Lunch and Issues Speaker:

Kathy Hochul
United States Congresswoman

Friday, December 16 at 11:30 a.m.
Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant
6999 Maple Road, Amherst

Congresswoman Hochul will discuss her work as the newest Representative of the 26th United States Congressional District. She serves on the Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Homeland Security. An engaging speaker, Congresswoman Hochul welcomes questions and comments from the audience.

The program is open to the public. It will begin at 11:30 a.m. with lunch. Lunch reservations are required. Reserve a spot for yourself and friends by contacting Sally Metzger or Judy Metzger (lwvbn@lwvbn.org) for reservations by Wednesday, December 14. The all inclusive meal is $15.00. Checks payable to LWVBN must be mailed to the League of Women Voters office, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, 14209, no later than December 14.

League of Women Voters Mission:
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.

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President’s Message and Board Actions

The busy election season is past. The League again led the efforts to provide voters with accurate unbiased information as they prepared to vote. Each League member who played a role in the two debates and nine candidate forums that we conducted in Erie and Niagara County during the primary and general election season played an important role in that effort.

The Lancaster Town Supervisor debate this year provided a special challenge after a front-page article appeared in the Buffalo News the morning of the debate that might have led to a difficult situation or even a shouting match among angry town citizens that evening. I received a beautifully written account of the event at the Lancaster Opera House from Ann Marie Malachowski, who along with Joyce Bol, moderated the debate for the League. Ann Marie wrote, “Thanks to the League’s ‘rules of engagement’ and the respect that the League received from the audience and candidates, the debate was held and was limited to issues relative to the campaign and community. Joyce and I were proud to represent the League that day and grateful for the set of standards that we demanded of everyone that night. We were able to ensure that the voters were educated about the issues in the campaign.” This eloquently states what we seek to do for voters in our region.

The interest in League-moderated debates and candidate forums continues to grow. The League will conduct a training session for moderators this winter. Please consider becoming a member of our moderator corps. Debates and forums are most important ways to serve voters.

I hope that each League member received the 2011 Voters’ Guide before Election Day. Campaign literature takes precedence over other bulk mail at this time of year and postal carriers have a two-week window related to bulk mailings. Because it includes responses to more questions than a printed guide, our on-line Vote411 guide can provide a more in-depth profile of candidates. Special thanks to our editors, Kristin Allen and Eugene Abrahamson, to Judy Clarke for her dedicated work to locate candidate information and update the distribution lists and to Laura McDade for marshaling the distributors and leading the efforts to deliver the 25,000 copies of the 2011 Voters’ Guide to over 370 sites in Erie and Niagara Counties. We deeply appreciate M&T Bank for donating funds to print this year’s Guide.

The board endorsed General Meetings for the remainder of this League year. In February, we’ll present a community forum featuring a power point presentation from the state League aimed at increasing voter participation. It includes many of the nontraditional registration and voting methods used around the country, including online registration, vote by mail and early voting. The Local Government Committee will host the March meeting with the thought provoking title: Who Needs County Government? The Waterfront/Transportation Committee (The Future of Transportation in WNY) and the Natural Resources Committee (Climate-Smart Communities: How we can each live greener) will provide the April and May programs. Dates and details will be in future VOTERS.

The board also endorsed an education effort proposed by Lynda Stephens to examine federal fiscal policies and social/economic justice issues as evidenced in the principles and positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

First of all my thanks to Kristin Allen for leading our last Great Decisions topic for 2011 and conducting some business since I was unable to attend. Members in attendance voted to continue the March-November timetable for meetings in 2012. Fortunately 12 people signed up for books for next year so we will be able to get the 20% discount. The books are slated to arrive in early January. If you would like your books in January, please contact me by phone. Otherwise hope to see you all on Thursday, March 1 at 1272 Delaware from 10 a.m. – noon. Please bring your check for $18.00 to the meeting to receive your book then.

Bernice Baeumler
HISTORY: TRUE TO MISSION
A recent column in the Buffalo News by Susan Estrich echoed a 1932 Courier Express article. The Courier Express article pointed out that while we may not be able to solve world-wide problems, we can affect local issues. The article reported on an Erie county League of Women Voters’ meeting at which Mrs. Berend J. Burns, chairwoman of the Municipal Affairs Committee and a past League president, discussed the same issue. Mrs. Burns, while encouraging members to be aware of world events, went on to remind them that “there are things in our own city that need study and correction.” She exhorted the members to continue to educate themselves by studying issues such as taxes, school boards, city hall procedures, and city government, and after researching the issues, to provide forums to educate the electorate through debates, lectures, publications.

