



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

HOLIDAY PARTY

Chef's Restaurant, 291 Seneca Street, Buffalo, NY 14204

Monday, December 1

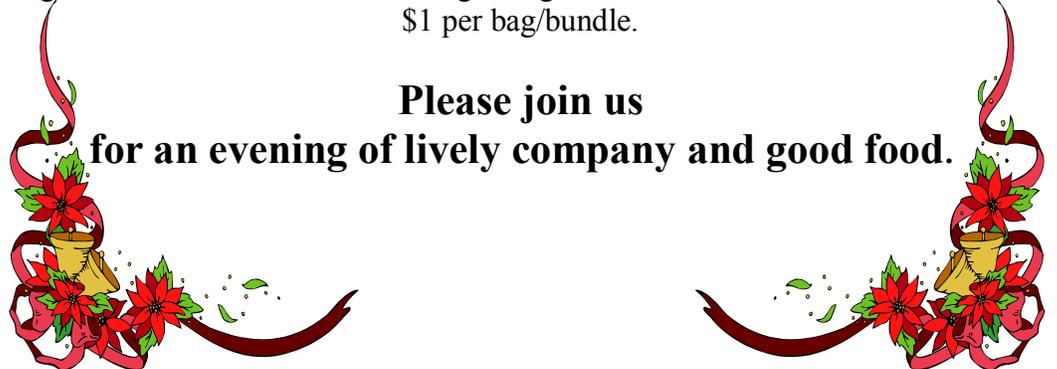
Cash Bar: 5:00 pm, Dinner: 6:00 pm

Cost: \$23.00 per person. Guests are welcome!

Please send check with names of attendees made payable to:
LWVBN, 1272 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209,
no later than November 21, 2014.

A large parking lot is available across the street from the restaurant.

Bags of bows and bundles of small gift bags will be available for sale at a cost of
\$1 per bag/bundle.



**Please join us
for an evening of lively company and good food.**

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

The 2014 election has been disappointing for several reasons. Many candidates are running without opposition and too many candidates have declined participation in candidate forums. The candidate forum in East Aurora was canceled before invitations were sent, because there was only one office where there was opposition, the office of Erie County Comptroller. The candidate forum in Amherst was changed to an informal "meet and greet" event, because only one candidate for each state and county office who had been invited responded to the invitation.

When we updated our policies and guidelines for candidate forums in the summer, we scrupulously followed the dictates in the state League's *Road to the Voting Booth* publication as well as information we received at league training last March and conversations with other League leaders in the state. As a result, we didn't include congressional candidates in our invitations to the forums for this fall's election. In the past, we have participated with WNED-TV in congressional debates, but none were held this year. This is unfortunate and from recent conversations with the state League, we may have yet another update before the 2016 congressional election.

I hope you have received the *2014 Voters Guide* that was mailed on October 21st. We continue to be disappointed that all candidates have not elected to participate. Candidates may still respond online at Vote411 and would probably do so if enough voters contacted them and requested their response. If you contact any candidates in your district, please do so as a voter and someone who uses our online or printed *Voters Guide*. All candidates have been contacted more than once with an official League request. Everything in the printed guide as well as several more questions to candidates are available at Vote411 from our web site: www.lwvbn.org. Encourage everyone you know to learn more about candidates' views on our online *Voters Guide* and read the pro and con arguments for the three New York State proposals.

We appreciate a grant from the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation to help us print the *2014 Voters Guide*. Producing and delivering the Voters Guide takes many hours of work each year. I commend and thank the people who worked especially hard on this year's Voters Guide. **Lynne Vallone** coordinated the work of the Steering committee. League member, **Krysta Doerfler**, designed this year's guide. It has a clean, professional appearance. **Kristin Allen**, our able web master, was responsible for connecting each candidate who responded to our invitation with access to Vote411 to enter her/his information. In addition to administering Vote411, she provided expert advice and guidance for the entire process of producing the *Voters Guide*. Her dedication and skill is outstanding. **Flora Summe**, our office volunteer, called all of the 370 distribution sites to update the distribution lists, a tedious job, especially when she often needed to leave a voice mail and call back when her call wasn't returned. **Laura McDade** once again coordinated the delivery of 23,000 *Voters Guides*. Many thanks also go to **Mary Ann Turkla** at the League office for her many efforts that included calling campaign offices to obtain responses and keeping in contact with the printer. We will surely recognize the distribution team in the Winter Voter. Each of the tasks and people who carried them out are essential to creating this professional publication that so many people in Erie and Niagara County use.

