



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The **VOTER** is published
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LWVBN Annual Potluck Picnic

Tuesday, July 28, Noon

Chelsea Club House

Downing Lane (off Renaissance Drive), Williamsville, NY
14221

Picnic Time!



All LWVBN members & friends of the League invited! Bring a dish to pass.

We are grateful to Sally Metzger, who lives in the Canterbury community, for securing this wonderful site.

After our lunch we will learn about the LWVUS study on Money in Politics, presented by Janet Massaro, chair of the Money in Politics committee. Included will be a "Ted" talk from Lawrence Lessig introducing his book, *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress – and a Plan to Stop It*. This program is part of the study recently reviewed in the June Voter. The League consensus process will conclude in January 2016. This is an excellent opportunity for all to learn about how the League works. Please come and participate in Making Democracy work.

Save the date

Special Constitution Day Event!

Thursday, September 17, 2015

Money in Politics: How Can We Take Back Our Democracy?

Speaker: Zephyr Teachout

Place: WNED-TV, 140 Sower Terrace, Buffalo, NY 14202

Time: Doors open at 6:30, program 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," says Zephyr Teachout, a noted expert in constitutional law and political corruption, and a 2014 candidate for governor of New York. Come hear her thoughts on purging money from politics, and empowering ordinary citizens like us to reclaim the representative government we deserve. What better way to celebrate Constitution Day!

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 Message



We look forward to another delightful League Potluck Picnic on July 28 and hope you'll come and bring someone who may be interested in joining the League.

We are extremely excited that Zephyr Teachout will kick off our coming program year on September 17th at the WNED-TV studios. Special thanks to Janet Massaro for reaching out to her and making a concerted effort to get a good number of co-sponsors for this special event for our entire community. Please contact Janet, or one of us, if you have contacts in an organization that we may add to our list of partners.

The 2015-2016 Board of Directors held its first meeting on June 13, 2015. The board will meet from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. on the following dates: 8/10/15, 9/14/15, 10/13/15, 11/9/15, 1/11/16, 2/8/16, 3/7/16, 4/11/16, 5/9/16. The League's Holiday Social will probably be on Saturday, December 5, in the afternoon. The 2016 Annual Meeting will be Saturday, June 4, 2016.

The board approved the following board responsibilities:

Co- President	Judy Metzger
Co- President	Terri Parks
2nd Vice President: Volunteer Coordinator	Judith Clarke
3rd Vice President: Issues Chair	Marian Deutschman
Secretary	Mary Herbst
Treasurer	Lori Robinson
Finance/Investment Committee Chair	Patricia Costanzo
Fund Development Chair	Rebecca Costanzo
Governance and Special Projects Chair	Wynnie Fisher
Legislative Action Chair	Joan Lo Curto
Public Relations Chair	Dorothy Tao
Communications Chair	Nancy De Tine
Voter Service Chair	Margaret Brunson
Director at Large, PR Committee Member	Theresa Pope

Please note the following committee chairs or contacts. They will welcome you warmly if you choose to work with them on their efforts this year:

Money In Politics Committee Chair	Janet Massaro
Education Committee Contact	Dorothy Tao
Election Services Committee Chair	Alan Dozoretz
Local Government Committee Chair	Marian Deutschman
Youth Program/Students Inside Albany Committee Chair	Janet Goodsell
Nominating Committee Chair	Judy Weidemann
Social, Economic Justice Committee Chair	Lynda Stephens
Waterfront/Transportation Committee Chair	Gladys Gifford

Thank you to all who have renewed your membership in our League for 2015-2016. Our membership year begins July first each year. Please return your interest survey as we depend on the involvement of our members for our strength. We need each of you to attend programs, help plan one, join a committee, and/or provide constructive ideas. We anticipate another productive league year with your interest and active participation.

-Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

Money in Politics : June Update

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

We have concentrated on the question of “the freedom of speech” in our discussions so far. However, there are a number of other questions to consider when looking at the First Amendment in the campaign finance context.

The freedom of speech also protects the right to hear – the need for the citizens in a democracy to hear full discussion of issues is also protected. Even if corporations do not have full free speech rights to spend unlimited amounts in a candidate election, the right for the public to hear the views of corporations is constitutionally important. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech protect the same rights. The lone blogger as well as the New York Times, a large for-profit corporation, are equally protected by freedom of the press. Campaign finance law allows newspapers to spend money in endorsing candidates. Should the press have different rights than individuals?

