



your
VOTER

Volume 25 Number 6

February 2020

President

Terri Parks

Office

1272 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14209
716-986-4898
Fax 716-882-3797
Email lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Office Manager

Barbara Gunderson

Office Hours

Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Please call before coming to the office.

LWVBN website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11 times a year. March Voter copy is due Monday, February 10. Send copy to Nancy DeTine at lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Tour the Northland Workforce Training Center

The state-of-the-art Northland Workforce Training Center is the signature workforce initiative of Governor Andrew Cuomo's Buffalo Billion program. Take the tour and find out how this industry-driven public-private partnership is closing the gap between employers seeking qualified job candidates and individuals needing the skills to get hired.

Date: *Thursday, February 13, 2020*

Place: *Northland Workforce Training Center
683 Northland Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14211*

Time: *2:00 to 4:00 p.m.*

Supper to follow at the Manna Cafe in the training center

Tour Leader: Lonnell Williams, Outreach Specialist

Speakers: Stephen Tucker, President and CEO of Northland Workforce Training Center

Brenda McDuffie, President and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League

RSVP: Reservations, supper selection and \$20 payment must be received by Monday, February 10. Make checks out to LWVBN and mail to LWVBN, 1272 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209.

Supper choices: Vegetarian, fried fish, or soup and salad

To attend the program only at no charge, reserve online at www.lwvbn.org, 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

On February 14, 2020, the League of Women Voters of the United States will be 100 years old. Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWS) from 1915 to 1920, began the League. She realized that the passage of the 19th Amendment would not magically alter the participation of women in the electoral process. Chapters of NAWSA became chapters of the League of Women Voters to educate women in the voting process and the important issues of the day, and to provide information about all candidates for political office. The work of the League is as crucial today as it was 100 years ago. Our support and efforts must continue with vigor. Please take time on February 14 to salute the brave women whose work continues to this day. We need to celebrate ourselves and our work as we begin the second century of work to advocate for voters and the issues we value.

We welcome new member Liz McGough who joined the League this month.

The board appointed an ad hoc committee to invite selected high school social studies teachers to apply for the Case Method Project summer workshop offered by Harvard Business School this coming summer. We selected five teachers whose classrooms we have visited in the past year or whom we have worked with to recruit Students Inside Albany candidates. Last year 50 Leagues from 22 states sent teachers to the workshop. We're excited to learn about this opportunity for teachers to add to their individual toolkits.

Each year the state League requests each League to submit three legislative priorities for our lobbying efforts with our state legislators. The board discussed six items recommended by the Program/Issues Committee and selected Census and Redistricting, Voters Rights Legislation, and Court Consolidation as our top priorities. We will also mention these as worthy efforts: Campaign Financing, Equity in Education Funding, and legislation to set maximum hours that home health care workers may be required to work.

Terri Parks

Call for Nominations — Honoring League Leaders

It's time again to think about nominating candidates for important League honors.

The **Joan K. Bozer Leadership Award** recognizes outstanding League leadership that reflects some of the many qualities that Joan has demonstrated in her long experience as a League and community leader. We selected five key characteristics exhibited by Joan that we feel are essential qualities for recognition: Ethical, Innovative, Resourceful, Respected, Steadfast. **Please submit a paragraph of up to 250 words that describes how your nominee embodies these characteristics. Be sure to include each characteristic as you write about your nominee.**

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara **LEE Award** is presented to a League member who has made a Long Term Commitment to the League with Energy and Excellence, in short, the initials "LEE." The award honors Lenore Tetkowsky, Leonore Lambert, and Lenore Banks. **Please submit a paragraph of up to 250 words about your nominee in which you note the approximate number of years the person served the League actively, and give examples of her/his Energy and Excellence in League activity.**

Please email completed nominations to lwvbn@lwvbn.org or mail them to the League office by February 28, 2020. Be sure your name is noted as the nominator. Please feel free to contact Terri Parks at lwvbn@lwvbn.org or (716) 986-4898 if you need help with your nominations.

Terri Parks

In Memoriam

Flora Summe began volunteering at the League office in 2010 when Eugene Abrahamson became the office manager. When Eugene left in 2013, Flora stayed and became Mary Ann Turkla's right hand. With Mary Ann's guidance, Flora developed new skills and provided invaluable assistance with many office tasks until the end of 2018. Flora died on December 1, 2019. She was a kind and friendly soul.

