County Executive Mark Poloncarz

“Initiatives for a Smart Economy”

Wednesday, October 23, 2013

6 PM—7:30 PM

Harlem Community Center

2600 Harlem Rd

The County Executive will detail his initiatives and provide a realistic blueprint of specific actions to enhance the quality of life in the county by leveraging our assets and forming meaningful partnerships.

This program is free and open to the public!

League of Women Voter’s 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.
President’s Report and Board Actions

The Natural Resources Committee with Ellen Neumaier’s capable leadership will facilitate the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) Agricultural Update. Much has changed in the last 20+ years since League of Women Voters’ last Agriculture Study. We need input from ALL members from ALL over the region!

LWVUS suggests readings and other media that focus on Aquaculture, Organic Farming, Genetically Modified Foods, Nanotechnology, Food Labeling, Sustainable Agriculture, Food Safety, Crop Insurance and Animal Management. We will add our own articles, discuss them, and then lift our voices in consensus as to how our food supply can be protected and improved. Contact Ellen at ellenneumaier@roadrunner.com. You may also call the League office and leave a message for Ellen that you’re interested in working on the study.

Both the World on your Plate conference and the October Luncheon Issues program described in this Voter will give you excellent background information that relates to the Agriculture Update.

New State Studies: As adopted at the 2013 State Convention, the state League is undertaking two new studies and one update: term limits, ballot access and the constitutional convention procedures. The state League encourages all local Leagues to organize local study groups on the two studies of Term Limits and Ballot Access now. The state Committee on these studies will be distributing study materials starting in October and local study groups could begin reviewing the materials and discussing the issues. A full timetable for these studies will be included in the September State Board Update.

Term Limits: This is a study on term limits for the New York State legislature and statewide elected officials.

The 1992 LWVUS Convention authorized state and local Leagues to use national positions and principles to take action against term limits for state or local office holders. The language adopted by the convention is permissive only; that is, it allows state and local Leagues to apply the national position in opposition to term limits at other levels, but it does not require opposition to term limits at other levels. It does not supersede positions arrived at by study and consensus at the state or local League level that may support term limits for state or local office.

In 1996 the LWVNY Board decided it was time for the state to take a position on term limits as several local leagues had already done so. Although the state board had the authority to adopt such a position without referring this matter to the membership, delegates to Council 1996 voted to concur with opposition to term limits for state legislators and statewide office. At the urging of several local Leagues, LWVNY is again considering the issue of term limits via this study.

Ballot Access: This study will broadly examine how candidates get onto the ballot in the general election. It will potentially encompass the primary system, fusion voting, Wilson-Pakula, run-off voting, and other aspects of election law.

Please contact me at lwvoter@verizon.net or call the League Office to let us know if you’re interested in being part of our local study group for these two important studies.

At its September meeting, the board reviewed our current policies as it does annually. There were a few amendments suggested and approved. We do plan to post all current policies on our web site soon. We post the minutes of each board meeting once the board has approved them. Both of these items will be found in the Members section of www.lwvbn.org.

Great Decisions

Fran Holmes will be facilitiating our Great Decisions discussion for Thursday, October 3 from 10 AM to noon at the League office, 1272 Delaware. Her topic is China in Africa: “What interests govern China's engagement in Africa? Should China’s growing emphasis on political ties and natural resources extraction inform U.S. relations with African nations?” I think this is the first time this particular topic has been addressed by the Foreign Policy Association. Come and learn something new.


Terri Parks

Bernice Baeumler  events@lwcbn.org
The Amherst Unit sponsors Luncheon Issues for League members and the community. Their next luncheon is:

Friday, Oct. 18th at 11:30 AM at Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant 3999 Maple Rd. Amherst, NY.

Our guest speaker will be Jessica Hall, Project Manager of Growing Together that examines food access and justice in Erie and Niagara Counties and is part of a larger regional sustainability planning effort called ONE REGION FORWARD. Jessica Hall graduated from the University at Buffalo in 2013 with a Master of Urban Planning.

