



Terri Parks
President
events@lwvbn.org

Judy Huber
Membership Chair
events@lwvbn.org

Office:
1272 Delaware Ave
Buffalo, NY 14209
884-3550
Fax: 882-3797
lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Office Manager:
Eugene Abrahamson

Office Hours:
Monday – Friday
9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Always call before going to the office.

LWVBN Home Page
www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS Home Page
www.lwvny.org

LWVUS Home Page
www.lwv.org

Kathleen McCormick
Voter Editor
events@lwvbn.org

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National Education Study Consensus Meetings on Common Core Standards & Assessments

Wednesday, October 19

**10 a.m. at the League Office
1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo
Discussion Leader: Phyllis Goldstein**

**7:00 p.m. at Harlem Community Center
4255 Harlem Road, Amherst
Discussion Leader: Joan Mondul**

Our consensus process for the LWVUS study of the federal government’s role in public education begins this month with a focus on Common Core Standards and Assessment. Members have two opportunities to participate, one in the morning and one in the evening. Turn to page 4 for more information.

Our consensus process continues on November 16 when the topic is Funding & Equity. Mark your calendar now!

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.

CONTENTS

President’s Message	2	Membership News	7
Great Decisions	2	Unit News	7
LWVBN News and Notes	3	Voter Services	7
Education Study Consensus	4	Calendar	8
Education Study Material	5		

President's Message

Therese Warden has earned our deep appreciation for her thorough and skilled work, first in leading the effort for the League's Reentry Studies and recently in preparing the affidavit that clearly shows the well-founded fear that disclosure of documents to Erie County would have a chilling effect on organizations' first amendment rights in the response to the subpoena served on several organizations by the County of Erie. The League is most grateful for Therese's work and the support and advice of our Lead Local Attorney, Michael Kuzma, and of Corey Stroughton, the lead ACLU attorney, in this most important work to ensure that "the organization remains true to its basic purpose: to make democracy work for all citizens." I encourage you to read the related documents and recent news articles linked to the home page of our web site in the Current Issues Section. Click on the Reentry Studies link at: <http://www.lwvbn.org/>. I'm sure you'll appreciate just how important this effort has been for the League when you do. More information will be added to the web site related to the ongoing efforts of the Reentry committee.

This edition of the Voter includes the last contribution from the Clarence Unit. Allene Falk, the long time coordinator of that unit, and most of its remaining active members will conclude their many years of efforts on behalf of the voters in Clarence this fall. Those of us who know Allene know that she has been a dedicated and able contributor to our League in many ways through the years. Her service includes editing the Voter Guide and leading our efforts for Public Relations and Communications for many years. We wish Allene a happy "retirement" and extend a sincere and heartfelt "Thank you" for her many contributions to the Clarence Unit and the entire Buffalo/Niagara League organization.

We extend our appreciation to all the active members in the Clarence Unit, without whom there couldn't have been candidate forums, Clarence Town Board monitoring and Lunch & Learn programs through the years. We surely hope that you all will continue to join us for programs and find other League activities that match your interests and talents.

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara is a participant in a LWVUS initiative for membership growth and leadership development that is a successful partnership between the local, state and national Leagues. It combines outreach strategies, focuses on a target demographic and includes a coaching component for the Leagues who participate. Lyle Toohey, Judy Huber and I meet by conference call each month with our coach, who in turn meets with the other coaches in New York State monthly. The ongoing coaching is one key to success. Participating Leagues have experienced membership growth; they have increased their visibility, improved relationships with the media and other community organizations, and implemented strategic plans for organizational growth. We're just beginning our efforts, but can see that the well designed materials and support will enable our League to grow its members and also develop new leaders to ensure that we thrive in the years to come. We may tap you to help us by being a Membership Ambassador at a League event or to help us extend our reach to folks who will appreciate our fine programs. We need to remember that every program event is an opportunity to reach out to other organizations and people, who appreciate the messages they hear and choose to respond to our request to join with a firm "Yes!"

