Effect of Big Media and Big Money on Political Campaigns

A town hall-style panel discussion

Thursday, October 6, 2016

5:00 p.m. registration, 5:30-7:00 p.m. program. Coffee and refreshments to follow.

Cost: Free for members of sponsoring organizations; $5 for guests

United Way Conference Room, 742 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209
Parking lot entrance off Summer Street

Moderator: Lee Coppola, retired dean, St. Bonaventure University
School of Journalism

Panelists: James A. Gardner, interim dean, University at Buffalo Law School
Jim Heaney, editor and executive director, Investigative Post
Carole McNall, assistant professor, St. Bonaventure School of Journalism

Given the surprising events of the 2016 presidential campaign, have the issues surrounding money in politics changed? If it’s not possible to keep big money out of politics, are there any ways to level the playing field? Is the media reporting fairly about all the candidates in any particular race? Come hear the experts’ thoughts on these and other crucial matters -- including questions from the audience.

RSVP: Attendees must reserve via email to WBASNYWNY@ymail.com. Space is limited!

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

Fall is here and the League has kicked into high gear. The summer was busy with voter registration efforts, work on the 2016 Voters Guide and planning for this program year by the members of the Issues/Action Committee. That important committee is composed of the chairs of the program committees and discusses and makes recommendations to the board regarding action that relates to our League positions. Usually our actions are carried out through letters to the editor or to elected officials. The committee also coordinates plans for our League program events each month. You’ll find “save the date” information for upcoming programs through January 2017 in this Voter.

We send much appreciation to the Local Government Committee members for planning the lovely luncheon to kick off this year and hope Judge Rose Sconiers’ message resonated with you and encouraged you to take an active role in governance at some level. We were pleased to have the Women’s Bar Association of New York State Western New York Chapter and the National Association of Women Business Owners Buffalo-Niagara as co-sponsors.

At the September board meeting, the members approved joining the coalition of community groups for the Our Outer Harbor campaign. Gladys Gifford has more details about the coalition activities in the Waterfront Committee report in this Voter.

More information and an online petition can be found on the campaign’s website, www.OurOuterHarbor.org. Take some time to visit the website, read informative articles and view the gorgeous photos and videos of that vital area. I’m sure you’ll spend a good amount of time learning about that local natural treasure. And make time to take a walk or bike ride at the Outer Harbor on one of our beautiful fall days to enjoy this priceless regional asset with its native flora and fauna.

We may need your help again to contact candidates who are slow to respond to our requests for our Vote411 and Voters Guide. We will email all members the names of candidates who have not responded to our invitation. Please call or send an email to candidates from your districts to urge them to participate. Contact them as constituents. Candidates for federal, state and county office will be covered by both Vote411.org and our printed 2016 Voters Guides. Candidates listen to their constituents.

Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Penultimate meeting tackles climate change

Marie Hanrahan will lead our seventh 2016 Great Decisions discussion on climate change on Thursday, October 6, from 10:00 a.m. till 12:00 p.m. at the League office (1272 Delaware). "In the past few years, the American public has become more aware of the damage wrought by climate change. From droughts in the west to extreme weather in the east, a rapidly changing climate has already made its footprint in the United States... What can the next president do to stymie this environmental crisis, and is it too late for these efforts to be effective?"

Bernice Baemmler

2016 Voters Guide and Vote411

General election information will be live at www.Vote411.org on October 3, 2016. You can also access the 2016 Voters Guide online at www.lwvbn.org. The printed 2016 Voters Guide will be mailed to all League households the week of October 17.
Volunteer Service Report

Going above and beyond to register new voters

Richard Hemann and Jayne Murray were the LWVBN representatives on August 17, 2016, at a naturalization ceremony at the U.S. Courthouse. Patricia Wille and Judith Casassa followed at the same site on August 25, 2016.

JoAnn Mecca and Deborah Shiffner deserve special mention this month. They were scheduled to represent the League at the U.S. Courthouse on September 1, 2016. We received information for a 10 a.m. start, which was incorrect. JoAnn arrived just as the ceremony was ending, but was able to make her presentation anyway. In the meantime, Deborah was not allowed entry because the ceremony was basically over. She had all the registration forms and proceeded to stand by the elevator to hand the new citizens their forms as they exited the elevator.

