



your
VOTER

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President

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LWVBN website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11 times a year. Summer Voter copy is due Monday, June 29. Send copy to Nancy DeTine at nancy@nancydetine.com



League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara Annual Meeting

Date: *Saturday, June 13, 2020*

Time: *10:00 a.m.*

Place: *Yours! From your computer or phone*

AGENDA

- Directions to help us use Cisco Webex.
- Election of officers and directors of the board of directors and Nominating Committee
- Approval of the 2020-2021 budget for the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara
- Approval of revisions to the LWVBN Bylaws
- Approval of the LWVBN Local Program Focus for 2020-2021

Members who make a reservation will be invited to attend by an email from Cisco Webex or phone conference call. Members with no email address who make a reservation will receive a phone call with the conference call numbers.

Members who make a reservation may request a hard copy of the Call to the Annual Meeting.

RSVP: by Thursday, June 4. To make your reservation, send an email to lwvbn@lwvbn.org or call 716-986-4898.



League of Women Voters Mission

The League of Women Voters is a good government organization that encourages informed and active participation in the political process, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League never supports political parties or candidates.

President's Report and Board Business

The annual meeting will definitely take place through the use of Cisco Webex, an easily accessible videoconferencing platform. Several board members have begun practicing its use. Folks who are unable to access it, because they have no computer or their computer won't connect, will be able participate through a phone number. It is essential that everyone who plans to attend make a reservation. Only people who make a reservation will receive an invitation. Everyone who has an email will receive an invitation by email. Anyone who has no email will receive a phone call with the call-in number. We expect to conduct program events and meetings in the near future through use of Cisco Webex or Zoom.

The board welcomes Directions to the Board from any members. Please send them by snail mail or email to the League Office.

The board members began planning for the coming year at the May board meeting. One thing we decided was that each board member would become a mentor for new members. We are beginning with those folks who joined the League since February 1 this year. Our purpose is to be more welcoming and learn new members will be active in our work.

At the current time, we are sending hard copies of the Voter only to the small group of members who have not shared email addresses with the League. We respectfully request other members who have email addresses to share them with us. When life returns to a more normal state, we will again publish the hard copy of the Voter.

Of course, we hope that everyone is keeping safe and well by honoring the directions for social distancing at this time. It certainly is unprecedented, but League members are well able to adapt to changing conditions.

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

The Great Decisions group will meet the first Thursday of the month when meetings may again be held at 1272 Delaware Avenue. The earliest date we will meet will be June 4 at 10 a.m. When we do meet, we will discuss the first topic in our 2020 Great Decisions Book: Climate Change. Marie Hanrahan will lead the discussion. At the meeting we will also review the calendar and reschedule future meeting dates and scheduled discussion topics. Please contact Fran Holmes at mfranholmes@gmail.com or 885-8449 with any questions. And stay well ...

Fran Holmes

Education Committee

As the isolation period was about to begin, our Education Committee intended to start a review of our charter schools position and planned to update the present version. Lee has found that the number of active charter schools in Erie County has reached 19 and there is one in Niagara County. We also have learned that there was an enormous overpayment to some of them from the Buffalo Public Schools, resulting in their filing court cases against retrieving that money. As the stay-at-home policies continue, some of us are reaching out to each other by phone and messaging.

Lee Tetkowski, Co-chair

Don't forget ... renew your membership today!

You should have received your membership renewal in the mail. Please return it and the completed Membership Survey as soon as possible. As we wrote in the letter, we urge folks who may make a donation to the League to send it with your renewal. The membership year is July 1 - June 30.

Money In Politics

U.S. Supreme Courte Upholds Donor Disclosure Requirements

In April the United States Supreme Court refused to hear a lower court case decision that required the names of secret doors to a \$1.7 million political super PAC be publicly disclosed. Although not entirely unexpected, the unanimous decision with two new conservative justices on board was greeted as a positive step upholding essential campaign finance disclosure requirements.

