



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The **VOTER** is published 10 times per year. Items for the Summer issue are due Friday, June 27

Please Join Us!

League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara 2014 Annual Meeting & Luncheon: Celebrate Service

The Protocol Restaurant

6766 Transit Road, Williamsville, NY 14221

located about 1500 feet north of Exit 49, New York State Thruway (US 90)

Saturday, June 14, 2014

The Annual Meeting will begin with coffee at 10:00 a.m.
Luncheon will be served at noon

Speaker: Mike Connelly, Editor of the Buffalo News

Special Awards:

Joan K. Bozer Leadership Award: Lyle Toohey for outstanding League leadership

LEE Award: Laura McDade for Long Term Commitment to the League with Energy, and Excellence

Making Democracy Work Award: Bill Nowak, an exceptional community activist

The reservation form is in the Annual Meeting Booklet. Reservations are due at the League Office on June 3, 2014.

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.

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President's Report

An Invitation from the President

At our Annual Meeting in June, we will celebrate the service of League members, especially those we honor with the Joan K. Bozer and LEE Award and three people who have elected not to accept another term on the board this coming year. Joyce Bol, Voter Services chair for the past six years, Janet Goodsell, a board member and officer for six years and most recently the Issues & Action committee chair and Eugene Abrahamson whose board service began after he resigned as Office Manager. They have distinguished themselves by their active contributions to the work of the board. Joyce and Janet have served with distinction, intelligence and reliability throughout their six years on the board. I certainly hope that all of these fine League leaders will continue to be active participants in the League. We shall miss them on the board.

I hope each of you will join us to celebrate the service of all League members at this year's Annual Meeting. Whether that service has been for a once a year short-term endeavor or carrying out a major committee or board responsibility, it is important to our efforts to uphold our mission and serve voters. The challenges to our democratic system are great, especially with the Supreme Court decisions related to campaign finance and the attacks on voters' rights. We must continue to advocate for fair elections, campaign finance reform, redistricting done in a manner that doesn't favor incumbents or create districts with bizarre configurations, and the other issues that undermine our democracy. There will always be much to be done.

Board Actions

At its May meeting, the board voted to approve the 2014-15 Budget of League of Woman Voters of New York State at the open board meeting on May 12. Board members also approved support for the efforts of the League of Women Voters of Kansas (LWVK) and Berkley, CA, to promote concurrence with the LWVK Living Wage position at the upcoming National League Convention. Ramona Gallagher and I will represent our League at the convention.

The board also agreed to be the sponsoring organization for a New York Council of Humanities Community Conversation for Environmental Stewardship to be facilitated by Judy Weidemann in East Aurora. The focus will relate to the League's work to encourage Climate Smart Communities.

We reviewed and made changes to the membership interest survey that members receive with their membership renewal forms. You may have already received yours. It is essential that we each complete the form every year to be sure we contact you for service that you feel willing and able to give.

I look forward to a most special annual meeting and do hope you will join us.

- Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Ann Malachowski will be facilitating our third 2014 Great Decisions topic, Turkey's challenges, on Thursday, June 5 from 10 AM - noon at 1272 Delaware. "Turkey: a nation at the crossroads, a bridge between an ever-growing chasm between the East and West. Turkey's first prime minister Kemal Ataturk envisioned a modern democratic nation-state built on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire with strong ties to Europe, not the Middle East. But as the clashes between secular and religious groups and the recent protests in Taksim Square show, the soul of Turkey is still very much up for grabs." On July 3, 10 AM, our topic will be "Islamic awakening" led by Fran Holmes. Once again we have the opportunity to become informed about our world.

- Bernice Baeumler

Term Limits: Lessons Learned After 20 Years Of State Experience

In this Voter we continue to examine the impact of term limits (TL) on the 15 states that currently have them. Although these 15 states differ in governmental organization and their TL laws vary, it is possible to assess the changes that have occurred, to suggest how TL might affect NYS, and to consider the future of the TL reform movement.