There is a whole new staff from Immigration Services scheduling these events and they will need some time to make a smooth transition. In the meantime, I have been assured more accurate information will be given to us. Kudos to JoAnn and Deborah for their extra efforts!

Judith Clarke, LWVBN Volunteer Coordinator

Election Services Report

Finally a tranquil month for the perpetually overworked

The LWVBN Election Services Committee had a fairly quiet month in September. There was one nominations meeting at LaSalle Courts in North Buffalo that was handled by Al Dozoretz. The second election was held at Shaffer Village in Riverside. The activists at this site were attempting to restart a nascent resident council. Many thanks to Judy Capidicasa for assistance in the voting process and to Marianne Poprosky for being our Spanish interpreter for the evening.

Alan Dozoretz, Election Services Chair

New Members

New members, welcome aboard!

Welcome to new members Marianne Poprosky of Buffalo and Andrea O Suilleabhain of Elma. We are looking forward to meeting you.

COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY 2016

General election: Tuesday, November 8

Register in person by Friday, October 14
Register by mail: postmarked by Friday, October 14, and received by Wednesday, October 19
Apply for absentee ballot in person by Monday, November 7
Apply for absentee ballot by mail: postmarked by Tuesday, November 1
Deliver ballot in person by Tuesday, November 8
Deliver ballot by mail: postmarked by Monday, November 7, and received by Saturday, November 12
Money in Politics Update

How would you rate New York State’s campaign finance laws?

The League’s Money in Politics review was prompted by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United decision and subsequent Supreme Court decisions that dramatically changed the country’s campaign finance laws. Our new position provides us with additional tools to address these changes and to further our work for campaign finance reform on federal, state and local levels. Since laws governing state campaign finance are as varied as the states themselves, it is time for us to give some much needed attention to understanding New York State’s campaign finance laws.

Does this seem a daunting task? The National League has come to the rescue, with a worksheet listing the important categories of disclosure, coordination and enforcement to help us evaluate state campaign finance regulations. We have included the worksheet here, adding contribution and expenditure limits. We are asking you to answer YES or NO if you think New York law includes these regulations. Additional comments are welcome. How would you rate our state’s campaign finance laws? Send your answers to the MIP Committee either by email to events@lwvbn.org or to my address listed in the LWVBN Member Directory. We’ll discuss your answers in the next Voter. Thank you!

Janet Massaro, chair, MIP Committee

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New York State Campaign Finance Regulations Worksheet

Do you think our state’s campaign finance laws include these regulations? Answer YES or NO.

Contribution limits ____
Expenditure limits ____

Disclosure:
Timely reporting of contributions ____
Timely reporting of expenditures ____
Identity of responsible human and address required ____
Contributor’s employer and address required ____
Top $$ contributors identified by name, not organization, on advertisements ____

Coordination:
Rules to prohibit coordination between candidates, political parties, outside organizations ____
Pay-to-play rules for lobbyists and those doing business with state ____

Public financing of campaigns:
Governor only ____
All statewide elections ____
All state legislators ____

Oversight/enforcement:
By a commission or board ____
Independent, non-political administrator ____
Mandatory audits ____
Penalties given for violators of campaign finance laws ____
Save these Dates!

Thursday, November 17, 2016: At 6:30 p.m. Robert McCarthy, a political reporter for The Buffalo News, will share his post-election reflections at the Harlem Road Community Center Auditorium.

Saturday, December 3, 2016: The League Holiday Party will be a luncheon at Rizotto’s Restaurant, featuring guest speaker Mary Travers Murphy, executive director of the Family Justice Center. We’ll share gift items that you may contribute in future Voters. Mark your calendars now.

Friday, January 13, 2017: Peter Galie will make a presentation about the New York State Constitutional Convention, including the pros and cons of conducting one, during a Lunch & Issues program at the Scotch ‘n Sirloin. Leagues have been asked to make a recommendation to help the state League board decide whether to recommend voting in favor or against a convention when it appears on the November 2017 general election ballot. Dr. Galie is a recognized expert on the New York State Constitution.

