



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. February Voter copy is due Monday, February 11. Send copy to Nancy DeTine at nancy@nancydetine.com

Proposed New Positions on Healthcare and Healthcare Financing

Join this important State League consensus process!

The League of Women Voters of New York State has proposed updates to its positions on healthcare and healthcare financing. Each local League has been asked to review the changes and respond to the concurrence questions by March 1, 2021.

Program: Healthcare Consensus Meeting

Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: via Zoom

Please note that this meeting is for League members only. To prepare, see the PowerPoint presentation Healthcare 2021 which has been emailed with this edition of the Voter.

RSVP by January 14: Register online at lwvbn.org, call the office at 716-986-4898 or send email to lwvbn@lwvbn.org. Be sure to indicate if you do not have computer access and we will call you with information to join the meeting by phone. All members with email will receive the Zoom link by email.

Note: The full text "Update on Healthcare and the Financing of Healthcare (2019-2021) Materials" is available [here](#) and at lwvbn.org. Especially reference pages 31-35 for footnoted proposed positions.

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

2020, the year we may want to forget, has ended and we are embarked on 2021. Soon we will inaugurate a new president following an election with unprecedented challenges by the Trump campaign and record numbers of people voting. In New York State, a record 63.4% of the people eligible to vote cast ballots. That was an improvement over previous years, but well below the 80% total in Minnesota. The national average was 66.7 %. Of course, the League would like to see a much higher turnout of voters and will continue to advocate for changes in the laws of New York State to make it easier for citizens to cast their votes.

One election activity that the League has done for many years is report the election totals to the Associated Press on election night. Currently, we still send volunteers to the Erie County Board of Elections to call in totals as they are recorded by computer. In November 2020, JoAnn Mecca again made that trip downtown just as she has done for the past 20 years! That is quite a record of service! Thank you, JoAnn, for your efforts.

The challenges of Covid-19 continue to have an effect on our daily lives. League activities continue to be conducted mainly by Zoom. That platform makes it possible to at least see most of the participants and share information through visuals such as photos, PowerPoint or even Word documents. It has made it possible to conference with people from anywhere in the world where there is Internet availability by phone, tablet and computer. Both the national and the state Leagues have conducted many more meetings and training sessions in this manner. A Zoom conference can be as few as two people and as many as several thousand. I love connecting with friends and family by Zoom. We can all be on camera at the same time. While the Covid-19 vaccines have begun to be available to certain groups, we don't anticipate being able to conduct business face to face for several months.

A Buffalo Bills Honor for LWVBN!

On August 2, Barbara Gunderson and I participated in a Zoom conference for the Buffalo Bills during their training camp. We discussed the importance of registering and voting and demonstrated how to use Vote411.org to register in any state and compare candidates. In mid-December, I received an email from the Bills: The players on the Social Justice Committee selected our League as the Inspire Change Organization of the Game recipient for Week 17 during the virtual half-time show on January 3, 2021. Because there are no fans at games, we will receive tickets to a future home game, but we have received the game ball and the \$2,500 grant that accompanies the honor. Of course, we are thrilled by this recognition. The Bills staff member I talked with didn't say that our participation on August 2 was responsible for the honor, but certainly it did draw attention to the work of the League.

I look forward to seeing you soon, by Zoom, and send wishes for a happy and healthy 2021 with a return to meeting face to face before the year grows old.

Terri Parks

Exceptional 2020 GOTV efforts!

Our League was extraordinarily active and creative to Get Out the Vote for the 2020 general election. From August 1 to November 3, these people (Terri Parks, Barbara Gunderson, Liz Zausmer, Alberta Roman, Ramona Gallagher, Patti Meyer-Lee, Linda Koenigsberg, Susan Dombrowski, Gretchen Ford, Liz McGough, Ann Zawicki, Shirley Joy, Mike Egan, Judy Huber, Mary Herbst, and Linda Barat) were active in these efforts and events: meetings with the Lovejoy Association; voter education/information Zoom sessions for the Ahmadiyya Group, the Federation of Jewish Women, the Buffalo Bills, the WNY Girl Scouts, Orchard Park High School teachers, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of WNY, and SANYS; six in-person and one virtual voter registration sessions; and two in-person voter registration/information sessions.