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

What do you know about the Caucasus? Be prepared to learn as you read our seventh 2011 Great Decisions topic and participate in the discussion led by Judy Huber on Thursday, October 6 from 10 a.m. – noon at 1272 Delaware. "The countries and regions of the Caucasus all have long lived in the shadow of their larger neighbors, Russia, Iran and Turkey. How does this influence the Caucasus of today? How do the region's energy resources play into its relations with the outside world?" Great Decisions announced their 2012 topics. They are: Middle East Realignment, Promoting Democracy, Mexico, Cybersecurity, Exit from Afghanistan and Iraq, State of the Oceans, Indonesia, Energy Geopolitics. Do they interest you? Think about it.

Bernice Baeumler

LWVBN News and Notes

League Office Hours

The League Office at 1272 Delaware Avenue will be open daily from 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Jacquelynn Skinner, our office assistant, will be in the office Monday through Thursday. Eugene Abrahamson will be in the office Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. As always, before you visit the office, please call (884-3550) to make sure that someone will be there.

Urban Farm Tour

The Natural Resources Committee invites League members and friends to tour the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) on Saturday, October 22 at 10:30 a.m. MAP is located on 389 Massachusetts Avenue in Buffalo. It has been recognized as one of the five most outstanding projects to address the food problem in the United States. The tour will take about one hour. The cost of the tour is \$2.00 per person. Please contact Judy Weidemann (events@lwbvn.org) to reserve your space.

SAVE THE DATE

Make November 3, 2011 a special day for shopping at Ten Thousand Villages on Main Street in Williamsville. LWVBN will benefit with a percentage of all sales that day, so plan to bring your friends. The hours are from 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. We'll have a special League display and a 7:00 p.m. presentation about our League program and activities.

League of Women Voters Membership-Leadership Development Initiative

Lyle Toohey and Terri Parks represented our local League at training for the first set of New York leagues to participate in this new initiative. This new leadership program was established by the LWVUS to help enrich the democracy-building efforts of the League and will be implemented by Leagues in all fifty states with the support of a volunteer national coaching team and a cadre of state coaches.

During the two-day training held in Albany in July, the participants attended “best practices” workshops conducted by national trainers from Washington DC. Skills practiced included techniques for empowering citizens to have a voice in their communities, for heightening League visibility and for developing the skills of rising League leaders.

Commenting on the national program, Terri Parks said, “In this time of increased political incivility and growing polarization, the League of Women Voters is needed more than ever. A strong League in every community is the best way to ensure that we have an American citizenry that is informed on the issues, ready and able to cast a ballot, and to ensure that every vote is counted.”

What Does it Mean to be a Public Servant?

David Swarts, former Social Studies teacher, Erie County Clerk and New York State Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, and present CEO of the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, addressed League members and guests on September 20th at our fall Kick-Off. David defined service as “being useful to your fellow man or woman” and said, “If an action supports the public good or meets a public need it is public service.”

While public servants are paid for their service, we in the United States also have a strong commitment to volunteerism. David reported that one third of all Americans are involved in volunteer efforts, which includes our work as League members. We have chosen a cause that is greater than ourselves in using our time and talents in service to safeguard democracy and work for civic improvement.

David's address was both informative and entertaining. He drew on his varied experience for examples in his talk to a most appreciative audience. As usual, League members had pertinent and probing questions for the speaker following his talk.

Terri Parks

The League of Women Voters:

Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Work with the LWV to help shape the issues that keep our community fair, vibrant and strong.

Education Study Consensus

We see the school buses every morning, and we wonder how the drastic cuts we read about may hurt youngsters. Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) lingers on a back burner in Congress, so Arne Duncan has offered waivers to prevent automatic condemnation of more and more schools as failing under the No Child Left Behind Act. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? How timely our study and consensus are!

Scope of the Education Study

The scope of the study, as adopted by the LWVUS Board, states:

The Education Study scope is broad and includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (preK through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues which are addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the common core standards/assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are national, not federal. The culminating position will address only those issues delineated in the scope.

What is Consensus?

Newer members of the League often wonder what “consensus” is. It is easier to say what consensus is not. Consensus is not a vote; rather, consensus is mutual agreement of League members arrived at through discussion. During discussion, everyone has an opportunity to express their viewpoints, and the issue is examined from all sides. Consensus questions, created by the appropriate LWVUS study committee and approved by the LWVUS Board, provide structure for the meeting. Members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes apparent that consensus has or has not been reached on each question. The LWVUS study committee analyzes the consensus responses and, using this information, creates a position statement.

