

Here's your VOTER for OCTOBER 2018

First, my apologies ...

Terri Parks, LWVBN president and our very talented VOTER editor, is still under the weather, and unable to provide the gorgeous layout you're accustomed to. The good news is that she has written a President's Report, so read on! As for the layout ... believe me, I tried mightily to work within our professionally designed template but, alas, it is much more complicated than one would think. If you are Microsoft Word expert and would like to volunteer, please let me know!

Nancy DeTine, Communications & PR Chair

Note: The deadline for the November Voter is Wednesday, October 10. Please email submissions to Nancy DeTine at nancy@nancydetine.com

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Immigrants and Refugees:

Good News for the Buffalo and New York State Economy

Friday, October 12, 2018

Registration: 11:30 a.m.

Speaker: 12:00 noon, lunch to follow

Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant

3999 Maple Road, Amherst, NY 14226

Guest speaker: Eva Hassett, Executive Director, International Institute of Buffalo

From stemming population decline to starting unique new businesses, settlers from afar are making a positive impact on our economy. Since August 2009, Eva Hassett has led the International Institute, whose mission is ***“Making Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees.”*** Join us!

RSVP by Tuesday, October 9. Make reservations online at lwvbn.org or call the League office at 716-896-4898. The \$21 lunch cost can be paid upon arrival. No charge to attend the program only.

President's Report

At our August meeting, the board adopted the following Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy:

League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principle and in practice. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective, or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

The LWVBN affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of the Buffalo/Niagara region of New York State.

Adopted 8/2018

In addition, the board established an initiative for Outreach for Civic Education Engagement to connect with other organizations and promote a more inclusive League. The long-term health and vitality of the League depend on having members and partnerships with the many diverse cultural groups in our community. Liz Zausmer agreed to chair this exciting effort and has made several fruitful contacts this summer. We worked with the NAACP on a candidates', have arranged to partner with the Urban League for voter registration on September 25, have conducted voter registration at the new Underground Railway Heritage Museum in Niagara Falls, and will partner with We are Women Warriors. Liz has contacted

other groups as well. The effort is off to an impressive beginning. Please think about getting involved and contact the League office to volunteer.

Terri Parks

LWVBN's Primary Day Reporters

Here's a fun fact you might not have known: Again this year, JoAnn Mecca and Ramona Gallagher reported results from the Board of Elections for the Associated Press (AP). AP made a contribution to our League for this service.

Mark Your Calendar for October 21!

LWVBN will be a co-sponsor when Richard Kimball, president of Vote Smart, brings his **Facts Matter Tour** to the Daemen College Alumni Lounge at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 21. Titled **An Evening with Richard Kimball**, the 50-minute multimedia presentation covers the four aspects of Vote Smart's Voter's Self Defense: why voter apathy and ignorance are dangerous for a democracy; how political commercials are used to manipulate rather than inform; why reliable facts and information are so critical to voting; and how to defend *your right* to the facts. The program, which is free and open to the public, is presented by the History & Political Science Department at Daemen, 4380 Main Street, Amherst, NY 14226. Vote Smart is a non-partisan organization dedicated to voter education.

Candidate events

Monday, October 22, 7:00 p.m., Amherst Town Hall Meeting Room: Marian Deutschman will be moderator and Patricia Wille will be timekeeper. Candidates who are on the ballot in Amherst will be invited.

Friday, October 26, 9:00 a.m., Amherst Senior Center: LWVBN will provide a moderator for this event, which is presented by the Amherst Senior Center.

Great Decisions

Toni Cudney is scheduled to lead our next topic, South Africa's Fragile Democracy, from 10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, October 4, at 1272 Delaware Avenue. "The African National Congress (ANC) party has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994. But the party today suffers from popular frustration over official corruption and economic stagnation. It faces growing threats from both left and right opposition parties, even as intraparty divisions surface. Given America's history of opportunistic engagement with Africa, there are few prospects for a closer relationship between the two countries. Meanwhile a weaker ANC could

lead to political fragmentation in this relatively new democracy." Still another interesting part of our world to consider. Hope to see you there.

Bernice Baeumler

Money in Politics Update

Campaign finance reform: What's ahead with a new Supreme Court?

"This political system is awash in money. ... The effect of all of this, unfortunately, leads to the cynicism and frustration of the American people and their lack of confidence in the system. It's got to change. ..."