We distributed 1,500+ voter information cards, 10,500 election information cards, 750 buttons, 1,000 pens, 1,500+ voter registration forms, and 3,000+ early voting site lists through NOAH Niagara, PUSH Buffalo, food pantries, Meals on Wheels, colleges and high schools, the Buffalo Public Schools meal distribution program, Stitch Buffalo, the WNY Peace Center, and faith-based groups. With the co-sponsorship of PUSH Buffalo and

the Buffalo NAACP and donations from Susan Dombrowski, Terri Parks, and Lori Robinson, we purchased 19 bus signs, which were displayed from September 3 through November 3. See images at lwvbn.org.

We initiated the Lovejoy District Postcard Project. The following members and friends wrote 3,000 postcards to “unlikely” voters, using addresses provided by VOICE Buffalo: Barbara Gunderson, Sally Metzger, Janet Goodsell, Sandra O’Hara, Ramona Gallagher, Margaret Meyer, Julie Meyer, Susan Dombrowski, Ruth Haines Patti Meyer-Lee, Liz Zausmer, Amy Moritz, Marjorie Tritto, Barbara Brooks, Barbara Bunker, Margaret Sontag, Jennifer Hoffman, Melissa Weiksnar, Linda Koenigsberg, Judy Casassa, Mike Egan, Terri Parks, Gail Radford, Judy Huber, Mary Scheeder, Peg Mergenhagen, Andrea Baldi, and Nina Lukin and her children. We mailed them on September 23, and received a few thank-you phone calls to the office. Only about 100 cards were undeliverable.

With 2,000 election cards left after distribution, we initiated the Doorknob Hanger Project. Barbara Gunderson donated clear doorknob hangers, Terri Parks, Judy Huber, Linda Koenigsberg, Liz Zausmer, Susan Dombrowski and Ruth Haines inserted the cards, and the following volunteers hung them in the North District of Buffalo on October 17, 18, 24 and 25, using addresses supplied by Tyrell Ford of PUSH Buffalo: Mary Herbst and her husband, Peg Mergenhagen, Mary Scheeder, Jennifer Hoffman and her friend, Janet Goodsell and her sister, Mariely Downey, Carolyn Hoyt Stevens, Pat and Bill Townsend, Nina Lukin and her family, Mike Egan and her team, Onda Simmons and her friend, Becca LaCivita and her team, Barbara Gunderson, Liz Zausmer, Clare Rados and Maria Evancho. Liz Zausmer, Susan Dombrowski, and Barbara Gunderson mailed 375 remaining cards to additional Lovejoy residents on October 26 and 27.

Barbara Gunderson, Voter Services Chair

Great Decisions

The Great Decisions discussion group will meet via Zoom at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 7, to discuss “The Philippines and the U.S.” The Foreign Policy Affairs organization says this about the topic: “The Philippines has had a special relationship with the United States since the islands were ceded by Spain to the United States after the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th century. However, since the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the country has pivoted more toward China, and away from the U.S. Duterte has also launched a large-scale war on drugs that many criticize for its brutality. What does the future hold for U.S. relations with the Philippines?” Joan Mondul will lead us in this interesting topic. Contact Fran Holmes at mfranholmes@gmail.com or at 716 885 8449 if you have any questions, or wish to be included in this Zoom teleconference call.

Fran Holmes

So Much to Discuss! Join our Book / Article Group

The LWVBN discussion group continued its monthly meetings on December 9 with a review of the Atlantic article “Why Obama Fears for our Democracy,” suggested by Shirley Joy. We also discussed “The After Party” by Nicholas Lemann in The New Yorker on the ideological future of the Republican and Democratic parties, suggested by Janet Massaro. The two articles overlapped in content, looking backward and forward. Reflecting on his presidency, President Obama said that events during his administration foreshadowed the Trump presidency and the populist wave. However, he envisioned more of a John Wayne figure to be the president, with strong moral character, to follow him. The author posed three possible scenarios for the Republican Party, which he called Remnant, Restoration and Reversal, providing lots of room for speculation about the likelihood of a continuation of Trumpism for a long time.

