 at Daemen College will pay homage to the suffragists who fought for the 19th amendment which gave women the right to vote, address the current impact of the pandemic on women that created a she-cession, and focus on the future as women fight for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in order to enshrine equity once and for all in the Constitution.

As the keynote speaker, Dr. Wagner will share her research spanning two centuries on race, class and gender. Four panelists will break down specific issues that have impeded women from a fair playing field – economic inequality, violence against women, women's health and reproductive justice, and women's underrepresentation in government. The panelists include Karen King, Erie County Commissioner of Public Policy; Ava Thomas, Operations Manager at the Family Justice Center; Shanaz Butt, Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Sciences in Philadelphia; and Diana Cihak, founder of WomenElect Program and WEPac. Join us for this important conversation as we explore Equity with Resilience and Activism. Virtual participation will be available.

The League of Women Voters is a proud partner of the Western New York's Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee.

Virtual Workshops to Learn More About the West Valley Nuclear Site

The West Valley Action Network is preparing a series of workshops on the nuclear site south of Buffalo that will air in the months leading up to the demolition of the Main Process Plant Building. Geologist and environmental scientist Dr. Ray Vaughn of Hamburg presented on the early history of the site in June.

The July workshop topic is "Protections Needed for WNY during the Demolition of the Most Radioactive Building." Presenters are Charley Bowman of the Western New York Peace Center and Diane D'Arrigo, of Nuclear Information and Research Service. It is scheduled for Tuesday, July 27, from 6:00 to 7:30 PM.

The August 24 presentation, also at 6:00 PM, will be a panel moderated by League of Women Voters Buffalo-Niagara member Pat Townsend. She will interview long-time grassroots activists at the site about how activism made us safer in the past and why a new generation of informed activists is needed for the upcoming challenges of cleanup and decommissioning.

Each presentation will be followed by a suggestion from the West Valley Action Network for how you can advocate for responsible demolition practices.

The virtual workshops, free to the public, are hosted by the Partnership for the Public Good. Visit their website under "Upcoming Events" for further information and the links to attend: <https://ppgbuffalo.org>

They will be recorded and available on the website of the Western New York Environmental Alliance for later viewing: www.wnyea.org

Pat Townsend

Candidate Questions Needed For Vote411.Org for November 2 Election

The June primary election is over and we're moving toward the November 2, 2021, general election. We request your input for questions for candidates to answer so their information can be posted on Vote411.org.

There were candidates in the June primary elections for Erie County Sheriff and Buffalo City Mayor, so we have already developed questions for the candidates for these offices who will be running in the November election. We are soliciting questions for:

- Erie County Comptroller
- Erie County Legislators - the same questions for all districts
- Niagara County Legislators - the same questions for all districts.

Questions need to be able to be addressed by all candidates for the same office. Please consider what you would want to ask the candidates, look up their job responsibilities on their respective county websites, and submit your questions to lwvbn@lwvbn.org by August 5, 2021.

Thank you for your input and support of Vote411.org, one of the only places in New York where voters can compare candidate statements side-by-side.

Barbara Gunderson, Voter Services Chair



PROVIDENCE

FARM COLLECTIVE

Foundations, donors, businesses and Western New York neighbors have enabled Providence Farm Collective change-makers to cultivate farmer-led and community-rooted agriculture and food systems that empower just and equitable access to food and farmland. There are stories from change-makers from Somalia, Liberia, and the Congo who are growing thousands of pounds of produce for their families and food insecure neighbors.

The resident chef, Shariff Abdi, from Somalia tries to cook a midday meal for the farmers Thursday through Sunday. If you would like to contribute to the meals, here are the items Shariff has on his wish list: coconut milk, dried pinto beans, dried black-eyed peas, canned San Marzano tomatoes, basmati rice, orzo, olive oil, canola oil. Wegmans or Tops gift cards, or paper plates, napkins, and cups are also appreciated.



Photograph courtesy of John Fiege: Farmers from Congolese Babondo Buffalo in July 2020.

New Programming Focus Will Cover Countering Mis- and Disinformation, Increasing Election Participation, Advancing Voter Access, and Reforming Redistricting

*Press Release from the League of Women Voters of the United States
July 7, 2021*

Washington – Today the League of Women Voters is launching ‘Women Power Democracy,’ a new programmatic focus of the organization that will advance a stronger, more representative American democracy.

“The attacks we have seen on voting rights since the last election constitute a threat to our republic like we haven’t seen in decades, which is why we are doubling down on our commitment to democracy,” said Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the United States. “Women Power Democracy’s four-pronged approach will build more trust in our elections, grow our electorate, establish fair voter access, and ensure community districting truly reflects our population.”

The following are the four programs under ‘Women Power Democracy’:

- **Democracy Truth Project:** Countering mis- and disinformation in our government and advancing better public understanding of the democratic and electoral process.
- **Expand the Franchise:** Increasing voter participation through our VOTE411.org platform and voter registration, education, and mobilization programs, with a focus on underrepresented populations and low-propensity voters.
- **Democracy Defense Fund:** Protecting voting rights and advancing a more equitable democracy through advocacy and voter protection efforts.
- **People Powered Fair Maps™:** Leading with advocacy, public education, and organizing to create fair, transparent, people-powered electoral map-drawing processes, and eliminate partisan and racial gerrymandering during 2021 redistricting.

“Because our network is so deeply rooted in our communities and represents voters in every corner of our country, Leagues of Women Voters are the optimal community resources to provide the public with the trusted information they need,” said Dr. Deborah Turner, board president of the League of Women Voters of the United States. “For more than a century, women and the League have been on the front lines of democracy, and today’s commitment is the next step in fulfilling our mission to empower voters and defend democracy.”

Women Power Democracy builds upon the success the League of Women Voters saw in the 2020 election. In the months ahead, this work will take shape through League activations, trainings, and workshops to support the public and position the League as a continued leader in these areas ahead of the midterm elections in 2022.

League Members, If you haven’t done so, you should log on to www.lwv.org and sign up to receive email and action alerts. The only way to take action with the LWVUS is to make a request on the national website. Legislators count the number of responses they receive for and against the current issues that are being discussed in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to help them decide how to vote. It’s an important way to support the work of the League.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Summer 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.

Wednesday, July 21, 10:30 a.m.

LWVBN Potluck Picnic

Providence Farm Collective

Friday, July 23, 11:00 a.m.

Healthcare Committee

via Zoom

Tuesday, July 27, 7:00 p.m.

League Discussion Group

via Zoom

Thursday, July 29, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

via Zoom

Tuesday, August 3, 4:00 p.m.

Program, Issues & Events Committee

via Zoom

Thursday, August 5, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions

via Zoom

Monday August 9, 4:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

via Zoom

Wednesday, August 11, 2:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee

via Zoom

Monday, August 16, 7:00 p.m.

GOTV Committee

via Zoom

Tuesday, August 17, 8:00 p.m.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

via Zoom

Thursday, August 19, 11:00 a.m.

Centennial Celebration Committee

via Zoom

Friday, August 20, 1:00 p.m.

Money in Politics Committee

League Office

Thursday, August 26, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

via Zoom

Friday, August 27, 11:00 a.m.

Healthcare Committee

via Zoom

Tuesday, August 31, 7:00 p.m.

League Discussion Group

via Zoom