-Terri Parks

Great Decisions

On Thursday, November 6, Joan Photiadis will lead our last Great Decisions discussion topic for 2014: U.S. Trade Policy. Our discussion will take place from 10 am to noon at the League office, 1272 Delaware. "America's foreign policy tools are not limited to sanctions, treaties or military campaigns - they also include the sales pitch. The logic behind this pitch, or economic statecraft, is simple: promote the benefits of democracy and the free market. In so doing, the U.S. will gain valuable and stable partners both in business and in diplomacy. Now, as China and other emerging nations battle the U.S. for global influence, Secretary Kerry takes the reigns as a free market matchmaker." (quote from the Foreign Policy Association.) If you've read the topics for Great Decisions 2015 published in the October VOTER and are interested in participating, let us know by our November meeting so we can order the briefing books needed. Thank you.

- Bernice Baeumler

Amherst Unit

Lunch & Issues is Back !

Speaker: Maria Whyte, Erie Co. Commissioner of the Dept. of Environment and Planning

Please join us for Lunch & Issues at 11:30 am on Friday, November 14 at the Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant, 3999 Maple Road, Amherst. Maria Whyte, Erie County Commissioner of the Department of Environment and Planning will be our guest speaker. Contact Sally Metzger or Judy Metzger at events@lwvbn.org for reservations. Cost: \$16.00 all inclusive.

We thank everyone who attended and volunteered for the candidate event at the Amherst Senior Center on October 24.

Request: Call Judy if you can attend a town Board meeting or committee meeting. We are interested in learning more about town government and the role we can play as observers. For instance, currently the Energy Conservation Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month. All meetings are posted on the Amherst, NY website at www.amherst.ny.us

-Judy Metzger, Sally Metzger, Arlene Miles, Coordinators, LWVBN Amherst Unit

Suggestions Welcome for the 2014-2015 Legislative Priorities

Each year at this time, the local Leagues in New York State make suggestions for the statewide issues that should form our legislative agenda for the coming year. The suggestions we make will be discussed by the state League Issues Specialists and approved by the state board in December 2014. The priorities selected will provide the talking points we will use when we meet with our state legislators in April and May of 2015.

We welcome you to join the members of the Issues and Action Committee at its next meeting on Tuesday, November 4 at the Harlem Road Community Center at 4:00 p.m. to discuss and recommend the issues you think should form the legislative priorities for next year's legislative session. The issues selected by the committee will be submitted to our board for approval and then be sent to the state League.

While each of us has issues that we especially value, we need to realize that both the state and national leagues need to set priorities on the issues that they pursue. Those priorities reflect a number of considerations. The issues chosen for action depend on two key things: strategy and timing.

-Terri Parks

Thanking our Volunteers

League volunteers have been busy representing the League at Naturalization Ceremonies for new citizens. They are: Kathleen McCarthy and JoAnn Mecca on September 12, Judy Huber and Lillis McLean on September 18, and Judy Weidemann with Pat Wille on October 2. Their participation in these events is very much appreciated.

-Judy Clarke, LWVBN Volunteer Coordinator

Membership

We welcome Nancy DeTine to our League. Nancy is newly retired and attended the recent Social Economic Justice Committee meeting. REMINDER: If you have not renewed your league membership July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015 please send your check to LWVBN, 1272 Delaware, Buffalo, NY 14209. Thank you!

Ballot Access Study

Pros & Cons of Primary Election Systems

Last month, our committee introduced the different types of primary election systems that are in use in various states throughout the nation. In this issue, we will briefly list the pros and cons of some of these systems.

Closed primary.

- Proponents say that this system contributes to a strong party organization because only voters who are members of a particular party can vote in that party's primary.
- Opponents note that unaffiliated voters, which include a large portion of immigrants and young voters, are totally excluded from the process.

Open Primary.

- A completely open primary is known as a "Blanket Primary." Everyone receives the same ballot and "crossover" voting is allowed. This "Blanket Primary" was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2000. Most states have something in between Open and Closed and these are usually known as Hybrid primaries.
- Proponents say that this system affords voters maximum flexibility because they can cross party lines. In other words, a Democrat could "cross over" and cast a vote in a Republican primary and unaffiliated voters could also vote.
- Opponents counter that this system dilutes a party's ability to nominate its own candidates who reflect the party's ideology.

Plurality Voting.

