



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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Monday, April. 10, 2017

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara present:

Survivors of Torture

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Doors open at 5:00 p.m.; program begins at 5:30 p.m.

Jewish Family Services Auditorium
70 Barker Street, Buffalo, NY 14209

Speakers, who all work for the Western New York Center for Survivors of Torture, include Amela Soteli, a refugee from Bosnia, care coordinator; Leonce Byimana, an asylum seeker from Rwanda, program director; and Alle Burger, described by her colleagues as “100% Buffalonian,” also a care coordinator.

More than 90 percent of the people fleeing to New York from conflict-ridden countries have resettled in one of five upstate counties. Erie County is one of those, welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Nepal and more. Come and hear about their real-life experiences, and how the Center for Survivors of Torture helps them heal and make their home in a new land.

**Barker Street runs from Main Street to Delaware Avenue,
between Bryant & Summer Streets next to Temple Beth Zion. Parking is
available.**

This program is free and open to the public.
Make reservations at lwvbn.org or by calling the League office at 716-986-4898

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.

Contents

Presidents' Report	2	Money in Politics	4
Great Decisions	2	Students Inside Albany	4
Election Service	3	Reflections on Black History	5
Volunteer Coordinator	3	Constitutional Convention	6



Presidents' Report and Board Actions



You should have received your copy of the 2017 "They Represent You" by now. This helpful reference is one benefit of League membership. We have also sent the brochures to all public libraries and city and town halls in Erie and Niagara counties for distribution. It is also available at www.lwvbn.org. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to use the online version. Mary Ann Turkla and Flora Summe updated all contact information. A number of League members delivered most of them. Special thanks to Shirley Joy who made all deliveries for Niagara County! Thank you to everyone who helped in any manner for your efforts. This booklet is an important League service to our community.

At the February board meeting, the board selected Roger Cook — for his exemplary and tireless work to promote social, economic and environmental justice — as the 2017 recipient of the League's Making Democracy Work Award. We'll be honored to present the award to Roger at our annual meeting luncheon on Saturday, June 3, 2017. Save that date on your calendar.

Tuesday, April 4, 2017, is the national observance of Equal Pay Day, the day when women and men around the country recognize the wage gap between working women and men, and offer remedies to address pay inequity. According to statistics released in 2016 by the United States Census Bureau, women are paid, on average, 80 cents for every dollar their male counterparts are paid -- a gap of 20 cents. Wear red that day to show the world that women are in the red as compared to men in their wages every day.

The board also approved co-sponsorship of the efforts of CEDAW-Buffalo. On its website: <http://www.cities4cedaw-buffalo.org>, CEDAW-Buffalo states: "*The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*" — also known as the "Women's Equality Treaty" or "CEDAW" for short (pronounced "see-daw") — is the most important international human rights treaty focused specifically on the rights of women. It requires governments and society to proactively address gender-based discrimination in all areas of public and private life including employment, wages, job security, public safety, child care, domestic violence, and reproductive health. CEDAW-Buffalo is working to obtain a CEDAW ordinance in the City of Buffalo.

"Cities across the United States have developed CEDAW legislation. We believe CEDAW-based legislation can have a similarly significant impact in the Buffalo community. We find it appalling that women in Buffalo and Erie County face daily threats of domestic violence. We find it unacceptable that in Buffalo, full-time female workers make on average \$13,349 less per year than similarly situated male workers. **We find it unacceptable that 30% of families in Buffalo live in poverty, and 25% of women in Erie County do not receive prenatal care.** All of this needs to change, and we need to stand up and work affirmatively together to change it."

The board also approved co-sponsorship, with the Buffalo Niagara Coalition for Open Government, for a September 27, 2017, presentation by Robert Freeman, executive director of the New York Department of State's Committee on Open Government. We look forward to this September program that will surely provide important and interesting information

Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Focus on the Future of Europe

Marie Hanrahan has agreed to kick off Great Decisions 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Thursday, April 6, at the League office. Our inaugural topic is the European Union (The Future of Europe: coping with crises). "The outcome of the United Kingdom referendum on EU membership sent shock waves across the globe. It even caught British voters by surprise. The European Union has helped secure peace in Europe for the past 70 years. Now it faces an uncertain future. Amid a refugee crisis, lingering financial recession and the constant specter of terrorism, unity seems more imperative than ever. But the 'Brexit' vote underscores the complexities of integrating an extremely diverse continent. What will post-Brexit Europe look like, and how can U.S. foreign policy adapt?" Weighty matters are up for discussion. Hope you all are ready to tackle them.

Bernice Baeumler, Great Decisions Chair

Election Services Committee

Taking Care of Business

In January, I had written to two Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority aides who have responsibility over sites that I thought might be overdue for elections. One aide responded, and as a result this committee was able to conduct two nominations meetings at sites which were overdue for elections. I want to thank committee volunteers who were present for a mailing and the two volunteers who accompanied me to these two sites.

