



VOTER

Volume 18, Number 11

September 2013

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The **VOTER** is published 10 times per year. Items for the October issue are due Friday, September 6

League of Women Voters Buffalo/Niagara and
American Association of University Women
Present

DEMOCRACY AT RISK

THEME:

“Widespread poverty and concentrated wealth cannot long endure side by side in a democracy.” Thomas Jefferson

Thursday, September 19, 2013
6:00 – 8:00 PM

Burchfield-Penney Art Center Auditorium
1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Panelists:

Lauren Breen, Associate Clinical Professor,
Consumer Financial Advocacy Clinic, University at Buffalo Law School
Ronald Deutsch, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness
Sam Magavern, Co-Director, Partnership for the Public Good (PPG)
Dr. Anthony Neal, Associate Professor Political Science,
SUNY Buffalo State College
Dr. Ted P. Schmidt, Professor Economics and Finance,
SUNY Buffalo State College

This program is free of charge and open to the public. No RSVP required.

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.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT AND BOARD ACTIONS

What results from a room filled with 23 intelligent, independent, insightful women and men? One thing is much conversation, in fact so much that even such obvious signals as turning the lights off and on needed several repetitions before folks could hear directions for a next step in the late afternoon League Planning Retreat on August 12. This group of League leaders met to begin setting some long range planning for our local League and to provide opportunity for program committee members, nominating committee members and the board to work together in that effort. It was a lively and productive session.

We began with key remarks from Lyle Toohey about how the League works, the linkages between the local, state and national arms of our organization and why it's important that we "Speak with One Voice" as we pursue efforts. Then we broke into small groups and worked to develop priorities from the many suggestions that the participants had sent prior to the event. Ramona Gallagher did a masterful job combining the lists of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the League that participants submitted prior to the meeting and facilitating their analysis by the groups. As a result of the work of the groups, we now have a set of twelve opportunities that were considered top priorities for League effort.

We will have follow-up meetings to further refine the priorities, consider other efforts that we feel we need to pursue and develop short and long term goals and actions for the priorities we select. This effort may guide our League's emphasis for the next few years. **All members of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara are invited to participate in this planning effort. Please e-mail or call the League office if you'd like to be involved.**

The members present on August 12 represent ten percent of our current League members. To continue to be a successful organization we need participation by a much larger percentage. We need YOU! We don't need you for every effort we undertake, but we do need you for at least one of them.

Terri Parks

**The League Of Women Voters Of New York State Education Foundation
in association with United Nations Department of Public Information invites you to attend
Briefings on the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women Campaign,
United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's multi-year campaign aimed at preventing and
eliminating violence against women and girls around the world.**

Tuesday, October 8, 2013 from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM
at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, First Avenue at 46th Street

There will be an optional tour in the morning and a luncheon in the delegates' dining room. The reservation form is available at www.lwvny.org on the home page, or call the State League office: 518-465-4162. Reservation must be made by September 25, 2013.

Great Decisions: Iran

Our 6th Great Decisions topic for 2013 will be Iran. It will take place on Thursday, September 5 from 10 AM-Noon at 1272 Delaware and Joan Photiadis has signed up to be our discussion leader. We will be addressing the suspicion and troubled history that have blighted U.S. – Iranian relations for three decades. How can the United States and Iran move forward? Is the existence of Iran's nuclear program an insurmountable obstacle? What do you think?

Bernice Baeumler events@lwvbn.org

LWVBN NEWS AND NOTES

Lake Erie Basin Committee is Forty Years Old and . . . Our League Needs More Representation

Members of the League in the Buffalo area were among the founding members of the Lake Erie Basin Committee (LEBC) that celebrated forty years' service at the July meeting in Rocky River, Ohio. Membership includes Leagues bordering the lake, representing constituents living in the Lake Erie watershed. This includes Leagues in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. Meetings are held in Spring, Summer and Fall and address concerns arising from the condition of the lake. The meeting location varies depending on member choice.

Topics often involve specific problem areas in the lake; e.g. a recent concern involved two "dead" areas of the lake, apparently caused by dissolved reactive phosphorus that spurs the growth of harmful algae and appear to be brought on by agriculture practices, sewage and dredging. Other reports at the July meeting included modification and/or removal of dams in border states; alternative measures to control flooding; closed beaches because of pollution from storm water runoff; lack of ice cover leading to greater evaporation and lower water levels.

We need someone, or two or three people, to represent the Buffalo-Niagara League at these meetings. If you have questions or are willing to represent our League in this important work, please call Lee Lambert.

Lee Lambert, events@lwvbn.org

Report on West Valley Citizen Task Force

The Citizen Task Force (CTF) for the West Valley Demonstration Project has met for over fifteen years to try to help solve the dilemma of radioactive waste in West Valley. CTF meetings are usually the third Wednesday of every month with members chosen from community service (e.g. officials or representatives from towns, counties, businesses and organizations) plus state and federal agencies, NYSERDA and the Department of Energy. I have been a member of the CTF for fifteen years, representing the League of Women Voters, particularly the Western New York region including Buffalo-Niagara and Dunkirk-Fredonia.

Topics for the CTF are varied but recently have focused on cleaning up the site, at least its visible components.

The purpose of the West Valley Demonstration Project Act was to deal with the waste remaining from a failed attempt to re-use radioactive material. A large portion of the high-level waste was liquid in huge underground tanks. Engineers invented a "hands-off" robotic process to pump out the liquid, treat it and pour it into canisters to solidify, preventing it from further endangering the environment. The waste is now contained in over 275 canisters over ten feet tall, which will remain radioactive for centuries. An onsite pad is being prepared for the canisters that are awaiting relocation out of the Western New York area.