Terri Parks

Money In Politics

How We Elect Our Representatives

League members throughout the country are being asked to adopt a position that will provide a clear but flexible base of principles for evaluating Electoral Systems that empower voters. Members who proposed this new position argue that our current position fails to provide the necessary criteria for evaluating such a system. The decision for or against the proposed position will be determined at the National League Convention in June 2020. Our Money In Politics Committee is leading the pro and con discussions of this proposal at our meetings on the third Friday of each month at 1:00 p.m. at the League office. We encourage all League members to join the discussions. Come when you are able.

The Position in Brief reads: *Support for Electoral Systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable and enhance representation for all voters.*

The introduction to this new position was printed in the January Voter. Additional material will be included in each monthly Voter. We begin this month with some basic terminology.

Electoral Systems are the rules and procedures governing the election of public officials by specifying ballot structure, district size and the way that votes are translated into seats. Electoral systems can enhance or deny voter representation just as gerrymandering can when district lines are drawn.

The **Plurality Election** is the most used electoral system in the U.S. (It is also called the At-Large or Winner-Take-All system). The candidate with the most votes wins, without necessarily receiving a majority of the votes. Such systems allow 51% of the voters to control 100% of the seats. Some Plurality Elections require **Runoff Elections** if no candidate achieves a certain percentage of the vote. In runoff elections voters go back to the polls to ensure that the winner receives a majority or certain percentage of the vote.

The second electoral system used is **Proportional**, which depends upon the percentage of the vote candidates receive. For example, 40% of the vote gets 40% of the seats in a legislative body. 60% of the vote gets 60% of the seats in a legislative body. **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) or Instant Runoff Voting** is a form of proportional voting that has gained popularity and deserves further explanation. Voters rank candidates by preference, indicating a “back-up” candidate if their first choice does not have enough support to get elected. RCV can also be used to achieve a proportional result (i.e., 40% of the votes get 40% of the seats).

A **Single Member District** is an area from which only one candidate is elected; a **Multi-Member District** is an area from which more than one candidate is elected.

Auditable Voting comprises transparent procedures to verify, by either hand count or technology, the accuracy of the election outcome.

Verifiable Voting comprises procedures that provide a secondary confirmation, such as a paper ballot, that the voting equipment has correctly counted a voter’s ballot.

Consider: How do you choose a candidate? Do you always vote for your favorite candidate regardless of outcome? If so, you have cast a **Sincere Vote**. In Electoral Systems that encourage sincere voting you can vote for your preferred candidate and not worry about “wasting” your vote. If your candidate was the winner, then you have also cast an **Effective Vote**.

You may at times consider **Strategic Voting** and vote for a candidate other than your first choice in hopes of preventing a less-than-desirable outcome. You decide to vote not for your favorite candidate, but for the candidate who may have a greater chance of victory.

You might not vote for your first choice in order to avoid the **Spoiler Effect**, which can happen when two like-minded candidates split the vote and help elect a less favored candidate. A well-known example of the spoiler effect occurred during the 1992 presidential election when Ross Perot split the vote with George H.W. Bush and helped elect Bill Clinton with 43% of the vote. The spoiler effect occurred again in 2000 when Ralph Nader split the vote with Al Gore, helping to elect George W. Bush.

With more than two candidates on the ballot, **Vote Splitting** can occur. Again, the outcome might lead to the

LWVBN Voter February 2020

election of a least favored candidate winning as two favored candidates split the vote. The prospect of vote splitting can also cause good, like-minded candidates to not even run for office. This reduces your choices as a voter, especially when parties discourage people from running.

Whenever votes are not useful in the election of a winner, they are referred to as **Wasted Votes**. Often this means all ballots cast for the losing candidates are labeled “wasted,” but it can also mean the extra or not needed votes cast in support of a much-liked winner.

Are some Electoral Systems better than others? What criteria would you include to create a better Electoral System? Does the above information answer your questions? Are there questions you would like to ask? Discuss them with us at our meeting on February 21 or send your comments to the Money in Politics Committee by email or by phone to the League office.