Today’s League carries on these same commitments through its various committees such as Local Government, Transportation/Waterfront, Education, and Natural Resources, while also raising awareness about state and national problems such as redistricting. Through its 90 year history, the League has stayed true to its mission to inform citizens and provide information for an informed electorate.

Marie Hanrahan, Historian

NEW MEMBERS
Welcome to our newest members, Kristen Keane from Depew and Lorry Schlick from Alden.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: WEST VALLEY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
The West Valley Demonstration Project started as a result of a Congressional act in 1980, with the purpose of solidifying high-level radioactive waste leaking from underground tanks. A Citizen Task Force (CFT) was founded to monitor the project. When they started, members thought their work would be done in a matter of months, but it quickly became obvious that a long term commitment would be required to ensure public involvement until project completion. LWVBN member Lee Lambert made that commitment. It will be fifteen years in January that she has attended CTF meetings.

Now it is time for Lee to look for a replacement or an alternate. Serving on the CTF is a wonderful opportunity to learn about agencies, governmental regulations and human interaction and to make a difference in the environment of the area and indeed, of the entire region. The right of the public to be informed and have input in governmental decisions is the watchword of the League. To get involved, please call or e-mail Lee for more information (lwvbn@lwvbn.org).

GET INVOLVED: LAKE ERIE BASIN COMMITTEE
The Lake Erie Basin Committee (LEBC) consists of LWV communities in the five states bordering Lake Erie from New York to Michigan. League units in the Buffalo area were instrumental in forming this committee whose mission is to protect water quality of the lake. LEBC meets three times a year (spring, summer and fall) in communities along the lake front to coordinate and publicize activities pertinent to committee goals. E-mail or call Lee Lambert if interested in attending or helping in any way (lwvbn@lwvbn.org).

BUSY ELECTION SEASON FOR VOTER SERVICES
LWVBN co-sponsored a televised Erie County Executive debate. President Terri Parks introduced and closed the debate. Laura McDade and Joyce Bol were timekeepers. The League also moderated nine candidates’ forums in municipalities throughout the region. In East Aurora, students from the Government class read the questions to the candidates.

The League of Women Voters:
Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.
Work with the LWV to help shape the issues that keep our community fair, vibrant and strong.
Buffalo Harbor Bridge Project Update

The Transportation/Waterfront Committee has been studying the Buffalo Harbor Bridge (BHB) Project being considered by Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation. We reached a conclusion at our September, 2011 meeting: there is no need for this bridge! We presented this position to the LWVBN Board, and all agreed. As the project moves along its process, LWVBN will support the “no-build” alternative.

Please read the background material below, and be ready to support our decision with letters and action in February. As always, the Transportation/Waterfront Committee welcomes any interested Leaguers to our meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m. in the League Office at 1272 Delaware Avenue. See you on December 14th!

Gladys Gifford, Transportation/Waterfront Committee Chair

Arriving at a Position

The BHB group, a division of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), is considering building a new bridge to connect Buffalo’s Inner and Outer Harbors. The BHB group issued a Final Project Scoping document in May, 2010. The scoping document listed two possible bridge sites, one at Erie Street and one at the foot of Main Street, plus a “no-build” alternative. So far, $4 million in public funds has been spent on the preparation of BHB documents. The anticipated cost of bridge construction is $70 – 100 million.

League members have studied the bridge options ECHDC is considering. In June, 2011 League members and friends toured the proposed bridge sites at Erie Street and Main Street. League members also attended the informational ECHDC Placemaking Workshops about the bridge project held in July, 2011. In addition, Transportation/Waterfront Committee members traveled the two existing (and recently improved) land routes connecting the Inner and Outer Harbors along the Ohio Street Corridor and followed the Skyway (Route 5) from downtown Buffalo to the Outer Harbor.

The decision to support the “no build” alternative is based upon the LWVBN’s 2011 - 2012 program. The League supports waterfront plans that provide and ensure:

1. Year-round public access to the waterfront;
2. A coherent regional plan adopted with adequate public participation;
3. Commercial development that makes appropriate use of the waterfront location;
4. Preservation of the industrial, commercial and social history of the waterfront;
5. Facilities necessary for variety of recreational activities;
6. Protection and enhancement of the natural environment of the waterfront.