- Proponents say that this type of system gives support to the two party system and relies on the preservation of the "one person, one vote" principle (also "one man, one vote", or OMOV, or more recently "one member, one vote"), as cited by the Supreme Court of the United States, wherein each voter is only able to cast one vote in a given election, where that vote can only go to one candidate.
- Opponents argue that when more than two candidates compete under a plurality voting system, elections can be won with only a minority percent of the vote and top contenders or 'spoilers' can end up splitting the vote, handing the election to a weak nominee.

Fusion Voting.

- Proponents argue that cross-endorsing, known as fusion, is a key part of New York State's political system that results in vigorous third parties and highly competitive elections. Bans on fusion would eliminate the third parties as a significant political force. Fusion is believed to encourage voting by offering voters the opportunity to cast a meaningful vote for a candidate with a credible chance of victory while still expressing their support for their third party's agenda. Fusion decreases plurality victories by encouraging voters further from the political center to express their views by voting on their third-party line. Fusion requires main-line candidates to move further to the right or left, depending on which third party allows them to run on their ticket, leading to candidates distinguishing themselves from each other, making choice more meaningful. Fusion gives blocs of voters real power when addressing legislators. For example, the Working Families Party believes that the 2004 increase in New York's state minimum wage was due to its influence in the legislature.

Ballot Access Study

- **Opponents** are concerned that fusion voting may: encourage patronage, if politicians make concessions just to gain support from special interest groups and if third parties exist only to get special privileges; give too much power or influence to groups with a single agenda or extreme groups with certain agendas; threaten the identity of all political parties, threaten the two-party system, and creates an illusion that the so-called spoiler effect of third party or independent candidates is eliminated, because the spoiler effect is eliminated only if the third party or independent candidate is also endorsed by, and has a ballot line, on one of the two major parties which would happen under fusion voting.

Wilson-Pakula – should it be eliminated?

- **Proponents**, including Governor Cuomo, advise the elimination of Wilson-Pakula. It is argued that without the Wilson-Pakula requirement, candidates from one party hoping to run on another party’s ballot would need to submit petitions to gather signatures of registered members of that party, rather than seeking the permission of party leaders. Proponents of this change argue that minor parties have on occasion offered their party line to the highest bidder, thus contributing to the corruption or appearance of corruption plaguing state government.
- **Opponents** Those who want Wilson-Pakula kept as law believe that eliminating it would threaten the integrity of political parties, lead to major parties invading minor parties, and mean the demise of third parties. Party leaders of all stripes believe that they should have a say in screening their own candidates. Opponents also consider the proposal to ban Wilson-Pakula a distraction from the major challenges facing our political system, such as the influence of big money, campaign finance reform, and other election reforms.

This is certainly food for thought. What do you think? Did you ever think that our primary choices could be so complicated? In the next issue we’ll take a look at “top two” primaries and “instant runoff voting”. Look for further updates as we move towards consensus.

- the Ballot Access Study Committee



VOTE
on November 4 and . . .
remind everyone you know to do so too!

Remind your friends and the young adults in your life that there is an election on November 4, 2014 and that we will be electing a governor, lieutenant governor, state attorney general, state comptroller, congressional representatives, state senators and state assembly members, Erie County Clerk, judges and other local officials. There will also be three propositions on the ballot. Refer your friends to the League website for more information and to see our Voter Guide. (www.lwvbn.org)

-Margaret Brunson, Voter Services

In Memoriam: Robert Annis

In early September the League's lost one of it's male members, Robert Annis. Bob was not a "paper member." He and his wife Agnes volunteered their time and energy to many League projects. They were *Voters Guide* distributors to West Seneca sites for many years. They also could be found down on the Niagara River for the shoreline cleanup, at Naturalization ceremonies and at voter registration tables. The League extends its sincere condolence to Agnes and her family. Bob will be missed.



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November Meetings

Tues., 11/4, 4:00 p.m.

Issues Committee, Harlem Rd. Com. Cntr.

Thurs., 11/6, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions, League Office

Mon., 11/10, 4 p.m.

Board Meeting, League Office

Wed., 11/12 10:00 a.m.

Transportation, League Office

Wed., 11/12, 1:15 p.m.

Local Government, League Office

Thurs., 11/13, 9:30 a.m.

Natural Resources, East Aurora

Fri., 11/14, 11:30 a.m.

Lunch & Issues, Scotch and Sirloin

Thurs., 11/20 1:30 p.m.

Charter Schools/Education, League Office

Dates to Remember

General Election, November 4

All Copy for the December/early January Voter due 11/7/2014