Janet Massaro, Chair

Waterfront Committee

Waterfront Committee Opposes Queen City Landing's Rezoning Request

These comments were submitted to the Buffalo Common Council on January 14 by Gladys Gifford, Chair.

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara supports plans for the Buffalo waterfront that provide and ensure year-round and unencumbered public access to the waterfront; a coherent master planning process for the waterfront which includes significant public participation; development that makes appropriate use of the waterfront location; and protection and enhancement of the natural features at the water's edge.

In line with our stated position, the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara urges you, the elected representatives of the public, to act in the best interest of the public. We urge you to deny this request to change the zoning for the QCL property. We urge you to affirm the zoning designation for the Outer Harbor lands as set in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) so that all of the public can enjoy this serene space for generations to come.

City resources should be concentrated on infrastructure and housing within the existing urban fabric of the city. The proposed waivers to the UDO amount to creating urban sprawl on the Outer Harbor with attendant pressure on infrastructure, such as lines for water and sewage. Such sprawl will obligate the city for infrastructure maintenance, and is inconsistent with the spirit and letter of the UDO.

The QCL proposal seeks to create a destination for both residents and entertainment events. A waterfront destination already exists at Canalside and on Ohio Street, where the city is required to provide funding to meet demands for traffic control and infrastructure maintenance and security oversight. Construction of the proposed tower/loft building on the Outer Harbor would create even greater demand for these services. The City would be obligated to provide fire protection and emergency medical services and police protection despite the isolated location of the site on the Outer Harbor.

This proposed development would require financial support from the City to maintain its infrastructure and access, thereby diverting needed financial support from other areas of the urban core. We urge you to affirm the current zoning of the QCL site and to deny this request. In line with the principles of Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan, we urge you to support new development and businesses that seek to do smart growth in Buffalo's neighborhoods that already have essential infrastructure and vacant land.

Important Party Affiliation Deadline

Voters who want to register with a political party or who would like to change their party affiliation must complete a new voter registration form that is received no later than February 14, 2020, to permit them to vote in this year's primary elections.

Materials for Constitutional Convention Position Update Approved by the June 2019 Convention

Purpose

The purpose of this update is to determine whether there is member agreement on deleting the first sentence of the League's 1993 Constitutional Convention position, as revised June 2015.

The entire position is on the next page. The first sentence to be deleted is:

"The League of Women Voters of New York State does not support or oppose the holding of a constitutional convention."

Shortly after this position was adopted in 1993, the state Board applied it by deciding to oppose the 1997 Constitutional Convention referendum based on the extensive criteria contained within the position. However, during the most recent decision in 2017 in which the state Board decided to support the referendum, the first sentence was interpreted by some members to foreclose a decision by the state Board to support or oppose the referendum. At the June 2019 convention, the delegates approved an update that would propose deletion of the first sentence to confirm state Board responsibility to apply the position to support or oppose using the criteria set forth in the balance of the position and depending on circumstances at the time.

A **YES** vote on the update will delete the first sentence and confirm the authority of the state Board to either support or oppose a future referendum for a state constitutional convention based on the criteria in the position.

A **NO** vote will leave the position as currently written. Under the new Study and Update Process adopted by the Board this spring, members, local leagues and ILOs may suggest a future update to this position.

Background

The New York State constitution can only be changed by amendments approved by two consecutively elected state Legislatures, or through a constitutional convention convened by a specific process described in Article XIX of the constitution. That Article provides that every 20 years the public has a chance to vote on the question of whether to hold a constitutional convention -- "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?" In addition, the Legislature can place the question on the ballot at any time.

Three public votes are involved in the constitutional convention process:

1. Whether to hold the convention
2. The election of delegates
3. Approval of any amendments to the constitution

Past League Action

A study of the New York constitutional convention process was undertaken in 1992 and the Board adopted a position in 1993. The delegate selection portion of the position was amended in 2015. The position has been applied twice. The state Board voted to oppose the November 1997 ballot question on the constitutional convention. The state Board voted to support the 2017 ballot question on the constitutional convention.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION League of Women Voters of New York State Statement of Position

As announced by the State Board, February 1993, revised June 2015

The League of Women Voters of New York State does not support or oppose the holding of a constitutional convention.

