



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The **VOTER** is published
10 times per year. Items for
the October issue are due
Friday, September 5.

Genetic Engineering, GMOs: What's the buzz?

Food Security in the Age of Climate Change

Wednesday, September 17 at 5:30 p.m.

Unity Church, 1243 Delaware Ave.

**Open to the Public – ample free parking available behind the Church
(snacks made from locally grown produce provided!)**

Speakers:

Elizabeth Henderson, Organic Farmer, author,
award winning national food justice activist.

Eveline Hartz, RN, CHHC

Aiden McLaughlin, a student activist from East Aurora

Dan Roelofs of Arden Farm, great-grandson of
Roycroft founder, Elbert Hubbard. Certified organic,
Arden Farm has been a family-owned farm since 1910.



GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) food is the new buzz word people are talking about in the United States. 64 countries, including the European Union, China, & Japan, label GMOs; many out right ban them.

Efforts to label GMO food in the US has been met with tremendous resistance despite a New York Times poll that found 93% of people want GMO labeling. A law has even been introduced to make it illegal for states to require labeling of Genetically Engineered food. Vermont, the first state to require GMO labeling, is being sued. The question is: Do you have the right to know what's in your food?

Why are GMO foods, if the same, given broad patents? How is it that the most engineered crops are also the most subsidized? Can these foods affect our health? Are there environmental implications? Are they a necessity to solve world hunger? Are there alternatives? Join us and learn more!

League of Women Voter's 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

Once again the election season is reaching high gear. We already see the glitzy 30 and 60 second commercials that have taken the place of many of the door-to-door and substantial discussions and debates for candidates for office. It's often difficult to distinguish the efforts of the candidates and their own campaign from those of the deep pocket PAC donors. Sometimes the most outrageous rhetoric and negativity can be traced to a PAC, if one can read the extremely small print at the end of an ad. The deluge of campaign literature has yet to weigh down our postal carriers' packs and find its way to our doorstep. It seems that most campaigners claim to have a plan to "fix" things that the candidate believes need fixing, but those plans aren't widely shared. Thankfully, the League continues to publish its online and printed Voters Guide with candidate responses to questions we have posed. Our Vote 411 electronic Voters Guide is able to address several more questions than our printed guide. I urge you to help us get candidate participation when you see or hear from candidates. Remind them that you expect them to respond to the League's request for participation.

We also continue to conduct Candidate Forums in several parts of Erie County. The dates and locations will be in the October Voter. This summer an ad hoc committee, chaired by Lyle Toohey with Laura McDade, Ramona Gallagher and myself, reviewed and updated our procedures and practices for conducting Candidate Forums. We haven't done this in many years and needed to be sure that we are in compliance with federal, state and local regulations and laws. We reviewed our current guidelines and the letters we send candidates, as well as agreements between the League and co-sponsors to get ready for this year's efforts to offer citizens opportunities to learn how candidates plan to address the issues that are important to people in our community. The board approved the updated plans at its August meeting.

Wynnie Fisher, At-Large Board Member, has accepted and received board approval to be Governance/Special Project Chair for the League. Among her duties will be to chair a Bylaw Review Committee, an ad hoc committee to submit requests for bids for our audit and payroll needs and to chair the Annual Meeting Committee. If you are interested in participating in any of these important and League service opportunities, please contact Mary Ann at the League Office, 884-3550 or lwvbn@lwvbn.org. -Terri Parks

Announcement:

The ballot in November has a proposal for a constitutional amendment that will establish an independent commission to draw the state legislative and congressional lines every ten years. Our League's October program will be a public forum featuring a PowerPoint presentation and discussion of the amendment. The October Voter will have the details of this important program and more detailed information about the amendment. The Issues Committee and Board will discuss and decide in October whether our League should join the state League in support of the amendment. The Home Page for the League of Women Voter of New York State has the background material and ballot wording of the amendment, so you can take some time to think about this most important issue. www.lwvny.org.

Great Decisions

Abby Bernardis has agreed to lead our sixth discussion topic for 2014, Food and Climate, on Thursday, September 4 from 10 a.m. - noon at the League office at 1272 Delaware Ave. "Even as a sixth of the world's population suffers from chronic hunger, a changing climate threatens to wreak havoc on already insecure and vulnerable populations. As food and water become scarce and once fertile land becomes barren, the U. S. finds itself faced with new challenges in securing the globe. The U. S. is getting ready, but can it lead the way to climate reform?"