Meanwhile, numerous efforts to contain an in-ground Strontium 90 plume have proven to be inadequate. The latest failed attempt, a permeable treatment wall, illustrates the danger and complexity of dealing with radioactive waste. The demolition of Building 14 is also on the list to be accomplished soon, with removal of asbestos, piping and ceiling tiles scheduled this summer. Of course the state and national burial grounds remain, as do the underground tanks, which have held the high-level liquid waste, and are consequently contaminated as well.

Lee Lambert events@lwvbn.org

Education Committee

Will Diane Ravitch's upcoming new book, Reign of Error, clarify the growing opposition to current “education reform?” From the top down a punitive policy instead of a helpful one, teachers are becoming demoralized and children discouraged. Federal and state mandates are promoting extreme emphasis on test scores, which are now even reaching down to early childhood classrooms. There is less emphasis on promoting child development, active, play-based learning, and hands-on exploration for the youngest.

Buffalo's high concentration of poverty and huge influx of refugee youngsters urgently requires wrap-around social and health services before test scores improve. “Say Yes to Education” is one local project that can be helpful.

The reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been languishing in Congress for several years. Although the House of Representatives has passed a version, the National Education Association and many other educators are opposing it on the grounds that it does not promote equity for all students, and it is not likely to pass the Senate in its current form.

“What should be our focus this coming year?” will be the topic of discussion at the Education Committee's **September 19 meeting at 1:30 PM at the League office at 1272 Delaware**. Consider joining this group. You will find it stimulating!

Lee Tetkowski, Education Committee events@lwvbn.org

Membership Renewals

If you have not renewed your League membership, please do as soon as possible! A renewal reminder was sent on August 16th. I hope you've been able to send your renewal. We certainly appreciate your support for the work of the League.

Please access our website at www.LWVBN.org for timely information. Questions? Please call the League office at 884-3550 or Judy Metzger 688-2351. Thanks to the input of many League members, the League Of Women Voters continues to be a respected name in the WNY community and YOU can be part of that effort.

Judy Metzger, Membership events@lwvbn.org

Voter Services

There will be a Primary debate for mayor of Buffalo on August 27 at 8 PM at the WNED studios. This debate is presented by WNED-TV, WBFO-FM, WGRZ-TV and the Buffalo News in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara.

Three candidates will participate in the debate Byron Brown, Bernard Tolbert (Democratic) and Sergio Rodriguez (Republican). The panelists will be Claudine Ewing of WGRZ-TV, Bob McCarthy of Buffalo News, and Eileen Buckley of WBFO-FM, and the moderator will be Jim Ranney of WBFO-FM. The timekeepers will be Laura McDade and Joyce Bol. This will be a live 60-minute broadcast. **Fifteen free tickets to the broadcast were sent for League distribution. Call the League office to reserve a ticket.**

Joyce Bol, Voter Services

SAVE THE DATE

Light Rail Conference

The Case for Transit: How light rail can be a vehicle for sustainable economic development.
Saturday, 14 September 2013- Montante Cultural Center, Canisius College, 2001 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14208. The Conference is free and runs from 8AM to 2PM. A box lunch is available for \$10. Reservations for lunch and/or tour are due by September 7th. Download the registration form at www.citizenstransit.org and send it with payment to Citizens for Regional Transit, c/o CRT Conference, 289 Ashford Avenue, Tonawanda, NY 14150. There is a phone number for questions: 716-833-9543

Fall Shoreline Sweep

We will be picking up trash **Saturday, September 21, 9 AM – noon**, on north Squaw Island as part of a community-wide effort under the auspices of Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper. If you can help, please contact Sally Metzger so that we have enough supplies on hand and can offer you driving directions.

Sally Metzger, events@lwvbn.org

Amherst Luncheon Issues

Friday, Oct. 18th at 11:30 AM at Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant, 3999 Maple Rd. Amherst, NY. Jessica Hall, Project Manager of Growing Together, will speak about a plan which examines food access and justice in Erie and Niagara County. The Cost for luncheon is \$16.00 all inclusive and payable to LWVBN. For reservations, please contact Judy Metzger- events@lwvbn.org
 Vegetarian meals are available.

Initiatives for a Smart Economy

A presentation of the Erie County Economic Development Plan by Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive, Wednesday, **Oct. 23, 2013 from 6 - 7:30PM** at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, NY 14226.

Primary Election Day is Tuesday, September 10, 2013 from 6:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Please remember to vote.

Articles for each edition of the Voter should be e-mailed to Sandy Chelnov by the date shown on the front page of each edition of the Voter. Copy for the October 2013 Voter is due by September 6.

Other News

Robert Saxton, husband of Ann Saxton, long time league member died in July. Bob, known as “Pete”, attended a number of League luncheons with Ann and was known for his knowledge of and support for league issues. Our condolences and thoughts to the Saxton family.



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September 2013						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Issues Committee 4:30 PM Harlem Rd Center	4	5 Great Decisions 10:30 AM LWV office	6	7
8	9 Board of Directors, 4 PM LWV Office	10 PRIMARY ELECTION	11 Local Gov. 1:15 PM LWV office	12 Nat. Resources 9:30 AM St. Matthias E. Aurora	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Charter Schools/ Education 1:30 PM LWV office	20	21
22	23	24	25 Social/Economic Justice 1:30 PM LWV office	26	27	28
29	30					