The committee agreed that a moveable bridge across the Buffalo River at Erie Street or moveable twin bridges across both the Buffalo River and the City Ship Canal at Main Street will have severe negative impacts on the existing and future development of the Inner Harbor and have negligible benefits as a connector to the Outer Harbor.

Inner Harbor Concerns

Over many years of waterfront planning, the most consistent public complaint has been the presence of the Skyway and the desire for its removal. Yet, the Skyway remains. The BHB Project proposal is to build still another roadway, 48 feet wide and 18 feet high, through the Inner Harbor waterfront to reach a huge moveable bridge that will connect to the undeveloped Outer Harbor. The dimensions for the approach roadway are dictated by federal navigational requirements.

The primary goals of development efforts in the Inner Harbor waterfront area is to restore Buffalo’s unique industrial and cultural heritage as the western terminus of the Erie Canal and to provide public access to the water and recreational opportunities. The bridge project diminishes these development efforts by creating structures that will obstruct the full landscape view of the Inner Harbor from the Erie basin Marina to the mouth of the Buffalo River and beyond to the grain elevators. It will detract from the natural environment of lake and river at the water’s edge, an experience sought after and highly valued by local residents and visitors alike. It will disrupt marine habitat currently protected at the mouth of the Buffalo River.

The roadway approaches to the crossing above the Inner Harbor will increase noise, pollution, traffic congestion, safety, and security problems. Commercial activity raises concerns around how often the moveable bridge will be used, how long
the wait time will be to open and close the bridge, what emergency plans are required, and the cost of operation and maintenance of the bridge. These details suggest that the project will restrict current commercial activity in the Buffalo River.

The proposed bridge and its approach will introduce cumbersome structures to a compact and already densely built area. The approach to the Inner Harbor area is already a confusing maze of roads and highways. The new bridge will require realignment of existing roads and traffic patterns and disrupt present residential, commercial and transportation facilities.

**Outer Harbor Concerns**

The proponents of the project claim that there is a critical need and a demand to connect the Inner and Outer Harbors with a land route and that the route must cross over the Buffalo River and City Ship Canal. We disagree with this assessment.

The Outer harbor has no infrastructure to accommodate development at this time. The area contains acres of toxic materials and has no committed development plans, public or private. The recently completed road improvements to Fuhrman Blvd. and the Skyway make the Outer Harbor more readily accessible by land. The Ohio Street Corridor now offers quick and easy vehicle access to the Outer Harbor for a distance of less than two miles. Furthermore, Ohio Street is slated for major roadway improvements to be completed by September, 2013, as intended in the Southtowns Connector project. Therefore, an improved Ohio Street supports the ‘no-build’ alternative as the sensible choice.

Let vehicles use the improved Ohio Street and the Skyway to reach the Outer Harbor. Let this bridge proposal fade away before more public funds are expended on this exercise.

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**Voter Guide 2011**

I would like you to say a big THANK YOU to all of you who helped distribute the Voter Guide:

Eugene Abrahamson, Sue Fay Allen, Agnes and Bob Annis, Bonnie and Harold Asch, Phyl Banas, Joyce Bol, Joan Broderick, Dot Brown, Judy Clarke, Marian Deutschman, Alan Dozoretz, Mike Egan, Donna Gioia, Janet Goodsell, Dick Hemann, Judy Huber, Carl Klingenschmitt, Ria Martens, Janet Massaro, JoAnn Mecca, Jim and Judy Metzger, Sally Metzger, Kathleen McCarthy, Lynn McConnell, Kathleen McCormick, Laura McDade, Arlene Miles, Sally Moehlau, Joan Mondul, Terri Parks, Ruth Sehl, Jane Sweet, Lee Tetkowski, Lynne Vallone, Judy Weideman, Dorothy Westhafer, Karen Willyoung,

Twenty-five thousand guides were distributed to the following places: Amherst, Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Clarence, Depew, East Aurora, Grand Island, Hamburg, Kenmore, Lackawana, Lancaster, Niagara Falls, Orchard Park, Southtowns, Tonawanda, West Seneca, Williamsville, Buffalo State College, Canisius College, Erie County Community College, University at Buffalo, Erie County Library System, NIOGA Libraries.