Centennial Celebrations

In the next few years, the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara will be actively commemorating the following centennials:

November 6, 1917: Women win the right to suffrage in New York State

November 19, 2019: 100th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters of New York State

February 14, 1920: The League of Women Voters (LWVUS) succeeds precursor organization the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

August 26, 1920: Women win the right to suffrage nationwide via the ratification by 36 states of the 19th Amendment

All are welcome, and many hands are needed. Call or email the League office to help with events and displays to commemorate these historic events.
Legislative Procedures Update Study

Join our consensus meeting Monday, October 17

During the 2015 League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS) State Convention, the delegates approved the board-recommended Program Update Study of our position on Legislative Procedures (1977). The section of the current position that we are looking at in this study reads:

“The legislature should continue to serve as a part-time body. Terms for legislators should be longer, and possibly staggered.”

Our League will conduct a consensus meeting on October 17, 2016, at 3:30 p.m. at the League office. The regular meeting of the board of directors will follow. We have provided the consensus questions with this Voter and the Executive Summary with the electronic mailing of the Voter. Please contact the League office (call 986-4898 or email lwvbn@lwvbn.org) by October 7, 2016, if you plan to attend and also let us know if you would like a hard copy of the Executive Summary. We’ll mail it to you early the next week. The Executive Summary and PowerPoint that we’ll present at the consensus meeting will give you the information you need to contribute to the consensus discussion.

Terri Parks, LWVBV Co-President

Call for Volunteers

Many opportunities to be more active

Help organize our May 2017 program on ethics

An ethics program is on our agenda for May. I have volunteered to coordinate and develop the program along with other LWVBN members.

Please contact me if you are interested. The program is expected to be fundamental and geared to attract a large audience. Committee will decide on an event title, but it may be similar to this: "NO ETHICS, NO DEMOCRACY: An Exploration of Ethics or Not in Government and Public Life."

Lynda Stephens

Register voters before the general election

Volunteers are still needed for voter registration events in October -- particularly for the Health Fair at Broadway Market on Tuesday, October 4. If you are interested in helping out, please contact me.

Margaret Brunson, Voter Service Chair
The LWVBN has joined the Our Outer Harbor campaign, as recommended by the Waterfront Committee. Terri Parks and Gladys Gifford represented the LWVBN at the press conference at the Bell Slip on the Outer Harbor on August 30. LWVBN member Nicole Matteson organized the event in her role as executive director of the 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor.

The Our Outer Harbor campaign is a coalition of community advocacy groups dedicated to protecting and preserving the public trust on Buffalo’s waterfront. The campaign stresses that all development planning processes for the Outer Harbor follow the intent of the law, set a positive precedent for waterfront land use and the protection of public health, and ensure transparency with timely information to the public.

A public tour will be held by Our Outer Harbor on Wednesday, September 28, to share with the public how the Buffalo waterfront belongs to everybody. The tour will be from 5:00 to 6:45 p.m. and meet at the Wilkeson Pointe Park sign on Fuhrmann Boulevard, Buffalo 14203. A public meeting will follow from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m upstairs at Buffalo Riverworks, 359 Ganson Street, Buffalo 14203.

The next meeting of the Waterfront Committee is planned for Wednesday, October 12, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., in the café area of the Central Library — all are welcome.

Gladys Gifford, Waterfront Committee Chair

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**September Kick-Off Luncheon**

*Almost 70 attendees enjoyed lunch and lively discussion*

Hon. Rose H. Sconiers made an interactive presentation in the beautiful Twentieth Century Club. Special thanks to our co-sponsors, the Women's Bar Association and NAWBO Buffalo Niagara.
October Meetings & Events

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

Thursday, 10/6, 5:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Effects of Big Money and Big Media on Political Campaigns, United Way

Tuesday, 10/11, 4:00 p.m.
Issues Committee, Harlem Road

Wednesday, 10/12, 12:30 p.m.
Local Government Committee, League Office

Wednesday, 10/12, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Waterfront Committee, Central Library

Monday, 10/17, 3:30 p.m. & 5:00 p.m.
Legislative Procedures Consensus & board meeting, League office

Thursday, 10/27, 1:30 p.m.
Education Committee, League Office

Friday, 10/28, 9:00 a.m.
Candidate Forum, Amherst Senior Center

League meetings are open to all! Come and bring a friend to learn what we’re doing.

New Voter deadlines!
To simplify the editorial schedule, the deadline for the Voter will henceforth coincide with the date of the monthly board meeting. Thus, the deadline for the November Voter is Monday, October 17, 2016. Please send copy, photos, meeting notices, and other submissions to our new copy editor, Nora Mikes, nora_mikes@yahoo.com (675-5025). And please, no formatting.