Bernice Baeumler

Ballot Access Study: An Introduction

The LWVNY Ballot Access (BA) study will examine the process by which candidates for elected office in New York State gain access to the general election ballot. *The LWVNY Ballot Access Study Committee writes, “At the conclusion of the study we hope to enable LWVNY to offer suggestions for ballot access best practices that ensure a thriving and functioning democracy.”* Our study will discuss and compare different forms of state primary systems and explore the possible effects that New York’s ballot access process has on issues such as voter representation, corruption, voter turnout, and partisanship.

We start by asking, what makes a good election system? Virtually everyone can suggest criteria by which to judge a good election system. Some criteria will have a higher or lower priority, others may be interrelated, or overlap, or might even conflict. Listed below are some of the criteria identified in LWV California’s Election Systems Study in 2000 and LWV Oregon’s Election Methods Study in 2008.

- **Ensure Majority Rule.** Winning candidates should have the support of the majority of voters. In some election systems, candidates can be elected with a plurality rather than a majority of votes.
- **Encourage Minority Representation.** Minority representation can be identified by either political affiliation, or defined in terms of race, ethnic background, sex, etc. Minorities must feel included in the election process.
- **Produce Fair and Accurate Representation of Different Political Views.** With accurate representation of views, public policies will more likely reflect the views of constituents.
- **Increase voter participation.** Voter participation is essential to a healthy democracy. NYS has a notoriously low voter turnout. We ranked 44th in the 2012 election.
- **Encourage “Sincere” Voting, as Opposed to Strategic Voting.** Voters should be able to vote for their “first choice” without worrying that their vote may result in the election of their least favorite party candidate.
- **Provide a Reasonable Range of Voter Choice.** The type of system used has a large impact on both the number of candidates and the variety of political parties on the ballot.
- **Prevent Fraud and Political Manipulation.** The most common example is political gerrymandering: the drawing of district lines to favor certain incumbents or political parties.
- **Encourage Competitive Elections.** Incumbent reelection rates in New York State and throughout the country are notoriously high.
- **Easy to Use and Administer.** Citizen should be able to cast their votes easily and understand the results of an election.
- **Other important considerations include:** promoting healthy political parties, ensuring stable government, encouraging issue-oriented campaigns, producing results viewed as legitimate.

You may have other criteria to suggest, or you may disagree with those we have included. We encourage you to consider ballot access criteria important to you as we begin to compare different systems in upcoming Voter articles.

Social Economic Justice Education Committee

During the past two years, the committee reviewed League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) Federal Fiscal Policy adopted in 1984 and examined current, related writing and research. The committee agreed that LWVUS Federal Fiscal Policy is very relevant today. We sponsored several programs to educate members and the general public. We promoted “front burner” actions by LWVUS in support of LWVUS Federal Fiscal Policy positions, such as federal income tax reform, which would increase fairness and reduce income inequality in the United States. In January 2014 LWVUS adopted Federal Fiscal Policy actions as a “third tier” priority. Although not the “front burner” approach we wished, at least some LWVUS actions may ensue this year.

Federal Fiscal Policy is a subset of LWVUS Social Policy. In 2014-15, the committee will review issues related to LWVUS Social Policy positions. Check our local league-LWVB/N website, www.lwvbn.org, for our committee’s updated Outlook for Work to learn more about committee activity plans.

At our July 23 meeting we learned about “living wage” issues from guests, Joan Malone and Andy Reynolds, board and staff members, respectively, of the Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ). Joan was involved in the City of Buffalo living wage movement, which began in 1996, and resulted in Buffalo’s adoption of a living wage policy. Compliance with the Buffalo living wage law is monitored by a commission established for that purpose.

The committee will consider whether LWVB/N might act, using LWVUS Social Policy positions, to promote living wage policies in Erie and Niagara Counties and perhaps at the state level. We will share our findings with LWVB/N members and the general public through Voter articles and a program later this year or early in 2015.

Interested members and others are encouraged to attend Social Economic Justice Education Committee meetings. Most meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, at 1:30 PM at the League Office, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo. Contact the League Office at 884-3550 to confirm meeting dates. Read more about our committee’s work and accomplishments at www.lwvbn.org.

LEAGUE TO HELP ON WATERFRONT SHORELINE SWEEP

Can you help pick up trash on scenic north Squaw Island in the Niagara River **Saturday September 20, from 10 a.m. - noon?** We will again be working under the auspices of the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper.

Bring gloves, hat or sunglasses, jacket, sunscreen, water and maybe a camera. There are no restrooms.

