



# The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

# VOTER

Volume 21 Number 1

September, 2015

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The **VOTER** is published  
10 times per year. Items  
for the October issue are  
due **Friday, 9/11/2015**



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA  
present

## Money in Politics How can we take back our democracy ?

Guest speaker: **Zephyr Teachout**

**Don't miss this energizing Constitution Day event!**



Thursday, September 17, 2015  
WNED-TV, 140 Lower Terrace, Buffalo, NY  
Doors open at 6:30, program starts at 7:00 p.m.  
Free and open to the public

We're in a "fight with big money for the soul of our country." So says Zephyr Teachout, a noted expert in constitutional law and political corruption, and a candidate in New York's 2014 gubernatorial primary. Come hear her thoughts on purging money from politics, and empowering ordinary citizens like us to reclaim the representative government we deserve.

### About Zephyr Teachout

- Fordham University Law School professor
- Author of *Corruption in America: From Benjamin Franklin's Snuff Box to Citizens United*
- Served as director of online organizing for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign
- First national director of the Sunlight Foundation, which advocates open government

Her 2014 campaign website describes her as "a deeply experienced leader in the fights for economic and political equality and against concentration of wealth and control in the hands of the few."

Special thanks to our co-sponsors: Citizen Action, Clean Air Coalition of WNY, Common Cause New York, Communications Workers of America Local 1133, New York State United Teachers, Partnership for the Public Good, People for Sustainable Housing (PUSH Buffalo), Sierra Club Niagara Group, and WNY Peace Center. (As of August 7, 2015.)

### Mission of the League of Women Voters:

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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## Presidents' Report and Board Actions



We are happy to announce that Sue Stievater volunteered to be the Membership Chair and was appointed director of the board with that important job responsibility at the August board meeting. We are pleased to welcome her to the board. Sue will happily involve you with membership committee efforts. Follow Sue's lead and contact the League office at 884-3550 or [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org) to volunteer.

If you are one of those who need to renew League membership for 2015-2016, you received a reminder in mid August either by email or from the US Post Office. Please send your renewal with the completed survey if you still need to do so. We need your support, both financial and through participation in committees or other League efforts.

Our picnic, July 28 was a huge success. Once again League members showed their culinary skills with healthy and tasty dishes. Pat Costanzo, Money in Politics Study Committee member, led the discussion following the YouTube video of Lawrence Lessig's "Money in Politics" presentation, an interesting and engaging piece that was helpful as we look ahead to our program on September 17 with Zephyr Teachout. We welcomed some newer and prospective members to the League and thank Sally Metzger for arranging the Canterbury clubhouse venue. We especially enjoyed the air-conditioned room on a very hot summer day.

The board feels that increasing League visibility with a main goal to increase our membership, both for financial support and to provide active leadership and involvement in the League's work is of prime importance to our League. There was much discussion centered upon being able to develop a program that would result in having a membership intern to carry it out. We seek to maintain our strong presence and efforts on behalf of voters and in regard to issues covered by League positions.

The program on September 17 is a most special effort by the League and its Money in Politics Study Committee. The study committee chaired by Janet Massaro is engaged in learning as much as possible about the subject through reading and from the information provided by the League of Women Voters of the United States on its website. There are many relevant articles that can easily be accessed by typing ***money in politics*** in the search box on the main page at <http://www.lwv.org>.

We need you to also press candidates for countywide election this fall to respond to the League's invitation for the 2015 Voters Guide. We will be sending email requests to contact candidates for election who don't respond. We know that pressure from constituents is effective.

*-Judy Metzger & Terri Parks*



## Voter Services

September 10 is Primary Day for state and local elections. September 9 is the last day to apply in person for an absentee ballot. September 9 is also the last day to postmark a ballot. Ballot must be received by the Board of Elections no later than September 17.

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Saturday, August 15, the last day to register voters before Primary Day, was a big day for LWVBN Voter Services. Kate Wagner chaired a voter registration event at the Williamsville Farmers Market. Margaret Brunson joined forces with Jeremy Morlach from UNYTS at a very successful voter registration event in Eastern Hills Mall: we registered five new voters and signed up two new organ donors. We also sent three voter registration forms home with women who had registered at our table and stated their intention to get their husbands to register as well. We also answered lots of questions about organ donation, voter registration and elections.

Several more events are scheduled for the next few weeks. We will return to Eastern Hills Mall on August 29 and on September 2 we will be at Canalside with UNYTS. LWVBN is making plans for a Labor Day Voter Registration Event at Martin Luther King Jr. Park in conjunction with the WNY Peace Center and another event later in September in Delaware Park. Please sign up to join us!

*-Margaret Brunson, Voter Service Chair*

## Community Shopping Event to Benefit the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara



The Ten Thousand Villages Store at 5596 Main Street, Williamsville, NY 14221, will conduct a benefit sales event for the League from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, September 24, 2015. Ten Thousand Villages will donate 20% of the net sales

during that time to LWVBN.

Many League members are familiar with Ten Thousand Villages and the beautiful products created by artisans in developing countries that can be purchased there. The products provide a dependable source of income because Ten Thousand Villages creates long-term relationships with the artisan groups and bases its contract prices on what artisans need to earn a living wage in their community.

Please plan to join us on September 24. We'll be promoting League activities and voter registration while folks shop for special items to use as gifts or for their personal use. Every gift you purchase from Ten Thousand Villages helps someone earn a living wage — something that the League supports for everyone.