The Erie County Health Department through this initiative has established a Food Security committee. Come and learn more. The cost of the luncheon is $16.00 all inclusive and payable to LWVBN. Vegetarian meals are available. For reservations, e-mail events@lwcbn.org

County Executive Poloncarz to speak on his “Initiatives for a Smart Economy” October 23 6-7:30 PM at the Harlem Road Community Center.

At our program on Wednesday, October 23 at the Harlem Road Community Center from 6-7:30 PM, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz will elaborate on his “Initiatives for a Smart Economy.” Many of the issues he raises are related to positions of the League of Women Voters. We encourage members and the general public to attend this important analysis of problems and opportunities facing Erie County.

Although County Executive Poloncarz acknowledges the widespread positive evidence of economic development in the area, he also fully appreciates the difficult problems that persist. These include the loss of over 195,000 residents since 1970 leading to abandoned properties and higher taxes. Over 30 percent of the residents of Buffalo live below the poverty line. He notes that “Erie County is not unusually poor” but poverty in the county is “unusually unequal.” The county executive’s initiatives provide a realistic blueprint of specific actions to enhance the quality of life in the county by leveraging our assets and forming meaningful partnerships. His initiatives address regional land use planning; inequities between the city and suburbs; region-serving infrastructure including parks, arts, culture, and waterfront development; environmental planning; new livable wage job opportunities; entrepreneurship and workforce training; the role of agriculture; and capitalizing on our binational location.

These are major new programs, capital projects, and policy directives where county government can take the lead. This report was prepared by the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning in conjunction with other county departments and outside agencies. The work began with an analysis of the strategic documents of the WNY Regional Economic Development Council identifying area needs and projects. “Initiatives for a Smart Economy” includes 64 specific do-able initiatives in which the county can play a lead role to address those needs. You (and your friends) don’t want to miss this meeting!

Please note that the LWVBN local government committee is studying the Erie County Budget and we welcome members to join us on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:15 PM at the League office. Contact chair Marian Deutschman at events@lwcbn.org

LWVBN Office Lending Library

As fall approaches and our weather cools, thoughts turn to curling up with a good book. I’d like to begin an office lending library. Our current publications have been organized and I find I have room for more books. If you have a favorite book or two you'd like to donate to the library, I'll compile a list and send it to our membership. Let me know if you plan to donate so we can set up a time for you to visit the office. I cannot accept political books that are partisan in nature. However, a good read, whether historical fiction, political intrigue and an informative biography will be gratefully accepted. There will be no time limit for when a book has to be returned. Look for a compiled book list in the near future and then stop in and borrow a book! If attending a League event, you may also want to stop by the office and pick up several books to take with you for other members to borrow.

Mary Ann Turkla, events@lwcbn.org
Education Committee

Summit for Smarter Schools

Wednesday, October 2, 2013, 6:30 -8:30 PM
Kleinhans Music Hall, 3 Symphony Circle,
Buffalo, NY
Sponsored by State Senators Tim Kennedy and George Maziarz
Assemblyman Sean Ryan and THE PARTNERSHIP FOR SMARTER SCHOOLS.

There will be a panel of experts discussing the impact that so-called reforms are having on the quality of public education in New York State, and highlighting alternative ways to measure student achievement and teacher effectiveness with less emphasis on high stakes testing.

The public is welcome, but tickets are required, and may be gotten on a first come first served basis by sending an e-mail to Boxoffice@bpo.org and including the following: Your name, address including zip code, phone number, school district you live in, and number of tickets you are requesting. Your tickets will be mailed. For more information visit www.partnershipforsmarterschools.org

Lee Tetkowski, Education Committee Chair

Voter Services

Voter Registration Drives:

As of September 5, we have had seven voter registration drives, mostly at farmers’ markets. We obtained approximately 50 new registrations, including address changes. Many people also picked up registration forms to be handed out to relatives or friends. Many thanks to our volunteers who make these drives successful. In September, we will continue with six more drives.

Political Candidate Meetings:

Thursday, October 17 at 7 PM at Aurora Senior Center, corner of Oakwood and King Streets, East Aurora.
Thursday, October 24 at 9 AM at the Amherst Senior Center, Audubon Parkway, Amherst,
Thursday, October 24 at 7 PM at Union-Pleasant Elementary School, Union at Center Street, Hamburg.