People who contribute large sums of money to political campaigns have always tried to hide their identities and to keep their donations secret. This has been an ongoing political issue since the founding of the republic but became especially contentious after disclosure requirements were made into law in the years following the 1970s Watergate scandals. At that time Congress passed strong disclosure laws and created the Federal Election Commission to enforce them. Since then, many cases challenging disclosure requirements have made it to the Supreme Court. However, the court has consistently upheld disclosure based on three government interests: informing voters, fighting corruption, and preventing people from circumventing the law.

The League's position on Money In Politics captures the court's reasoning on disclosure. We state that financing political campaigns should:

- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices;
- Ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections;
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

Our Money In Politics Committee meets regularly to read, discuss and take appropriate action to promote these League objectives. Meetings are open to all League members and, although we are unable to meet in person as we write, we continue to share information with each other. Call the League office at 986-4898 for contact information, meeting dates and times.

Janet Massaro, Chair

Naturalization Ceremonies



This has been a very successful year as we registered 1416 new voters. For those of you who have never been to a ceremony, it is a very emotional experience. Our volunteers arrive early and meet Robert Hellwitz from the Erie County Board of Elections. By 8:00 a.m. we are at work helping new citizens complete voter registration forms. The ceremonies themselves are very moving. Many of our new citizens came from war-torn, hostile countries. As the High Notes sing the Star Spangled Banner, a new citizen leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance, and we are able to share and watch as their journey to citizenship is completed. We do not know when the next ceremony will occur, but when that happens we will be looking for additional volunteers. Stay healthy and safe.

Deborah Shiffner, Coordinator



Get Out the Vote Steering Committee

The Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Steering Committee is alive and well! Prior to the current pandemic we hosted members from the NAACP, PUSH Buffalo, ACCESS Buffalo, OPEN Buffalo, Hispanos Unidos, NOAH and VOICE Buffalo in a meeting to work on ways we could collaborate to get out the vote. We have partnered with the NAACP and ACCESS Buffalo to go to high schools to engage students in voting workshops and partnered with OPEN Buffalo, PUSH Buffalo and ACCESS Buffalo to register voters.

Since beginning our sheltering in place living style, the GOTV Steering Committee has been meeting via conference call. One of our members, Susan Dombrowski, wrote a grant proposal to the State League for the purpose of Getting Out the Vote in the Time of COVID-19. We will receive \$600 that will be matched by our local League to work on a project proposed by Barbara Gunderson. We plan to send GOTV postcards to residents in the Lovejoy District, who are unlikely to vote, encouraging their participation.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS to write and address postcards. We will be sending 3,000 postcards in September to remind people of deadlines for voter registration, absentee ballots and dates of early voting. We will prepare packets with 30, 50 or 100 postcards, instructions and postage. All interested members, please email Barbara Gunderson at bjgunderson44@gmail.com.

In addition, **WE NEED YOUR IDEAS**. If anyone has ideas about advertising or other means of increasing voter turnout do not be shy. Again, you may contact our Voter Services Chair, Barbara Gunderson at bjgunderson44@gmail.com. We look forward to your participation in these important GOTV activities!

Help Us Get Out the YOUTH Vote

The LWVBN GOTV Steering Committee has reached out to college administrators with a message for students to answer their questions about voting and facilitate online voter registration. The committee requests your help in this important effort by encouraging any young people you may know to register and vote.

Do you know some young people who may still need to register to vote or need to have questions answered about voting? Are you and your friends still registered to vote? We are all a political force, but young people in particular are a major potential political force who have the power to shape elections. Approximately 49 million young people, ages 18-29, are eligible to vote – but first, they must be registered!

Online voter registration is easy and takes only a couple of minutes. The following link takes you directly to the New York State voter registration site through the Department of Motor Vehicles. You can also use this registration form to update your voter registration information (change of address, change political party, etc.). Please take a couple of minutes and complete the registration form.

<https://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/electronic-voter-registration-application>

Not sure if you are registered? To check the status of your voter registration and find your polling place: <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>

If someone is a college student, voter registration can be done with either the college or home address. If the student will not be at the registered address when it's time to vote, the student can vote by absentee ballot. To request an absentee ballot: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/votingabsentee.html>

The League's online resource, Vote411, is live for both the primary and the general election. To obtain additional information about voting and related issues in any state, please visit [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org/); <https://www.vote411.org/>.