Our next meeting will take place Wednesday, January 13, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Consider joining the dozen or so of us to discuss this article suggested by Janet Goodsell: “Free Speech Will Save Our Democracy: The First Amendment in the Age of Disinformation,” by Emily Bazelon, from the New York Times Magazine of October 13. Here’s the link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/magazine/free-speech.html?searchResultPosition>. If you’re interested, please call Marian Deutschman at 634-2412 to receive the link and Zoom access information.

Marian Deutschman

Join our New Healthcare Committee

Inspired by the State League's massive undertaking to study and propose an update to its Healthcare Position, our League is forming a Healthcare Committee. The purpose of our Healthcare Committee is to create activities that carry out National and State League Healthcare Positions. Certainly the timing is perfect now with the Covid-19 pandemic hurting people around the world in so many ways. Anyone who has an interest or would like to have a conversation is welcome to call Alberta Roman at 716-695-1334 or send an email to albertaroman03@gmail.com.

Alberta Roman and Judy Huber, Co-Chairs

Waterfront Committee Update

Summary of Action on the Latest Outer Harbor Plan

The Waterfront Committee met via Zoom on November 18. We discussed the latest action by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation – the General Project Plan for the Outer Harbor – and agreed to submit comments to the ECHDC by their deadline, which has been extended to January 8. Gladys Gifford and Lynda Stephens developed and submitted the comments, with approval by Terri Parks, LWVBN President.

Here's our summary, as sent to the ECHDC: The League finds that the GPP provides a framework for future improvements at the Outer Harbor. Much of what the GPP proposes is needed, such as comfort stations and improved ferry access. There needs to be more connection with the nearby communities to ensure that local transit-dependent users have access to the site. Too much of what the GPP offers is centered on intensive human activity while ignoring the naturally developing waterfront landscape. The League will continue to watch birds and wildlife and sunsets at the Outer Harbor and advocate for preserving these public lands for the public good.

Our next meeting will take place at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13, via Zoom. We are planning for a special public event in April, to feature discussion of climate change impacts on our waterfront. All are welcome! To sign up, please contact Gladys Gifford before January 6.

Gladys Gifford, Chair

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Update: Coming in February!

Our DEI committee, the NAACP of Buffalo, and SANYS (Self-Advocacy Association of New York State) will host a Zoom roundtable discussion about voting challenges through history. The tentative title of the event is "Fighting for Our Vote Over Time." We will also discuss what we can do to identify and remove barriers to voting in the here and now. Our speakers will be Jennifer Wilson, Deputy Director of the LWVNY; BJ Stasio, President of SANYS, and L. Nathan Hare, former President and CEO of the Buffalo Community Action Organization. Judge Lenore Foot Beavers, Chair of the Diversity Committee of the New York State Women's Bar Association, has agreed to be the moderator.

The date will be scheduled at 7:00 on a weeknight during the last two weeks in February. Working through Deaf Access Services, we will arrange for closed captioning and, upon request, ASL interpreters. Please stay tuned for final details. Speaking of tuning in, here is a link to a great [TED talk](#) by a brilliant Syrian/Jordanian American. Enjoy.

Liz Zausmer, Chair

Money In Politics Update: Redistricting

Our committee is shifting gears just a bit. Yes, redistricting 2020 has arrived! Once again, we are calling on all LWVBN members to help with this once-in-a-decade effort to draw fair legislative districts, especially for Erie and Niagara Counties and the City of Buffalo.

We are working closely with Jennifer Wilson, State League Deputy Director – see below for information from her December report to the state board. Do read it over to be familiar with the activities LWVNY is planning and think how we can use them to further our efforts here. League members in Niagara County should contact Alberta Roman who is heading up redistricting there. I will work with Erie County folks and JoAnn Mecca will once again tackle Buffalo. Margaret Meyer and I participated in the National League's three-day Redistricting Workshop in December. There is good information to share and lots to do. We'll be contacting you, but you needn't wait – contact us first. Bring your good ideas and your enthusiasm – there is room for everyone. Our next meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. Friday, January 15, via Zoom.