Directions: We drive into the Squaw Island Park from Niagara Street in Buffalo on the ramp-like entrance next to 1726 Niagara Street. It’s a short block north of the Niagara St./Scajacuada intersection. The entrance has a large billboard and a small park sign. From the park entrance, cross the bridge spanning the Black Rock Canal. (Make sure that no one is already on the bridge as it has only one lane.) Then drive straight ahead (west) to the river. Turn right under the International Railroad Bridge and drive to the end of the road to where we will start our work. Beth Kauffman is our captain this year. Email Beth at events@lwvbn.org say you can help so that we have enough supplies on hand.

Voter Services

Candidate Forums

LWVBN sponsored Candidate Forums will be held in mid October in Hamburg (Oct. 22) and East Aurora (date to be determined). The League provides a moderator and time-keeper at the Amherst Senior Center (Oct. 25, 9 a.m., 250 Audubon Parkway.)

LWVBN has been asked to provide a moderator for a Candidate Debate between Timothy M. Kennedy and Betty Jean Grant (Candidates for the Office of State Senator in the 63rd District) at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center on August 25.

-Margaret Brunson, Voter Services

National Voter Registration Week Is September 21 through 27

National Voter Registration Day is September 23

Volunteers are Needed!

In the next few weeks LWVBN voter registration drives will be held at the following times and locations:

Elmwood Farmer's Market	Sept. 6 th	8 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Volunteers Needed
Urban League	Sept. 23 rd	11 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Volunteers Needed

To volunteer at these events contact Kate Wagner at events@lwvbn.org. Kate is hoping to set up additional events at local Walmart Stores during September. To date this year Kate Wagner has organized and held seven voter registration events. Thank you, Kate!

I am working with Kathy Bunce from Developmental Disabilities Alliance of Western New York (DDAWNY) to set a voter registration event at one of their member agencies. Details to be arranged. We will need volunteers.

-Margaret Brunson, Voter Services

Naturalization Ceremonies

Since April first, the following members of our League have attended Naturalization Ceremonies, speaking to the new citizens and distributing voter registration forms to them:

April 3	Joan Simon and Judy Huber
April 17	Joan Simon and Bernice Baeumler
May 1	Judy Casassa and Freddie Cheek
May 15	Marge Gardner and Judith Hoffman
June 5	Kathleen McCarthy and Dianne Rubin
June 26	Marge Gardner and Dorothy Tao
July 10	Judy Weidemann and Marie Hanrahan
Aug. 7	Judy Weidemann and Margaret Brunson
Aug. 21	Margaret Brunson and Dan Brunson
Sept. 12	Kathleen McCarthy and Jayne Murray

Our appreciation goes out to these volunteers. Volunteering to represent the League at these ceremonies is a very rewarding experience. Please let us know if you are interested.

-Judy Huber

Outer Harbor Planning Process on the Fast Track: It is Time to Engage

The pace of the Outer Harbor planning process is moving briskly. As you may have seen in the August 7 edition of the Buffalo News, some 340 concerned citizens showed up at an Open House on August 6 to comment on three design concepts for the Outer Harbor presented by the design and architectural consulting firm, Perkins & Will. According to the Buffalo News, the public responded overwhelmingly in favor of public access and the protection of the environment, while at the same time there is pressure from other quarters for the Outer Harbor to become financially self-sustaining and to have "follow-on private investment." One last opportunity for public comment and input will come in September. Stay tuned!

LWVBN very much favors open space. There should be year-round public access to the waterfront with a variety of recreational activities. We support protection of the natural environment. The League favors support for the 21st Century Park concept, available at www.21stCenturyPark.org.

Community members favoring open space are quite concerned about the rapid pace of the planning process that is giving public and civic groups only a short time to respond and come up with comprehensive analyses and alternatives to those that ultimately will be proposed by Perkins & Will and their client, the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation. For this reason the Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA), of which the LWVBN is a member, called an emergency meeting on July 31 at the offices of the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo. Comprised of numerous organizations, the WNYEA has no official single position for the Outer Harbor, but wishes to put forward commonly held principles to ensure that public access, public benefit, and wildlife protection have priority on this publically owned land.

At the WNYEA meeting, various plans developed over the decades for the Outer Harbor by public agencies were reviewed:

1982 - A survey of the public showed people wanting clean water, access, and a park;

Early 1990s - Rep. Higgins, Horizons, the public still proposed a park

2004 - The NFTA Outer Harbor Proposal included housing while Buffalo Riverkeeper countered with "Citizens Visions for the Lakefront," including its own demonstration that the number of housing units proposed could be executed without consuming anywhere near the entire Outer Harbor, as NFTA's plan called for.