We hope you will read this message and share it with people in any organizations to which you belong, as well as with any children or grandchildren or students you know who may fall into the young people category.

Liz Zausmer, Chair

June 23 Primary Dates, Deadlines and Ballot Information

The June 23 Primary Election dates and deadlines are as follows:

- The last day to register to vote in person or by mail is May 29, 2020.
- EARLY VOTING DATES [if permitted under coronavirus precautions] ARE JUNE 13—21.
- The last day to change your address is June 3.

ABSENTEE VOTING:

- The last day to apply for a ballot by mail is June 16.
- The last day to apply for a ballot in person is June 22.
- Ballots must be mailed to the Board of Elections by June 22.
- Ballots can be returned in person until June 23.

An executive decision by Governor Cuomo allows applications for absentee ballots to be mailed to all registered voters in New York State, with return postage paid. The League of Women Voters of New York State suggests that registered voters might want to request a ballot from their Board of Elections anyway, just to be sure.



Offices on the June 23 primary ballot for Erie County are:

- Democratic Presidential Primary [The presence of this election on the ballot is being appealed in court.]
- Special Election for Representative in Congress, 27th Congressional District
- Delegates to the Democratic National Convention/26th Congressional District
- Delegates to the Democratic National Convention/27th Congressional District
- Democratic Primary, State Senator, 61st District
- Democratic Primary, Assembly Districts 140, 149
- Members of Democratic County Committee
- Republican Primary for Representative in Congress, 27th Congressional District
- Members of Republican County Committee
- Conservative Party Primary, City of Lancaster Councilman
- Members of Conservative County Committee
- Working Party Primary, Assembly District 142
- Libertarian Primary for Representative in Congress, 27th Congressional District
- Members of Libertarian State Committee
- Independence Primary, State Senator, 61st District
- Independence Primary, Assembly Districts 140, 142, 146
- Delegates to 8th Judicial District Convention, Assembly Districts, 140, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149
- Alternate Delegates to 8th Judicial District Convention, Assembly Districts, 140, 142, 143, 145, 146, 147, 149

A Tribute to Lee Tetkowski

How many people reach age 97? How many of them are talented artisans, politically active and maintain their own homes complete with gardens? The League is so fortunate that Lee Tetkowski does all three and more. Last month, she decided it was time to leave the co-chairmanship of the Education Committee, but not her active participation in its work and the League.

Lee volunteered to start a Charter School Monitoring Committee in December 1998 as soon as New York State adopted its charter school law. She was the chair for about 18 years and has been the co-chair for the past four years. She led our local Charter School Study and convinced the State League to adopt it as a state study, which led to consensus. At its peak the committee had about 22 people. Its name and focus changed to the Education Committee in recent years. Lee

and the Education Committee led our League's consensus efforts for the recent national League Education Study. Lee's membership in the League spans about 61 years. She has developed a relationship with school superintendents throughout our jurisdiction such that when she led a League program event several years ago, their organization changed the date for its meeting so many superintendents could attend and one was on the panel.

Lee wrote that she "remembers that the very first time I volunteered for anything at a meeting was when I raised my hand and said I could make a poster. Before I knew it I became the resident artist for flyers, posters, stationery and the Voter." Lee edited the bulletin prior to 1997 when the Voter began publication, and her cityscape headed the Voter and our stationery for many years. The first major issue she worked on was water pollution abatement and passing the Pure Waters Act in the early 1990s.

Ten years ago, Lee and Lee Lambert were honored with the Making Democracy Work Award. In 2013, the Awards Committee established a new award, the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara LEE Award. The criteria for the award are Long Term Commitment to the League, with Energy, and Excellence – in short, the initials LEE. The award honors the three women for whom the award is named: Lenore Tetkowski, Leonore Lambert, and Lenore Banks.

We are indeed fortunate to have Lee Tetkowski as a role model for us all!

Terri Parks

Opportunities for Service to the League

Finance Committee chair and one committee member. We seek a chair and an additional member for this committee, whose main duty is to monitor the League investments. The chair convenes committee meetings at least three times a year to review our investments and other financial matters that need to be addressed and reports to the board each month on the status of the League investments. The chair, treasurer and president all serve on the board. Two additional committee members may come from the general membership. This is an ideal opportunity for anyone with an interest and experience in managing their own investments.