The League of Women Voters of New York State recognizes that a constitutional convention is an acceptable (legal) method of amending the New York State Constitution and that the provision requiring periodic mandatory submission of the question of calling a convention is a proper procedure.

The impetus for a convention between the mandated twenty-year referenda should come from the public. However we feel that certain principles are essential throughout the process:

- Education and involvement of the public must be an integral part of each phase of the process.
- Planning should be given adequate time and sufficient funding.
- Nonpartisanship is essential.

The League believes that specific conditions should be incorporated in the policies and procedures established for constitutional conventions:

- Pre-Convention Commission: A preparatory commission should be appointed with adequate time to study the issues, establish the agenda and procedures and prepare position papers for the convention. Such a commission should provide ongoing information to the public and solicit its participation.
- Convention delegates: The League supports the following reforms as positive factors in deciding on support for a constitutional convention. Delegates should be elected by a fair nonpartisan process that complies with federal voting rights provisions and eases 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. Revised June 2015
- Convention process: Procedures must be put in place to reduce partisanship, by assuring that committees and committee chairmanship are beyond party control.

Reasonable time limits must be placed on the length of the convention and its costs.

The issues to be considered must be determined in advance by the pre-convention commission and researched by position papers, which are complete and available at the time of the convention. Meetings of the delegates should be open, held at acceptable convenient hours, with full media coverage.

- Ballot Issues: Widespread public hearings and adequate voter education are necessary prior to the placement of referenda on the ballot. Constitutional amendments recommended by a convention should be submitted to the voters as separate issues.

Join the discussion: League Position on State Constitutional Convention

We invite all League members to join us at 5:45 p.m. on Monday, February 10, 2020, after the LWVBN board meeting to discuss and decide whether our League should vote in favor of or in opposition to an update to the state League's position on constitutional conventions. Materials are provided in this Voter. We need a count of people who will attend to ensure we have sufficient chairs at the League Office. Make your reservation by email to lwvbn@lwvbn.org or call (716) 986-4898. We need only your name.

Terri Parks

Our Nuclear Times: Article 24

WELCOME to this WIMBY (What's In My Back Yard) series:

West Valley Demonstration Project, New York State, USA

Numbers start at #1001.

This nuclear fuel reprocessing site (1966-1972) contains nuclear waste that is extremely hazardous to life for thousands of years. The alphabetic index cards (3 ½ X 5 inches) do not require electricity or devices.

Instructions: Copy or cut out. Collect. Place into an envelope marked: To Future Generations. Share.

Barbara Frackiewicz



A

West Valley Demonstration Project, New York, USA #1001

ASER=Annual Site Environmental Report (year 2018)

Prepared by: Site Contractor: CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, LLC

Prepared for: -the public

-DOE (Department of Energy, a U.S. federal agency)

Contents: Public radiation exposure data

Air monitoring data

Surface water, groundwater, soil, and biologic sampling data

General radiation information

NOTE: for report copies: Telephone (716) 942-4996 or go to:

<http://www.wv.doe.gov>

Information compiled by: BF2020

P

West Valley Demonstration Project, New York, USA #1002

PTW=Permeable Treatment Wall

What is it? A below grade trench, filled with zeolite

Location: North Plateau, mostly in an East-West axis

Size: 850 feet long; 3 feet wide; 20 to 30 feet deep

Composition: zeolite, a mineral often found in cavities and veins of ancient lava; it can be artificially manufactured

Purpose: capture strontium-90 from an underground plume through ion exchange

Construction: year 2010; next replacement due in the year 2030

Information compiled by: BF2020



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

February 2020

Tuesday, February 4, 4:00 p.m.

Issues/Program Committee

Harlem Road Community Center

Monday, February 10, 4:00 – 5:45 p.m.

Board of Directors

League office

Monday, February 10, 5:45 p.m.

Constitutional Convention Position Update

League Office

Wednesday, February 12, 2:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee

League office

Thursday, February 13, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

**Preparing Workers for Careers in Advanced
Manufacturing**

Northland Workforce Training Center

Thursday, February 20, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

League office

Friday, February 21, 1:00 p.m.

Money In Politics Committee

League office

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