LWVNY Redistricting Update and Plans

Status of Independent Redistricting Commission

The final two non-partisan commissioners have been appointed including League-supported Professor Ivelisse Cuevas-Molina, its first Latinx member. To date, the commission has hired two co-executive directors, discussed bylaws, agreed to create a public website by mid-January, discussed who would be the chair of the commission, and has advocated for the release of their \$750,000 budget allocation from the governor's office.

People Powered Fair Maps Grant Funding

As the new Redistricting Commission plans its operations for the coming year, the State League is making plans to work with local Leagues to propose fair state and congressional legislative lines. The State League received grant funding from LWVUS to participate in their People Powered Fair Maps Campaign in 2021. We are drafting a plan for spending these funds and participating in the campaign. These funds will be primarily spent on education and outreach to all New Yorkers. We will also use the funds to oppose second passage of a constitutional amendment to weaken minority party protections in the new maps.

Mapping and Public Outreach

The State League is planning public outreach actions for the coming year. National will create a public education template to explain the basics of redistricting and educational materials that will include a PowerPoint and graphics. We will conduct trainings on free mapmaking software to be used by local Leagues and the public.

Janet Massaro, Chair

Dust: West Valley Demonstration Project Update

I hate dusting furniture, don't you? I admit that the invention of the microfiber duster was a (baby) step forward. On the other hand, my favorite lecture post-Covid was Barbara Brown Taylor's talk in the Hall of Philosophy at Chautauqua (virtually) this August titled "You Are Made of Stardust." She reminded us that all humans, animals, and all life indeed are made of the same chemical elements as the stars, as a grounding for an ethic that protects all life.

This fall we have been preoccupied with the dust that comes from demolishing an old industrial building. Starting sometime soon, perhaps early spring, the Main Process Plant Building at the West Valley site near Springville will come down. It was built in the 1960s by Nuclear Fuel Services for reprocessing nuclear waste. It will not be exploded, like an old hospital or hotel. Instead, it will be pounded, sliced, and chopped down with heavy equipment at the end of cranes that reach several stories high. The plan was outlined at the November public meeting. https://www.wv.doe.gov/Document_Index/383570.pdf

Preparations have been underway for many years. When vitrification of the liquid wastes was ended, the contractor began hauling out the contaminated equipment, then the piping and asbestos. Finally, they are removing plutonium from the concrete walls of the most contaminated inner chambers.

How deeply did contamination penetrate those thick walls? The worst of it is on the surface, and it can be cut away by workers in "moon suits" with a technique called nitro-cision, using liquid nitrogen to remove radioactive layers into containers for disposal. That is happening this winter.

Demolition will raise dust, and some of that dust will be radioactive. There are ways to deal with that. Sometimes an enclosure is built over the project. More often, a fine mist of water is sprayed to suppress the dust. That is what was done when the contractor demolished the adjacent building and plans to do again this spring. Misting, of course, leads to radioactively contaminated water, so the runoff must be monitored and treated. The air is monitored so that demolition can be halted if something is going wrong that would harm the workers.

At the very least, the public needs to know the results of monitoring in a timely way and to demand protection of communities downwind and downstream. Because the project is unusually complex, with both state and federal agencies involved, it is not entirely clear who is looking out for our health.

Pat Townsend



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

January 2021

Note: Due to social distancing and stay-at-home practices, meetings are subject to change and may take place via phone or computer. Please contact the committee chair for the latest information.

Tuesday, January 5, 4:00 p.m.

Program, Issues & Events Committee

via Zoom

Thursday, January 7, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions

via Zoom

Monday, January 11, 4:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

via Zoom

Wednesday, January 13, 2:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee

TBA

Wednesday, January 13, 4:00 p.m.

Waterfront Committee

via Zoom

Wednesday, January 13, 7:00 p.m.

Book Discussion Group

via Zoom

Thursday, January 14, 11:00 a.m.

CCC Committee

via Zoom

Friday, January 15, 1:00 p.m.

Money in Politics Committee

via Zoom

Monday, January 18, 6:30 p.m.

Finance Committee

via Zoom

Monday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

GOTV Committee

via teleconference

Tuesday, January 19, 7:00 p.m.

Healthcare Consensus

via Zoom

Thursday, January 21, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

TBA

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