When the LWVUS Board of Directors approves the position for “the role of the federal government in public education,” it immediately becomes the League’s position and is the basis for action on the issue. This type of member involvement in the consensus process tends to ensure member commitment to the resulting positions. In addition, members have the opportunity at each Convention to decide whether or not to re-adopt these positions or update them.

Consensus Meetings

We need two sets of general meetings to thoroughly discuss and take consensus on all the LWVUS consensus questions. It is very important for members to plan to attend BOTH an October meeting and a November meeting.

Wednesday, October 19
COMMON CORE STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS
10:00 a.m. at League Office
7:00 p.m. at Harlem Road Community Center

Wednesday, November 16
EQUITY & FUNDING
10:00 a.m. at League Office
7:00 p.m. at Harlem Road Community Center

Study Resources

These study papers from the LWVUS and recommended books are available at the LWVBN web site ([Education Study Materials](#)):

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

Please reread the Education articles in the Summer and September issues of the VOTER. Back issues of the VOTER are available on our League web site ([VOTER Archives](#)).

Lee Tetkowski, Education Chair

RECENT MILESTONES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

From the very beginning of our Republic, a well-educated citizenry was thought to be essential to protect liberty and the general welfare of the people. Here are some recent milestones in public education.

President Reagan 1981-1989

New National Commission on Excellence in Education focuses on including computers.

Supreme Court reaffirms ban on prayer in public schools.

Supreme Court rules that TITLE IX bars sex discrimination in educational programs.

Report places nation "At Risk", USA falling behind in educational achievement."

Magnet Schools: The New Hope for Voluntary Desegregation.

Major study finds high quality preschool pays off for the disadvantaged.

Secretary of Education William Bennett promotes vouchers for disadvantaged students.

Public schools must educate all children with disabilities.

President George H. W. Bush 1989-1993

"Indian Education Bill of Rights"

President Bush and Governors agree to establish national performance goals.

President Bush and Governors unveil plan for national assessment system to measure progress toward goals for 2000.

Advisory committee on Hispanic education.

First state-level assessment finds wide variations.

Plan for national standards in history by 1994. Becomes very contentious.

President Clinton 1993-2001

Study highlights unmet needs of immigrant students.

"Goals 2000" signed to raise expectations.

Reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act for five more years.

National Certification earned by 81 middle school teachers from 23 states.

Report on juvenile crime brings calls for new policies.

School Districts scurry to establish academic standards and assessments to measure progress of TITLE 1 students under reauthorized ESEA.

Federal government concerned about K-12 learning gap.

President Clinton wants to turn NAEP into a lever, giving states financial incentives to close gap.

"Teach for America" begins.

President G. W. Bush 2001-2009

Reauthorization of ESEA as NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND to hold states accountable for student performance based on annual assessments.

Supreme Court upholds vouchers for religious schools.

"Value-added" gains popularity.

Reauthorized IDEA for special education.

President Obama 2007-

Reauthorization of ESEA as "Race to the Top", grants awarded to states with innovative ideas that accepted the Common Core Standards.

Federal aid to states to be cut.

Philanthropies nationwide are getting involved in federal policy.

Ten-year study by panel of scientists finds that high-stakes testing have largely failed to improve student achievement.

Some Terminology for the Education Study

Assessments (Formative vs. Summative):

Summative Assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know in order to make a decision or determine a grade. Many associate summative assessments only with standardized tests such as state assessments, but they are also used as an important part of district and classroom programs.

Formative Assessments are part of the instructional process. When incorporated into classroom practice, they provide the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. In this sense, formative assessments inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame.

Common Core Standards (CCS):

The Common Core Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. The initiative is sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). As such, the initiative is a national one and neither developed nor funded by the federal government.

Content Standards:

Content standards establish the goals of learning whereas curriculum is the “how” to implement the standards or goals with specific materials and instruction to correspond to the standards. The Common Core Standards initiative is a U.S. education initiative that seeks to bring diverse state curricula into alignment with each other by following the principles of standards-based education reform. The initiative, sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), was announced on June 1, 2009. The initiative’s stated purpose is to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them.

Performance Standards:

Performance standards determine how much of the content standards a student must know in order to reach a particular level, such as “proficient.”