Lynda Schneekloth, of the Sierra Club, commented that, as there is no infrastructure on Outer Harbor land, commercial and residential building there would constitute sprawl, just as if it were East Amherst or Orchard Park. Betsy Giles of Citizens for Regional Transit, added that the forbidding winter winds off Lake Erie are not conducive to year-round use. And finally several people spoke of how the Outer Harbor is an internationally known hotspot for birdwatchers because of the migration pathway over the area: it was then recognized that we have a need for contiguous, unbroken swaths of wildlife habitat for both flora and fauna.

Finally, Joan Bozer spoke to the vision of the 21st Century Park as envisioned by Frederick Olmstead but which was moved on the insistence of 19th century commercial interests to South Park. Such a park, supported by LWVBN, would allow for recreational use while being careful to leave the essential wildlife habitat intact and facilities would be run on 100% renewable energy. Buffalo would thereby boast the largest waterfront green space in the United States.

Out of this meeting, WNYEA developed an alternative set of guiding principles for the Outer Harbor making clear that any choice must take long-term ecological sustainability into consideration. Details are available at www.growwny.org

So it is now the time to engage as a concerned citizen -- and as a member of LWVBN -- at this critical time when historic decisions are about to be made about the Waterfront. Contact Gladys Gifford at events@lwvbn.org.

League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara Membership Registration Form
July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015



Make checks payable to LWVBN and return to LWVBN, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

Check one category. Dues to local, state and the national affiliates are included in each category.

- \$ 65 Individual Member July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015
 \$100 Household (2 members living at the same address)
 \$ 75 Carrie Chapman Catt Membership
 \$ 90 Elizabeth Cady Stanton Membership
 \$100 Susan B. Anthony Membership
 \$ 30 Student Membership
 Enclosed is an additional donation of \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Unit Interest
 (Optional)
 Amherst

Please e-mail me the LWVBN bulletin: LWVBN Voter. The First Year I joined the

Thank you to those LWVBN members who have renewed their membership. If you have *not* renewed for the 2014-2015, you may use the renewal form above no later than January 2015, by which time we need to update the LWVUS database. If you not sure you have renewed, please contact MaryAnn at the League office. Your continued generosity and participation on LWVBN committees, the Board, in either small or big tasks is greatly appreciated. Consider asking a friend to join us at any meeting!

Ramona Gallagher, Judy Huber, Dorothy Tao, Judy Weidemann and Judy Metzger, chair

In Memoriam



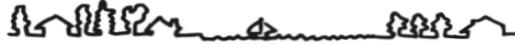
We are saddened and stunned to learn that Marge (Marjorie Fox) Gardner died on Monday, August 4 after a sudden illness. Many League members worked with Marge on a number of League efforts, most recently July 8, when she assisted in the vote tally for the BMHA Tenant Commissioners' Election and earlier on May 26 when she welcomed new citizens at a Naturalization Ceremony on the USS Sullivan.

Prior to joining the League, Marge was an inspiring teacher at the Elmwood-Franklin School and later at Nichols School, altogether for more than 30 years. After retiring, Marge became active in the League. She served on the Board and was an outstanding Election Services Coordinator, expertly involved in overseeing Election Services to the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. (BMHA). Marjorie is remembered by League members as a most gracious lady, wonderful to work with and one who contributed so much to the LWVBN. She was a fine leader.

Marjorie was also an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church for 50+ years, was president Emeritus of the College Club of Buffalo; she was a volunteer teacher for refugees at Vive la Casa and an avid traveler and music lover. Gifts in memory of Marjorie may be made to the Unitarian Universalist Church Endowment Fund, by mail or delivery to the church at 685 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY.



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September Meetings

- | | |
|---|--|
| Tues., 9/2, 4:30 p.m.
Issues Committee, Harlem Rd. Com. Cntr. | Wed., 9/10, 1:15 p.m.
Local Government, League Office |
| Thurs., 9/4, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions, League Office | Thurs., 9/11, 9:30 a.m.
Natural Resources, East Aurora |
| Mon., 9/8, 4 p.m.
Board Meeting, League Office | Wed., 9/17, 1:00 p.m.
Ballot Access, League Office |
| Wed., 9/10, 10:00 a.m.
Transportation, League Office | Thurs., 9/18, 1:30 p.m.
Charter Schools/Education, League Office |
| | Wed., 9/24, 1:30 p.m.
Soc./Economic Justice, League Office |

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Last Day to Apply for Absentee Ballot for Primary Election – September 8
- **State and Local Primary Election** – September 9th
- Last Day to register for the General Election – October 10
- Change of Address for Registered Voters must be received by the County Board of Elections by October 15 to be processed in time for the General Election
- **Change of Enrollment** for the 2015 Primary Election must be postmarked before midnight on October 10, 2014.
- **General Election** – November 4th

All Copy for the October Voter due 9/5/2014