Senator John McCain, on the David Lettermen Show, January 12, 2012

Senator McCain was responding to the 2010 Supreme Court decision in Citizens United and expressing his outrage at the failure of Congress and state legislatures to enact meaningful campaign finance reforms.

League members shared McCain's outrage and voted to reexamine our position on the financing of political campaigns. Our League participated in this national review and our MIP Committee was formed at that time. For all of our new and not-so-new members, we are highlighting significant changes in the nation's campaign finance laws. Most important, we extend an invitation to you and all of our members to join our MIP monthly discussions. (Positive reforms appear in roman type; *negatives changes are in italics.*)

1974: The Federal Election Campaign Act. The first "really big" reform legislation was a direct response to the Watergate scandals of 1972-1974. The act:

- Set limits on both contributions to and spending on political campaigns
- Strengthened disclosure and reporting requirements
- Established the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to oversee compliance
- Established opt-in public financing of presidential elections

1976: *Buckley v. Valeo*. The Supreme Court struck down limits on campaign spending but upheld limits on direct contributions to candidates.

2002: BCRA, or the "McCain Feingold" legislation, prohibited contributions to political parties, banned fake "issue ads," and prohibited corporations and unions from electioneering close to an election.

2010: *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*. The Supreme Court affirmed the right of corporations and labor unions to spend unlimited money independently in elections.

Subsequent decisions have extended the Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United. The composition of the court itself has become dramatically more conservative, making future campaign finance reforms ever harder to achieve. The question to reformers is how to best respond to these new realities.

Note: the next MIP Committee meeting will take place at 1:00 p.m. Friday, September 28, at the League office. Contact Janet Massaro at Massaro.janet@gmail.com for future meeting dates.

Janet Massaro, Chair, Money In Politics Committee

Voter Registration

With election deadlines approaching, League members and friends have been busy throughout our region helping to register potential new voters. Your dedication has been inspiring! Here's a record of some of the activity:

September 6, Central Library: Callie Lockwood, Joan Simmons and Liz Zausmer

September 12, Bryant & Stratton Buffalo Campus: Ramona Gallagher, Linda Koenigsberg, Claudia Kruszynski, JoAnn Mecca and Tina Prygon

September 16, Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area: Shirley Joy and Lee Tetkowski

September 17, Hilbert College: Janet Goodsell and Diane Goupil

September 17, Daemen College: Mike Egan

September 21, Rock the Vote at Babeville: Sue Kirkland and Janet Lenichek

September 22, NYAEYC annual meeting: Peg Mergenhagen

September 25, Buffalo Urban League: Kathy Elias, Janet Goodsell, Jayne Murray, Joan Kernan and Kate Wagner

September 25, ECC North Campus: Linda Koenigsberg and Peg Mergenhagen

Note: September 25 is National Voter Registration Day, which was founded in 2012 to encourage citizen participation in the electoral process!

October 2 and 3, Buffalo State Social Justice Festival: Ann Converso, Mary Herbst, Kathy Macaluso, Kathy Elias, Barbara Ochterski and Wallace Ochterski

October 4 and 5, ECC South Campus: Barbara Ochterski, Wallace Ochterski, Sandra O'Hara and Judy Capodicasa

Many thanks to you all for your vital community service!

League members encourage voter participation in Erie and Niagara Counties

League members were invited by Sophia Roberts, director of the Self-Advocacy Network, to speak to self-advocates at the organization's monthly meetings in September. Ramona Gallagher and Judy Weidemann talked to the Niagara County group at the Niagara Falls Library, and Ann Converso met with the Buffalo group at the Belmont Housing office. FYI: The members of the Self-Advocacy Network are registered voters who wanted more insight into the process of deciding what issues are most important, and which candidates to support. Many thanks to Ramona, Judy, and Ann for helping to deepen their understanding.

Mike Egan

Welcome New Members!

We are pleased to announce that Christine Prygon and Olga Karman have become new members of our League.

Janet Massaro, Chair, Membership Committee

Election Services Report

September has seen some movement for the Election Services Committee. On September 19, volunteers stuffed, folded, and stamped more than 900 envelopes to notify BMHA Kenfield Langfield residents of a nominations meeting for their resident council officers in October. Many thanks to Judith Clarke, Shirley Joy, Mike Egan, Lee Tetkowski, Sally Metzger, Janet Goodsell, Ramona Gallagher, Nora Mikes and Kathleen Macaluso for coming to our house and taking part in our mailing gatherings. Additional thanks go out to Nora Mikes for preparing the paperwork in Spanish and English, and to Judith Clarke and Mike Egan for providing those delicious desserts. In October, Nora, Ramona, and I will be at Kenfield Langfield to supervise their nominating process. In November we will conduct elections for their officers. This committee works due to the diligence of its members.