After two requests for a response, the other housing aide has still not responded. I will most likely be forced to contact a supervisor in order to obtain a response to my inquiries.

Alan Dozoretz, Election Services Chair

Volunteer Opportunity

Take Part in the 2017 Shoreline Sweep

Join your LWVBN friends to clean up Unity Island (formerly Squaw Island) again this year on April 22. The park is just off Niagara Street on the scenic, dramatic Niagara River (near the foot of Amherst Street). We'll work from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Dress warmly. If you wish, bring your own work or garden gloves.

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper administers the shoreline sweep and registers volunteers. To volunteer, go to bnriverkeeper.org/cleanup (be sure to choose Unity Island as your site).

Ellen Gibson, LWVBN Shoreline Sweep Coordinator

League History

Volunteers Help Document the Past

The Great Decisions members and volunteers have agreed to the task and are working on archiving League history. This "job" was prompted in part by League material collected by the East Aurora League and donated by Lee Lambert, former president of the East Aurora League. Thank you!

Judy Metzger, Co-President

Volunteer Coordinator

Registering New Citizens

There were only two naturalization ceremonies in February. Ramona Gallagher and Ann Converso represented the LWVBN at the U.S. Courthouse on February 16, 2017. The ceremony at the Theodore Roosevelt site was attended by Patricia Wille and Kathleen Bassett.

I am happy to report that our commitments on the court calendar are filled through June. Many thanks to our volunteers who came forward so quickly! A new calendar for the summer months will be sent out later in the spring.

As always, we appreciate the time and effort our volunteers give to this project.

Judith Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator

Lunch & Issues

Hard Work and Dedication

For a number of years, Lunch & Issues programs have taken place at the Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant. Marion Fay and Sally Metzger have been faithful in welcoming attendees, taking payment for luncheon and reconciling the bill after the program. They have agreed to continue as needed. Thank you!

Judy Metzger, Co-President

Students Inside Albany

Local Students Chosen to Attend SIA Program

Genavieve Koyn, a senior at Grand Island High School, and Madeline Gee, an 11th grader at City Honors High School, have been chosen to attend this year's Students Inside Albany program sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation. This 17th annual Students Inside Albany program will take place May 21-24, and will bring 60 students from across the state to Albany to get a first-hand education about their state government. The program is designed to increase high school students' awareness of their responsibility in representative government and how to meet that responsibility.

Genavieve and Madeline, representing the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, were chosen for their career direction and interest in law and government, and their leadership in school and the community.

While at the conference, students will join their peers in a hands-on learning experience with participation in a series of interactive lectures on the state budget process, the role of lobbyists in the legislative process, citizen rights to access government information, the role of media in politics, and the move to reform state government. The students will have an opportunity to tour the State Capitol. The highlight for most students is the opportunity to shadow their senators and assembly members during actual legislative sessions.

For more information on the Students Inside Albany program, please visit the state website at www.lwvny.org.

Janet Goodsell, Youth Program Chair-SIA

Happy Hour *You are "cordially" invited*

Please join us for our inaugural monthly Happy Hour

5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at Providence Social
490 Rhode Island St., Buffalo NY 14213

Come alone or bring a friend for an evening of informal, nonpartisan camaraderie and socializing, with happy hour pricing on drinks and food.

Money In Politics Committee

League of Women Voters Urges Congress to Reform the Federal Election Commission

Elections cost money, but money shouldn't be able to buy elections! Fair and clean elections, determined by the vote of American citizens, should be at the center of our democracy. But big money, secret money, is taking over our elections while the Federal Election Commission (FEC), the agency that governs money in politics, sits on its hands. The FEC is broken and it is time for a change.

Paralyzed by its own structure with six commissioners — three Republicans and three Democrats who regularly cast tie votes on a partisan basis — the FEC has failed to enforce the nation's already weak campaign finance laws. FEC Commissioner Ann Ravel has recently resigned, saying she's had enough of the gridlock and infighting.

The existing bipartisan approach must be replaced by an enforcement agency with an odd number of commissioners so that public interest comes before partisan interests. Legislation currently in Congress would create a new independent agency, the Federal Election Administration of five commissioners, to replace the FEC. Two commissioners from each major party would be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate; the fifth commissioner would be appointed on a nonpartisan basis from a list of candidates selected by a blue-ribbon panel of retired federal judges, former law enforcement officials or individuals with election law experience. With this five-member structure, the new legislation would end gridlock at the commission and put the public's interests over partisan interests.