The Amherst annual candidates’ event will take place at the Amherst Senior Center, 350 Audubon Pkwy on Thursday, October 24th at 9 AM. Ann Marie Malachowski will be moderator; Mike Egan will be timekeeper. Come and bring a friend.

Joyce Bol, Voter Services Chair

Election Services

The Election Services Committee has been extremely busy these last few months. We have conducted numerous elections at various Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) sites. None of this work could have been accomplished without the dedication and commitment of this committee's able and competent volunteers. My deepest and heartfelt thanks go out to Judy Capodicasa, Ramona Gallagher, Marge Gardner, Mike Egan, and Marlene Katzel.

In the office, Mary Ann Turkla has been taking the phone calls and relaying them to me in a timely and conscientious manner so that these election processes can be initiated. Kathleen McCarthy is always available for consultation, advice, and as a sounding board for ideas and concerns. Thank you Mary Ann and Kathleen for your input, time, and valuable support.

Alan Dozoretz, Election Services Chair

LWVBN to host workshop at World On Your Plate at Daemen College, October 12.

The World On Your Plate 10th Annual Conference on Food and Sustainable Living will take place at Daemen College, October 11-12. LWVBN will host a “Low Carbon Diet” workshop on Saturday, October 12 at 2:30 PM, followed by a skit.
**Volunteers**

**It is a Moving Experience to Greet New Citizens!**

LWVBN members Charles Paganelli, Lona Allendoerfer, Marion Bass and Judith Casassa represented the LWVBN at the U.S. Courthouse Citizenship Ceremonies in August of this year. On September 5 League members Judy Huber and JoAnn Mecca represented the League. Judy and JoAnn are very active volunteers and are generous with the time they devote to the League. It is always a moving experience for our members to greet new citizens and pass out voter registration cards!

**Renewing Members**

Please make sure you update your Membership Survey. Some people have not filled out a survey in a very long time and we need to know what volunteer opportunities are of interest to you. Your survey should be updated every year.

*Judy Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator*

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**Agriculture**

**LWVUS Agriculture Update: Some Resources to Get Us Going**

The LWVUS Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on: 1) **current technology issues in agriculture** including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling; and 2) **current agriculture finance issues** including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process.

Where to start? There are three background documents the LWVUS Agriculture Update Committee has identified to provide a broad and relatively neutral overview of the complex set of issues addressed by U.S. agricultural policy.

The first recommendation is the administration’s perspective on the key agricultural policy issues that need to be addressed in 2013 as reported in *Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Agriculture* (Chapter 8 of the *Economic Report of the President- 2013*). Although the content of this 28-page report goes beyond the specific topics in the Update Scope, the Committee considers it an excellent introductory document offering background on such topics as the role of agriculture in the U.S. economy, structural changes that have taken place since the 1920s, the development of new markets (e.g., organic, local), the contribution of research and development to productivity growth, agriculture in world trade, and the challenges of agricultural risk management. The document can be downloaded in PDF using the following link: [http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/ERP-2013/ERP-2013-chapter8/content-detail.html](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/ERP-2013/ERP-2013-chapter8/content-detail.html)

The second document is a Union of Concerned Scientists policy brief entitled *The Healthy Farm: A Vision for U.S. Agriculture*. This is an 8-page position statement by the UCS and is, therefore, not entirely neutral. The Committee selected it because it looks at farming from a variety of perspectives (production, economics, and environment) and a variety of farming systems (industrial, conventional, organic, etc.), offering examples of technologies and management practices able to contribute to the UCS vision of a healthy farm. The report contains many useful references and links. [http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf)


More information and resources are available at the LWVUS website: [www.lwv.org/content/about-agriculture-update-committee](http://www.lwv.org/content/about-agriculture-update-committee)

**Other News**

We extend our condolences to the family of Marie Krellner, who died August 29, 2013. Marie was one of our newest members and had looked forward to representing the League at the U.S. Naturalization ceremonies.
## OCTOBER 2013

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