The First Amendment protects the right to associate as well. Associations take many forms in American society – from political parties to religious organizations; from for-profit international corporations to local charitable organizations; from newspapers and media outlets owned by corporations to the League of Women Voters with affiliated organizations in all 50 states and more than 750 communities. Should different associations have the same or different rights under the First Amendment? How should they be differentiated by law?

There are many different currents in the First Amendment “river” and channeling them in ways that both enhance political freedom and protect representative government is not a simple task. And, as circumstances change, can the law respond appropriately?

The Supreme Court defines and enforces First Amendment protections for individuals, the press and association. In the area of constitutional law, the Constitution says what the Supreme Court says it says. Therefore, for better or worse, the only fully effective way to change constitutional interpretation is to change the composition of the Supreme Court.

The information above is a summary of the First Amendment rights from the *LWV Money in Politics Primer*, the full text of which is available on the LWV website. Our Money in Politics Committee also recommends the following for your summer reading pleasure: *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress – and a Plan to Stop It*, by Lawrence Lessig. We’ll view an introduction to Lessig’s book at our Summer Picnic on July 28th.



League of Women Voters of New York State 2015 Convention

LWV: A Voice for Citizens, A Force For Change was the theme for the 56th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNY) June 6 -7. The Buffalo/Niagara League was well represented by Marian Deutschman, Ramona Gallagher, Gladys Gifford, Lori Robinson and Terri Parks. With only two days, almost every minute from eight in the morning until eleven at night was scheduled with workshops, caucuses and plenaries. Workshops were designed to involve local Leagues in presentations and encourage active participation by attendees. There are many exciting and valuable efforts happening across the state and a good number of them were highlighted in the presentations and delegate comments.

The convention included 97 delegates from 39 local Leagues so networking was a highlight of the weekend. Some of us toured the state capitol on June 5 with other League members. Marian reports, "It is worth seeing the Richardson-designed Senate and Assembly halls and hearing about the many historical figures that held positions in New York and eventually moved to national prominence."

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara was recognized for Outstanding Accomplishment in Citizen Engagement for the actions we have taken this past year related to the plans to develop Buffalo's Outer Harbor. The description in the awards booklet notes the following: "although all of the submissions for this award were innovative, effective and worthy, this project stood out because it used a League position to propel local action. As Gladys Gifford and the Waterfront/Transportation Committee lead the LWVBN efforts, it was most appropriate that she accept the award on our behalf.

Highlights from workshops to consider in our work:

- Expand our TRY brochure to include the wealth of information in the Suffolk County LWV's 2015 Directory of Public Officials
- Engage people at the human level by capitalizing on the interesting people in the League
- Develop new leaders consciously and intentionally
- Explore ways to take our shows on the road regionalizing topics and programming
- Pull people in by a focus on how a subject relates to them. Choose a wider array of subjects such as news literacy, changes in Medicare/Medicaid; co-sponsor programs with the library; check civic engagement groups at colleges. One League had 300 people attend a "State of the Town" lunch.
- For membership recruitment, make it a personalized ask rather than a group ask
- Assign people to each candidate to get information for Voter Guide
- Train substantive, strong moderators
- Develop Youth Program in concert with Girl Scouts that fits with a Scout Badge as is done in the Hamptons
- Work with fourth graders as is done by the Wayne County MAL Unit
- Become involved in the next steps related to the New York state hydrofracking ban as outlined by Beth Radow: monitor pipeline infrastructure, create a ban on transporting hazardous waste, oppose Seneca Lake natural gas storage

League of Women Voters of New York State 2015 Convention - continued

- Plan a program related to the 2017 required ballot issue as required by the New York State Constitution: Shall there be a Constitutional Convention?
- Link all “evites” to our web page with payment via pay pal or merely to register if there is no charge
- Have donation envelopes at every program event and fundraiser
- Consider fundraising events keeping in mind that they raise awareness and visibility for the League along with raising dollars.
- Make sure to invite elected officials to League events and fundraisers.

-Marian Deutschman, Gladys Gifford and Terri Parks contributed to this article

LWVBN Volunteers in Action

Spring Shoreline Sweep: Ellen Gibson acted as site captain for the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper shoreline sweep on Saturday, April 25, 2015. Ellen recruited several League members to help out at this annual event.

Naturalization Ceremonies were held on:

May 21- represented by Dorothy Brown and Janet Goodsell at the U.S. Courthouse

June 4 - represented by Judith Casassa and Sandra O’Hara at the Buffalo History Museum

June 25 - represented by Richard Hemann and Marian Deutschman aboard the USS Little Rock.