- TL impacts are greatest in states with the most restrictive term limits.
- Impacts are greater in professionalized states such as California or Michigan that have strong governmental structure, provide compensation, extensive staff support and other resources. (New York is a professionalized state.)
- The most important impact of TL is the weakened power of the legislature. With less control over their members or the time necessary to develop policy expertise and longstanding relationships, legislative leaders and committee chairs are less influential. The upper house gains power over the lower house which becomes a place of “training”, preparing members for moving up to more desirable positions. In California, after more than 20 years of term limits, virtually all incoming senators previously served in the lower house.
- Power lost by the legislature may increase the power of the executive.
- TL have made elections less competitive. Incumbents continue to retain the electoral advantage of name recognition and access to resources. Challengers have less incentive to take on an incumbent, preferring to wait for an open seat election when the incumbent is termed out.
- TL have increased the rate of legislative turnover, but probably less than had been anticipated since normal rate of turnover is obscured by the long tenures of a few high profile legislators. Redistricting remains the greatest source of legislative turnover.
- There has been no increase in voter turnout in states with TL or in states without them.
- After an initial period of disorganization, TL states have begun to adapt strategies to improve legislative procedural knowledge and policy expertise. For example, Florida has a mandatory apprenticeship program for incoming legislators and new staff. Other TL states have made similar programs optional. In California parties quickly identify promising freshman legislators and groom them for leadership roles by placing them on important committees.
- Whether legislative output is better or worse is a judgment call, depending upon one’s personal views. However, with less time to enact legislation, the pace of legislative activity has increased, especially where there are strong TL laws.
- The last state to adopt TL was Nebraska in 2000. It is doubtful additional states will enact TL because of procedural impediments and lack of organized enthusiasm for reform. New York would require a constitutional amendment to adopt term limits. On the other hand, in states where TL are in place, voters have consistently rejected attempts to repeal them.

- Term Limits/Ballot Access Committee

Did You Know?

Located 500 miles from 41 percent of the US population and 59 percent of Canada’s with access to 25 percent of the world’s fresh water, Western New York has many assets and strengths – such as a tourism sector with international acclaim; relatively low costs of living and doing business; and an educated and skilled workforce.

- Marian Deutschman, Local Government Committee

Voter Services

Board of Education Candidates' Meetings in May:

I would like express the League's appreciation to the following volunteers for participating in these meetings: Joyce Bol and Janet Goodsell, Ken-Ton; Anne Marie Malochowski, Amherst; Ramona Gallagher and JoAnn Mecca, Starpoint; Laura McDade, Hamburg; and Ellen Neumaier, Ellen Moomaw and Judy Weidemann, East Aurora.

Voter Registration Drive

Kate Wagner and I have confirmed the following dates for voter registrations: July 23, Friends of the Night from 5 to 7; August 23, Williamsville Farmers Market from 9 to 1 pm; August 23, University Community Farmers' Market UB South Campus from 9 to 1 pm; Walmart Sheridan either August 24 or 31; September 6, Bidwell Farmers' Market from 9 to 1 pm; September 23, Urban League from 11 to 3 pm. September 23 is also National Voter Registration Day, which our National League supports. Kate and I are still working on possibilities with NFTA at one of the subway stations on Main Street. In addition, the following venues are pending: radio station WUFO site, Taste of Diversity, June 28 and Discover Amherst Street Festival 17, June 21. Anyone who would like to volunteer assisting us in these registrations, please contact events@lwvbn.org

Finally, we participated already in two registrations in the Black Rock Area on April 17 and April 22 through the auspices of Debbie Lombardo, Community Outreach Coordinator, West Side Black Rock in Riverside.

- Joyce H. Bol, Voter Services Chair

Important Notice: Slate of Candidates Revision

The Nominating Committee has revised the slate of candidates for the Board of Directors election at the Annual Meeting on June 14. Margaret Brunson replaces Christine Vogel for a two-year term. Joan LoCurto replaces Margaret Brunson for a one-year term.