Alan Dozoretz

Welcoming New U.S. Citizens

On August 16, Mary Michael Egan and Pat Egan welcomed 49 new citizens at the naturalization ceremony at the U.S. Courthouse. On August 23, Judy Weidemann and Patricia Wille represented the League at a naturalization ceremony at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery where 73 candidates from 30 countries became citizens.

Patricia Wille, Volunteer Coordinator for Naturalization Ceremonies

Our Nuclear Times: Article Ten

The topic: The West Valley nuclear waste site in Western New York.

The focus: Accidental releases of radioactive strontium [STRON-tee-um] and radioactive cesium [SEE-zee-um] at the site.

STRONTIUM: An element. Symbol Sr.

Strontium, a metal, was discovered in 1791 near Strontian, Scotland. Strontium is chemically similar to calcium. A highly radioactive form called strontium-90 can replace calcium in bones and teeth, which may then cause bone cancer and leukemia. **THE ACCIDENT:** In the 1960s, a leaking pipe in the Main Building released strontium-90 into the ground. This mixed with ground water and spread north, in a long underground plume. In the year 2018, this building will be demolished. Later, the foundation will be excavated to allow access for soil cleanup. **THE PLUME:** The plume has spread widely, even into the construction-and-debris landfill area. An underground barrier (called the PTW or Permeable Treatment Wall) that is 800 feet long and 25 feet deep captures much of the strontium-90 plume, but not all. This barrier's zeolite [ZEE-o-lite] minerals need replacement about every ten years. Also, a small, far edge of the plume, beyond the barrier, has already emerged into Quarry Creek. **HALF-LIFE:** The strontium-90 half-life is about 30 years, so after 300 years (ten half-lives) the radiation will be reduced to an acceptable background level. **NOTES:** Non-radioactive strontium is found in trace amounts in our food and in small amounts in our bones and teeth. Supplemental strontium primarily accumulates in newly formed bone, so children are at particular risk when considering strontium overexposure.

CESIUM: An element. Symbol Cs.

The metal cesium in a strongly radioactive form is called cesium-137. Cesium is chemically similar to potassium, so it can be absorbed into muscle and body tissues. **THE ACCIDENT:** During the reprocessing years in the 1960s, one chimney filter blew out. **THE PRONG:** Cesium-137 dust was sent into the air, which settled onto the ground in a prong or trail at the site. **HALF-LIFE:** The cesium-137 half-life is also about 30 years, so after 300 years (ten half-lives) the radiation will be reduced to an acceptable background level. **NOTES:** Cesium is used in today's atomic clocks, which measure time with an accuracy to billionths of a second. **NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS:** The radioactive strontium-90 and cesium-137 are the principal medium-lived products of nuclear fission. This means that every nuclear power plant produces a lot as nuclear waste. These are still the largest sources of residual radiation in the areas of the 1986 Chernobyl (Ukraine) and the 2011 Fukushima (Japan) nuclear disasters. Did you know that there were 2,053 atomic and hydrogen bomb tests conducted worldwide between 1945 and 1998? How much radiation was released worldwide in the form of strontium-90 and cesium-137?

RADIATION: You can't see it, smell it, or taste it. If you see a radiation warning sign: read it, respect it, and react.

Barbara Frackiewicz

Meetings & Events

Wednesday, September 26, Waterfront Committee, 3:00 p.m., Central Library Cafe

Thursday, September 27, Education Committee, 1:30 p.m., League office

Friday, September 28, Money in Politics Committee, 1:00 p.m., League office

Monday, October 1, Our Damaged Democracy, 5:30 p.m., TR Site

Tuesday, October 2, Issues & Action Committee, 4:00 p.m., Harlem Road Community Center
Monday, October 8, Board of Directors, 4:00 p.m., League office
Wednesday, October 10, Local Government Committee, 1:30 p.m., League Office
Friday, October 12, Immigrants and Refugees, 11:30 a.m., Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant
Sunday, October 21, An Evening with Richard Kimball, 6:30 p.m., Daemen College Alumni Lounge