*-Terri Parks, Ten Thousand Villages Volunteer Associate*

## Great Decisions

Joan Mondul has signed up to facilitate our fifth topic for 2015 Great Decisions on Thursday, September 3, at 1272 Delaware Ave: The U. S. and Africa: The Rise and Fall of Obamamania. "Africa is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation. The continent is home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world, and it has become a draw for foreign investors from across the globe. However, after the Obamamania of 2008 died down, the realization that Obama wasn't going to overturn, or even prioritize, U.S. Africa policy kicked in. Still, the U.S. has promised to promote strong institutions, not strong men, and to favor good governance and healthy economies over profit. How can U.S. policy live up to its promise and values while securing its interests in the region?" I hope everyone will be back in town to weigh in.

*-Bernice Baeumler,*

## Money In Politics Update: What do all these W\*O\*R\*D\*S mean?



In preparation for our exciting Money in Politics conversation with Zephyr Teachout on September 17, we are including some common terms used in campaign financing. These are not “official” definitions that are very detailed and have well-established meaning in law, but they will help guide us through the complex maze of campaign finance terminology. *League positions and actions are expressed in italics where appropriate.*

- **Contribution.** Gifts, money, loans, or anything of value given for the purpose of aiding an individual candidate or a political party.
- **Coordination.** An expenditure for express advocacy made in “cooperation, consultation, or concert” with, or at the request of, a candidate, an agent of the candidate’s committee, or a political party committee. *The League has criticized the Federal Election Commission for excluding many common-sense examples of coordination.*
- **Corporation.** An organization formed with State governmental approval to act as an artificial person to carry on business or other activities.
- **Corruption.** In *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) the Supreme Court ruled that corruption or the appearance of corruption is a justification for limiting free speech rights in campaign finance law. The current Court has narrowed the definition of corruption as a “quid pro quo” exchange, virtually the same as bribery. *The League disagrees with the Court’s definition, pointing out that there is corruption when citizens’ right to a representative government is threatened.*
- **Dark (or Secret) Money.** Political spending, the source of which is not disclosed under current regulations. *The League has supported all legislation to strengthen disclosure. The League has also advocated new and effective rules by the IRS to ensure that 501(c)(4) organizations are not used for unlimited secret spending.*
- **Electioneering Communication.** Broadcast, cable, or satellite transmissions that refer to a clearly identified candidate, targeted to the relevant electorate and made within 30 days before a primary or 60 days before a general election.
- **Expenditure.** Any purchase, payment, of money or anything of value for the purpose of influencing an election. It does not include any news story or editorial, nonpartisan voter registration or get-out-the-vote activity, or communications by an organization to its members.
- **Express Advocacy.** Political communications that explicitly advocate the defeat of, or election of, a clearly identified federal candidate.
- **Federal Election Commission (FEC).** The six member, bipartisan federal commission that has enforcement, regulatory and interpretative authority over federal campaign finance law. *The League has called for a more effective FEC with strict enforcement of disclosure requirements and coordination rules.*
- **Hard Money.** Direct contributions to a political candidate. Corporations and unions may not contribute directly to federal candidates.

## Money in Politics - continued

- **Independent Expenditures.** An expenditure that is not coordinated with any candidate or political party committee. *Citizens United* opened a large loophole by providing for unlimited independent expenditures by corporations, unions and non-profit organizations. (See Super PACs.)
- **Issue Advocacy.** Political communications in the form of advertising that is framed around an issue. Congress and the Court have not agreed on what constitutes a “true” issue ad and a “sham” issue ad, one that points a voter for or against a candidate.
- **Political Action Committee (PAC).** A political committee organized for the purpose of raising and spending money to elect or defeat candidates. *The League has lobbied Congress to prohibit contributions from PACs that are associated with federal government contracts and to prohibit members of Congress from fundraising from the interests they directly regulate. In addition, we support closing the “revolving door” loophole that would significantly extend the time before members of Congress can accept high-paying jobs with firms they have been involved with while serving in Congress.*
- **Public Financing.** Money provided by local, state or federal government to candidates to fund their campaigns. *Both the LWVUS and many state Leagues (including LWVNY) consistently support public financing of elections. LWVBN supports public financing for the city of Buffalo.*
- **Soft Money.** Contributions to a political party for “party building activities.” These contributions cannot be used to advocate for a candidate in an election. There are no limits on soft money contributions.
- **Super PAC.** A Political Action Committee (PAC) that makes unlimited independent expenditures not coordinated with any candidate or party. Both PACs and Super PACs must file reports with the FEC that include names and amounts from their donors and the amounts of their expenditures.

We hope to see you all at the WNED Studios on Constitution Day, September 17. Come with your questions for Ms. Teachout. Engage in the conversation and be inspired! Learn what we can do together to “Make Democracy Work.”

- Janet Massaro, Chair, Money in Politics Study Committee



“The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerated the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That in its essence is fascism: ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or any controlling private power.”

- [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)



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## September Meetings & Events

**Thurs., 9/3, 10:00 a.m.**  
Great Decisions, League Office

**Tues., 9/8, 4:00 p.m.**  
Issues Committee, Harlem Road  
Community Center.

**Wed., 9/9, 1:15 p.m.**  
Local Government, League Office

**Thurs., 9/10, Primary Day**  
**Remember to vote!**

**Mon., 9/14, 4:00 p.m.**  
Board Meeting, League Office

**Thurs., 9/17, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Money in Politics with Zephyr Teachout**  
**WNED, 140 Lower Terrace**

**Wed., 9/23, 3:00 p.m.**  
Waterfront, Buffalo Central Library

**Thurs., 9/24, 1:30 p.m.**  
Education, League Office

**Thurs., 9/24, 5 p.m.**  
**League Benefit Sale - Ten Thousand Villages**  
**5596 Main Street**

**REMINDER: All copy for the October Voter is due Friday, 9/11/15, and should be submitted to Sandy Chelnov. All material should be submitted in a Word document with no formatting.**