- Kathleen McCarthy, Chairperson, Nominating Committee

Membership

Thanks to all who attended the Membership Social on April 30th. We welcomed new and prospective folks and members of the Voter Registration, Term limits, and Local Government committees explained their committees' work. Terri distributed a list for all league and potential members to get involved in short, medium or longer-term League efforts. They are included with this edition of the Voter. See what the League is doing and volunteer to help. You will be in the company of an amazing group of women and men.

Amherst Unit

Amherst members will host a potluck picnic for the League at noon on July 29 at the Chelsea Club House on Downing Lane at Canterbury Woods off Renaissance Drive in Williamsville. Terri Parks and Ramona Gallagher will give an update on the League of Women Voters of the United States 2014 Convention. Please bring a favorite summer dish and join us for an enjoyable afternoon with your League friends.

- Judy Metzger

Opportunities for Service: League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

Please call or email the contact person listed or the League Office if you are interested in any of the efforts below. 884-3550 lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Longer Term Service

Education Committee
Local Government Committee
Membership Committee
Transportation/Waterfront Comm.
Election Services Committee
Youth Program Committee
Campaign Finance Reform
Social-Economic Justice Education

Length of Service

ongoing
ongoing
ongoing
ongoing
ongoing with short term opportunities
ongoing
ongoing
ongoing

Contact

Lee Tetkowski
Marian Deutschman
Judy Metzger
Gladys Gifford
Al Dozoretz
Dot Brown
Janet Massaro
Lynda Stephens

Medium Term Service

Voter Guide-research candidates/offices
Voters Guide-update distribution lists
Voter Guide Steering Committee
Two or Three Social Events
Design League Brochures
Voter Registration Drive
State League Studies
Moderator/Time keeper/ candidate forums (with training)

May-August
May- August
May-October
TBA
as needed
May-October
Now through January 2014
May-October

Mary Ann Turkla
Mary Ann Turkla
Lynne Vallone
Terri Parks
Terri Parks
Kate Wagner
Janet Massaro
Judy Clarke

Short Term Service

Voter Registration Drive
Voters Guide Distribution
Membership Ambassadors at events
Event Photographer
Event Videographer
Legislative Action: state legislators

sign up for individual locations/times
mid October
most months Sept-May
most months Sept-May
most months
April-early May

Kate Wagner
Mary Ann Turkla
Judy Metzger
Terri Parks
Terri Parks
Terri Parks

Another step towards victory!

On April 15th Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a bill that will pledge New York's 29 electoral votes to the Compact for the National Popular Vote. Our 29 votes will now be added to the 136 already pledged towards the necessary total of 270 votes that will assure the direct election of the president and vice president of the United States.

League has long believed that the direct election of the president and vice president is essential to our representative democracy and that the Electoral College should be abolished. The question we asked in our 2008 study was whether the National Popular Vote Compact could be a way of achieving this electoral goal. We concluded it was. We are pleased to announce that NYS concurs.

- Janet Massaro

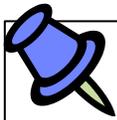


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June Meetings

Tues., 6/3, 4:30 p.m.

Issues Committee, Harlem Rd.
Community Center

Thurs., 6/5, 10 a.m.

Great Decisions, League Office

Mon., 6/9, 4 p.m.

Board Meeting, League Office

Wed., 6/11, 1:15 p.m.

Local Government Committee
League Office

Thurs., 6/12, 9:30 a.m.

Natural Resources, East Aurora

Wed., 6/18, 1:00 p.m.

Term Limits/Ballot Access Committee
League Office

Thurs., 6/19, 1:30 p.m.

Charter Schools/Education Committee
League Office

**Annual Meeting
June 14
Protocol Restaurant**

Copy for Summer Voter due 6/27/2014