Common Acronyms/Abbreviations

ACT: American College Test	IEP: Individualized Education Program
AERA: American Educational Research Association	K-12: Kindergarten through Grade 12
APA: American Psychological Association	LEA: Local Education Agency
AYP: Adequate Yearly Progress	LRE: Least Restrictive Environment
BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs	NAEP: National Assessment of Education Progress
BIE: Bureau of Indian Education	NCES: National Center for Education Statistics
CCR: College and Career Readiness	NCLB: No Child Left Behind
CCSI: Common Core Standards Initiative	NCME: National Council on Measurement in Education
CCSSO: Council of Chief State School Officers	NGA: National Governor’s Association
CSSRS: Center for Study of Small Rural Schools	OME: Office of Migratory Education
ELA: English Language Arts	PARCC: Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers
ELL: English Language Learners	RTTT: Race to the Top
ESEA: Elementary and Secondary Education Act	SBAC: SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium
FAPE: Free and Appropriate Education	SEA: State Education Agencies
HUD: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	U.S.C: United States Code
IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997	USDE: United States Department of Education
IDEIA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004	

Membership News

Renewals are coming in nicely, BUT the membership year began July 1. If you haven't mailed your renewal, please kindly do so now.

It was good to see so many familiar faces at our kickoff event on September 20th. Our League is participating in the National League's Study of the Federal Government's Role in Education. We hope you will attend meetings in October and November to help our League reach consensus on this important topic. Two October meetings will address consensus questions about common core standards and assessment. Consensus questions about funding and equity will be addressed at two November meetings. Please plan to attend one of the meetings each month.

We welcome Marlene Katzel of Buffalo who rejoined the League this past month.

Judy Huber, Membership Chair

Unit News

Amherst Unit

On Friday, November 18, Gail Radford, a League member, will present "*PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: Where They Come From and What They Mean for Us Today.*" Gail is an author on the subject. We are honored that the Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant, 6999 Maple Road, Amherst, will again open just for the League on Lunch and Issues days. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. The cost remains \$15.00 all inclusive, payable to LWVBN. Contact Sally Metzger or Judy Metzger (events@lwvbn.org) for reservations. As always, this program and luncheon are open to the public. We look forward to seeing all interested League members and friends!

Judy Metzger, Amherst Unit Coordinator

Clarence Unit

The Clarence Unit (with the help of previous members and other friends) will deliver Election Guides around Clarence and Newstead, hold a Candidates Forum on October 24th for a contentious local election and then cease to function as an independent Unit. Plans to move out of the area, declining health and energy, and shifting priorities have reduced our membership to a remnant of the past. It's been great fun, and we have built solid, supportive friendships and accomplished good things by working together over many years. Remaining members will continue to be active in LWVBN.

Allene Falk, Clarence Unit Coordinator

Voter Services

Naturalization

Thanks to members who participated in naturalization services: Ramona Gallagher and Dorothy Tao on September 14, Kathleen McCarthy and Janet Goodsell on September 22.

Candidates' Forums

On September 8, Lockport radio station WLVL hosted a mayoral candidates forum. Kathleen McCormick moderated. Several forums are scheduled for October:

Thursday, October 20 at 9:00 a.m., Amherst Senior Center, Ramona Gallaher moderator

Monday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m., Clarence Town Hall, Laura McDade moderator

Tuesday, October 25 at 7:00 p.m., East Aurora Senior Center, Laura McDade moderator

Wednesday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m., Union Street School, Hamburg

Erie County Executive Debate at WNE D

The debate will be on Friday, October 13. According Laura McDade, the point person for the League, talks between the candidates and WNE D are still ongoing. Detailed information about the debate will be sent by e-mail to League members when it becomes available.

Joyce Bol, Voter Services Chair



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OCTOBER 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3 Board Meeting 4:30 p.m.	4	5	6 Great Decisions 10:00 a.m.	7	8
9	10	11	12 Transport & Waterfront 10:00 a.m.	13 Natural Resources 9:30 a.m.	14	15
16	17	18	19 Consensus Mtg. 10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	20 Education 1:30 p.m.	21	22 MAP Farm Tour 10:30 a.m.
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	November 1 Issues 4:30 p.m.				

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