The new Federal Election Administration will still have the responsibilities previously held by the FEC to administer campaign finance laws and the presidential public financing system, as well as to issue regulations and advisory opinions. The FEA would also have the authority to conduct investigations of possible violations. However, the legislation sets up a new system of administrative law judges with jurisdiction over individual enforcement cases in order to provide for consistent and impartial enforcement.

Join the fight to end gridlock at the FEC. Tell Congress to support the Federal Election Administration Act of 2017.

Money In Politics Committee Members as submitted to "Another Voice" in "The Buffalo News"

Reflections on Black History Month

Never Give Up: Progress is a Constant Struggle

This past February, we observed African-American History Month. It is a month in which the nation pays homage to the contributions and achievements of its African-American citizens. Their history is inextricably woven into the fabric of American history, and is an important part of the history of the larger society.

Originally celebrated as “Negro History Week,” the observance was founded by Carter G. Woodson in 1926, but Negro History Week became so popular in African-American communities that the week was expanded to the entire month of February.

By what may be interpreted as a voluntary act of omission, African-Americans have long been deprived of rightful pride in the making and shaping of the wealth and power of this nation. This neglect describes a segment of the American experience that is a direct result of social processes and arrangements that have been in place for generations. Yet, Americans of color have defended and enriched this country, and their labor has contributed greatly to its growth and development.

The history of the accomplishments of African-Americans and their antecedents was chronicled by Joel Augustus Roberts, who labored for decades to bring their cultural contributions to light. Born in Jamaica in 1883, Roberts experienced delayed success as a writer and historian, owing to the indifference of publishers to portrayals of people of African lineage as intelligent, ingenious and contributive. His works appeared at a time when no mass communication was used to assure integration and easy passage of ethnic minorities into the American mainstream. He died in 1966 at age 83 after devoting a lifetime to his undertaking.

There is an authentic African-American middle class, a well-defined class division that has resulted from economic mobility, education and attitude which, because of cherished conceits, denigrating others still, many choose not to perceive.

From a wellspring of 21st century ethnic expectation emerged a hero destined to be the 44th president of the United States of America, the most exalted political position in the world.

I wish venerated historical friends could have witnessed his inauguration, i.e., old warriors such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Mary B. Tolbert, W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, and all those who sacrificed for social justice and change. Our fragile status on the social landscape has been significantly altered.

The demoralizing foe is still racism, but we need not be overwhelmed by it. If we have learned but one lesson since the 1960s, it is that there is no substitute for sheer perseverance and the development of Christian strengths to succeed in spite of opposition and discouragement. Refusing to give in to attack does reap rewards. In a nation composed of people of diverse ethnic origins, all groups have had to learn the value of accommodation on the long road to assimilation.

Today we have more African-Americans in government in high policy-making positions than ever before. We have more African-American millionaires, educators, jurists, scientists, and corporate managers than ever before. Conversely, we also have more victims of poverty, of hate crimes, of black-on-black crimes, and more illegitimacy, drugs and homelessness than ever before.

God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and a same mind, and through Him, black women must act fearlessly and decisively. In all struggles for black liberation, women have been at the forefront.

Constitutional Convention

LWVBN Position on Con-Con Ballot Question

On November 7, 2017, 240 years after the first New York State Constitution was ratified, voters will go to the polls throughout the state and vote "yes" (to support) or "no" (to oppose) the holding of a constitutional convention in 2019.

We invited Peter Galie, one of the state's leading experts on the history of the New York State Constitution, to present the pros and cons of holding a state constitutional convention at a Lunch & Issues event in January. At that time we invited League members to submit suggested comments and/or join us at our February board meeting. Two people submitted suggestions and two members attended the board meeting and shared their comments. Our response to the state League's request for input follows:

At the 2015 LWNYS State Convention, the League clearly articulated its support for the following reforms as positive factors in deciding on support for a potential 2019 constitutional convention:

- A fair nonpartisan process that complies with federal voting rights provisions should be used to elect delegates and ease ballot access to encourage participation by racial and other minorities.
- Public financing should be provided for candidates and their positions on issues and convention goals should be widely publicized to enable voters to cast informed votes at their election.
- Statewide office holders, state or federal legislators, and state judges should not serve as delegates.

As of February 2017, none of these points have been addressed by the legislature. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara has no alternative but to oppose the November 2017 ballot question regarding the convening of a 2019 constitutional convention.

In addition, we note these serious concerns:

- We view the estimated \$50 million to \$108 million cost as excessive, and fear that public officials could double-dip.
- Everything currently in the constitution is potentially in jeopardy — for example, free public education, environmental protections, social services and other commitments that the League values.
- We believe that, in the current political climate, the risks outweigh the potential benefits.

Terri Parks, Co-President

State League Launches Google Groups

Join One or Both for Regular Action Alerts

The New York State League has set up two Google groups for advocacy. Members of the groups can share ideas, articles, statewide bills of interest, and other information as appropriate. This is an excellent opportunity for the League to use its membership to lobby on pertinent legislation. We will send out Action Alerts on specific bills in real time so that those interested in calling their legislators can do so exactly when the time is right.