We have just one opportunity left on our calendar for a New Citizen ceremony. The date is Dec. 3, 2015 and it will be held at the U.S. Courthouse. If you would like to represent the LWVBN at that ceremony, please contact Judy Clarke at events@lwvbn.org

Ramona Gallagher and JoAnn Mecca moderated and kept time at a candidates’ forum at Starpoint Central School in May. Many thanks to our volunteers who represent the League. So many can be counted on for multiple assignments.

-Judith Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator

Great Decisions

Great Decisions will meet on Thursday, August 6 from 10 AM - noon at 1272 Delaware. Pat Costanzo will lead *India Changes Course*: "Fed up with corruption, dynastic policies and ineffective public services, Indian voters catapulted Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party to power in the country's 2014 elections. For voters Modi embodied real change and an India that wasn't stumbling, but running, to greatness. But for the U.S. change in India brings its own set of unknowns, heralding an age ruled by a prime minister new to national office and other policymakers who have been out of the public eye for a decade. Now the U.S. has to determine how to best secure its interests as India asserts itself on the world stage." Hope to see you all over the summer

Bernice Baeumler

Voter Services June – July 2015

LWVBN participated in four voter registration events in June through the middle of July.

On Friday June 19, LWVBN participated in the Seneca Babcock Community Day, after being contacted by Cheryl Byrd from the Seneca Babcock Community Center. The event was held across the street from the Community Center, at the corner of Seneca and Babcock Streets. This was a brand new event for us, located in a neighborhood we probably have not visited in many, many years, if ever. We met many people and distributed copies of TRY (They Represent You) and other informational materials. This was a good event from a Public Relations point of view – we were visible.

Representatives from many non-profit organizations, schools and medical services were there to answer questions and offer services to neighborhood residents. There was free food and entertainment throughout the day. Thank you to our volunteers: Sue Marom, Kate Wagner and Terri Parks.

On Saturday, June 27 Kate Wagner represented LWVBN at the Taste of Diversity Festival.

On Sunday, June 28 we were invited to “New Citizens Day” at the International Institute. This was a lovely party with food and entertainment. Those attending were new citizens and others who will become citizens in the next few months. I distributed informational materials and chatted with many people but did not register any new voters. There were presentations by Mayor Brown, Judge Scott, and other dignitaries. Thank you to Eva Hassett and Brian Brown-Cashdollar for inviting the LWVBN.

Kate Wagner registered new voters and provided change of address voter registration forms at the Farmers Market in Williamsville on July 4th.

I am currently looking at other sites for Voter Registration events. So far there will be a September event in Delaware Park.

Organ Donations

An Organ Donation Form is included on each Voter Registration form. If you wish to become an organ donor you may do so by completing the form at the bottom of a voter registration form. The entire form can be submitted to the Board of Elections with only the organ donation portion completed for people who are already registered voters. The League is partnering with the New York Alliance for Donation, Inc. to promote organ donation when we register voters. New York State has one of the lowest percentages of organ donations in the country. Each year tens of thousands of New York residents die while waiting for organs to replace their diseased organs.

Another Update . . . Residents from outside of Erie County may register at our registration events and the Erie County Board of Elections will forward their registration forms to their county of residence.

-Margaret Brunson, Voter Services Chair



Photos from the League of Women Voters/Buffalo Niagara Annual Meeting, June 13th



Lynda Stephens shows flowers from the Local Government Committee to Marian Deutschman, 2015 Joan K. Bozer Award recipient



These fine ladies represent over 250 years of membership and service to LWVBN:
Allene Falk, Ruth Korn, Dorothy Westhafer, Joan Photiadis, Lee Tetkowski

We were honored by their presence



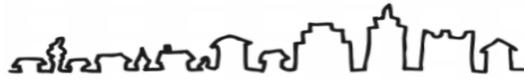
Judy Metzger, Lee Tetkowski, Terri Parks, Brian Higgins and Wynnie Fisher at the 2015 LWVBN Annual Meeting



Co-President Terri Parks presents Ellen Neumaier with a Certificate of Appreciation for her many years of able service as Chair of the NaturalResources Committee.



Gladys Gifford receives the 2015 LWVBN LEE Award from Lee Lambert and Lee Tetkowski, whose exemplary service to the League led to the creation of the award.



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August Meetings

Tues., 8/4, 1:00 p.m.
Money in Politics Committee, League
Office

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

Thurs., 8/6, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions, League Office

Mon., 8/10, 4:00 p.m.
Board Meeting, League Office

Wed., 8/12, 1:15 p.m.
Local Government, League Office

REMINDER: All copy for the September Voter is due Friday, Aug. 7, 2015