Laura McDade

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*Thank You!*
**New Trial Membership**

Do you know someone who is interested in the work of the League of Women Voters? Of course the answer is “YES!”

Do have someone who deserves a meaningful gift at holiday time or any time? “YES!”

Do you know someone who needs a little nudge to get involved? “YES!”

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara is offering a Trial Membership to our local League for new members for only $30. Trial memberships will extend to June 30 each year when the member will be invited to join as a full member of the League—local, state and national—at the current membership rate.

Please share this information and the Trial Membership form with folks who express interest in our work or who may have been “on the fence” about joining the League.

Terri Parks

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**Join the League of Women Voters!**

with a trial membership for $30.

The membership runs from now until the end of June.....

You receive our Voter Bulletin, invites to programs, events and ability to try out a membership until the end of the membership year.

This trial membership is for **first time members only.** Or as a Gift from a current member who sponsors you with a trial membership gift!

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara is offering a Trial Membership to our local League for new members only for $30. Trial memberships will extend to June 30 each year and the member will be invited to join as a full member of the League-local, state and national at the current membership rate.

Name: ________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
City: __________________ State:  _______________ Zip: _______________
Phone: ________________________________
E-Mail Address: ________________________________
**Climate Smart Communities**

How climate smart is your community? Homes, businesses, and public buildings must become carbon neutral to meet New York State’s climate protection goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), most greenhouse gases come from three sectors:

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Forward thinking leaders know they will save money with better insulation and lighting; better recycling—lower tipping fees; using renewable energy— an investment in the future. They know that protecting our air, land and water will save lives --and billions! Is your community already doing things needed to become a New York State “Climate Smart Community”? Climate Smart Communities are eligible for funding and grants from DEC and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) not available to other towns and cities. Check out the DEC web site to find out how communities can become eligible ([www.dec.ny.gov/energy/50845.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/50845.html)).

New York State currently has ninety-seven Climate Smart Communities-- but NONE in Erie County! Four are in Niagara County. LWVBN Natural Resources and Local Government Committees want all forty-four municipalities in Erie and Niagara counties to sign-on. Gary Carrel, coordinator for Energy $mart Communities at Cornell Cooperative Extension, came to the November Natural Resources Committee meeting to help get us started. We brainstormed, set priorities. Will Amherst be first? Grand Island? Village of East Aurora or Town of Aurora?

As Leaguers we must educate ourselves, then educate our community leaders. Watch for a “Climate Smart Communities” program in the spring to be presented by Natural Resources and Local Government Committees with representatives from DEC, NYSERDA and specialists who can bring the issue down to the citizen level: How can we use solar panels? How best to insulate? What landscaping will best keep our homes warm in winter, cool in summer? How much energy do mini-windmills create?

Everyone is encouraged to get involved! Will YOUR community be the first in Erie County to sign-on?  

*Ellen Neumaier, Natural Resources Committee Chair*

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**Redistricting Update: The Mapping Democracy Project**

The League and other good government groups continue to call for an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw state legislative district lines. Our partners at Common Cause/New York have pursued an additional strategy – to use the latest technology to prepare their own Congressional, NYS Senate and Assembly district maps and to present them to the public for comment. Susan Lerner of Common Cause explained that while their maps carefully adhere to federal and state requirements, they give additional attention to “communities of interest”, identified through better demographic information and bolstered by comments made at public hearings throughout the state. Common Cause will release their completed maps to the public by the end of November. In December, they will come to a meeting in Erie County to discuss their maps. The maps proposed by LATFOR (NY State’s redistricting commission appointed by legislative party leaders) will also be available to the public by then. What a great opportunity for LWVBN members to compare maps drawn by LATFOR with those made by an independent, nonpartisan organization. Do plan to attend. Check the LWVBN web site or call the League Office for the date, time, and location of the Common Cause “Mapping Democracy” visit.

Our League is an active participant in local and state redistricting reform. We welcome any and all members to join the ongoing work of the Redistricting Committee. We need your input, energy and commitment to achieve the reforms we all want. Please contact Janet Massaro ([lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org)) if you would like to learn more.

*Janet Massaro, Redistricting Committee Chair*
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Copy for Winter VOTER is due Friday, December 9, 2011