The two groups are a General Advocacy Group on the general happenings at the Capitol, and an Education Issues Group.

If you are interested in joining either (or both!) of these groups, please email Jennifer@lwvny.org. And don't forget to check the LWNYS blog: <http://lwvny-capitolbeat.blogspot.com/>

Adapted from the February-March 2017 LWV of Albany County Bulletin

Seeking program suggestions

Have an idea for a topic or speaker?

Let us know!

Each year, the Issues Committee is challenged with developing monthly programs that are relevant, timely and interesting to both League members and the community at large. If you have an idea, we're eager to hear it. Speakers can be national or regional, not just local, so think big!

Email your thoughts to lwvbn@lwvbn.org

LWVBN Annual Meeting

Come One, Come All

The LWVBN Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, June 3, 2017, at the new Hyatt Place on Main Street in Amherst.

The meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. with coffee and pastries; a buffet luncheon will follow. At 1:00 p.m., Paul McQuillen, our guest speaker, will address the issue of gun violence. Paul is the upstate coordinator of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence. We will also hear brief remarks from our two Students Inside Albany participants.

A highlight will be the presentation of the Making Democracy Work Award, the Joan K. Bozer Leadership Award and the LEE Award.

Kathleen Macaluso, Board Events Chair

New Magnetic Name Tags

Wear yours with pride!

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara is excited to introduce a new membership benefit. At the annual meeting on June 3, we will distribute these beautiful metal name tags with our logo and easy-to-read names. A magnet that affixes to the back lets you wear your tag without damaging your clothing.

Your name will appear as it is listed in our membership roster. If you want your tag to read differently (for example, *Terri Parks* instead of *Joan Parks*), you **MUST** send an email stating your preferred name to lwvbn@lwvbn.org by **MONDAY, MAY 1, 2017**.

In the future, we will order name tags for new members once a year — in March, after dues and renewals are received. One free name tag will be provided for each member; replacements, if needed, will cost \$10 each.

Nancy DeTine, Communications Chair



Tribute To A League Member

Voted in Every Election from Truman to Trump

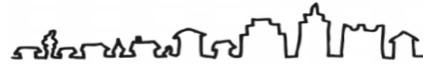
Long-time League member Jean Caldwell died recently. Her daughter shared her interesting League story with us:

"Quite recently, actually, we had a conversation about her involvement with the League of Women Voters. I recall her saying that she joined the League of Women Voters back around her college days. She is Cornell Class of 1944. She told me she was very excited to join the League of Women Voters, excited to be able to work towards making change in the world through League membership and activity. She said this was very important to her as a young woman. She was born in April 1921, just eight months after the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote, so she grew up in the first generation of women born into the right to vote! Voting age was 21 back then (in all states but Georgia), and she did vote in the first presidential election in which she was eligible to be a registered voter.

The first presidential election she voted in was the historical upset election of 1948, where the incorrect newspaper banner headline announced "Dewey Defeats Truman." What an election to be your first! She absolutely did vote in the recent presidential election, and even made sure to help my father get down to the polling place. Interesting, she voted in presidential elections from Truman to Trump. In her span of 95 years, she most likely voted in 18 presidential elections!

She was a life-long resident of New York State, living in Utica where she was born, Ithaca and Buffalo. And for many years she summered with her family at their Adirondack camp. Although she was 95, her sudden turn of health and passing were completely unexpected. I honestly thought she would live to be 100."

Our sincere thanks to Jean's daughter, Cynthia Pegado, for sharing these memories with the readers of the Voter.



OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA
1272 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209-2401



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



April Meetings & Events

Visit lwvbn.org for the latest event details

Mon., 4/3, 4:00 p.m.

Issues Committee, Harlem Road Com. Cntr

Tues., 4/4, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Program: Survivors of Torture, Jewish Family Auditorium,
70 Barker St., Buffalo, NY 14209

Wed., 4/5, 1:30 p.m.

Local Government Committee, League office

Thurs., 4/6, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Great Decisions, League office

Mon., 4/10, 4:00 p.m.

Board meeting, League office

Sat., 4/22, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Shoreline Sweep, Unity Island, Buffalo

Thurs., 4/27, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee, League office

Thurs., 4/27, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

LWVBN Happy Hour, Providence Social,
490 Rhode Island St., Buffalo

Thurs., 5/4, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Great Decisions, League office

Be sure to check your email and our website for other events as they are scheduled!

Reminder

The deadline for the May Voter is Monday, April 10, 2017. Please send copy, photos, meeting notices, and other submissions to Nora Mikes, copy editor, at nora_mikes@yahoo.com (675-5025).