Fund development chair: The League, like all not-for-profits, must raise the funds to conduct business and serve members. Fund development includes an annual appeal, annual meeting sponsorships, grant requests, and special events. The fund development chair works with members who have the expertise and interest in the efforts to keep the League operating in the black!

If you think you may be interested in either of these opportunities, please contact me at 716-873-3243 or lwvoter@verizon.net. I promise that I hug you only gently when we meet to discuss your interest (if and when social distancing allows). Nor will I emit an ear screeching yell of delight as much as I would like to do so.



Declaration for American Democracy

Together, we must build a democracy where **everyone participates, every vote is counted, and everyone's voice is heard**. We deserve to have a say in decisions that affect our lives, and to be fairly represented by elected officials who are responsive to our needs in order to make our lives better.

Right now, our system is in crisis. Powerful corporate and wealthy interests regularly defy the foundational principles of fairness, equity, ethics, accountability, and respect for the rule of law, and we are heading towards an impending constitutional catastrophe. Some states are passing laws that make it harder for voters, particularly minority voters, to gain access to the ballot. Long-standing voluntary standards that created a framework for some executive branch accountability are no longer enough to forestall corruption, and our current system of laws is inadequate.

We know that from calamity, opportunities arise—as does the chance to collectively build the democracy we demand and deserve. Now is not the time to tinker around the edges. **Now is the time for bold, comprehensive and new solutions to create a government that's reflective, responsive, and accountable.**

* Our democracy must ensure the freedom to vote and have that vote counted.

A strong democracy is one where voting is a fundamental right and a civic responsibility. We need to actively encourage more people to cast their ballots and ensure those votes are counted, respected, and protected. This includes policies like automatic voter registration, fully restoring the Voting Rights Act, and ending partisan gerrymandering.

* Our democracy must be honest.

A strong democracy serves the people rather than the private interests of public officials and wealthy political donors. We must strengthen ethics and financial disclosure rules for Congress and the executive branch, and subject the president to them.

* Our democracy must have meaningful participation.

A strong democracy is one where our influence is based on the force of ideas, not the size of our wallets. Elected officials must be reflective of, and responsive to, their constituents and communities. We must create programs that give small donors a bigger say in our elections and make sure our campaign finance laws are enforced.

* Our democracy must provide transparency into our government and our elections.

A strong democracy is one where people know who is trying to gain influence over our representatives, who is trying to influence our votes, and how and why policy is being made. There needs to be more transparency of political spending, more access to government records, and the White House should be required to release visitor logs.

* Our democracy must be responsive.

A strong democracy works to respond to the needs of people and their communities, building trust in governance and equity. We need to make sure government agencies are doing what's best for Americans, not just special interests and slow the revolving door between public service and private gain.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

June & Early July 2020

Note: The information below reflects normal meeting dates and times. However, due to social distancing and stay-at-home practices, schedules are subject to change and meetings may take place via phone or computer. Please contact the committee chair for the latest information.

Issues/Program Committee	Tuesday, June 2, 4:00 p.m.	TBA
Great Decisions	Thursday, June 4, 10:00 a.m.	League office (if it is open)
Board of Directors	No meeting in June	
Local Government Committee	Wednesday, June 10, 2:00 p.m.	TBA
Western New York Women's Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee	Thursday, June 11, 11:00 a.m.	via phone
Annual Meeting	Saturday, June 13, 10:00 a.m.	via phone or computer
GOTV Steering Committee	Monday, June 15, 7:30 p.m.	via phone or computer
Money in Politics	Friday, June 19, 1:00 p.m.	TBA
Great Decisions	Thursday, July 2, 10:00 a.m.	League office (if it is open)
Issues/Program Committee	Tuesday, July 7, 4:00 p.m.	TBA
Local Government Committee	Wednesday, July 8, 2:00 p.m.	TBA
Board of Directors	Monday, July 13, 4:00 p.m.	TBA
Education Committee	No meeting in July or August	
Waterfront Committee	No meetings during the summer	

**Check the calendar on our website for updates.
Please remember to wear your League badge to all League events.**