



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The **VOTER** is published
10 times per year. Items for
the November issue are due
Friday, October 3.



LWVBN sponsored
Candidate Forums

Hamburg
Wednesday, October 22, 7 pm
Location TBA
(please check the LWVBN website)

East Aurora
Wednesday, October 29, 7pm
East Aurora Senior Center
101 King Street

In addition, LWVBN will provide a moderator and
timekeeper for the Candidate Forum in Amherst on
October 25,
9 am, at the Amherst Senior Center, 250 Audubon
Parkway.



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 Term Limits consensus report was approved for submission to the state League at the September board meeting. Laura McDade facilitated the consensus meeting at the League potluck picnic and committee members offered comments. The resulting consensus was to oppose term limits for state elected officials. In its comments to the state League, the committee noted:

Most members expressed strong opposition to term limits (using "fist to five" designation). Although there was some sentiment in support of term limits for the office of governor, it was not widely shared. There was some support for four-year terms for State Senate but none for revisiting the Term Limits issue again. There was consensus that the League of Women Voters of New York State should spend its time working for reform of redistricting and campaign finance.

The meeting did not generate much debate. Members were generally engaged but only a few members voiced opinions or asked questions. Perhaps members had already formed firm opinions, were reluctant to voice their opposition, or were not particularly excited about the issue.

The Ballot Access Study Committee, chaired by Janet Massaro and Joan Photiadis will examine the variety of ways a candidate may access the ballot across the nation. The committee plans to have articles in each Voter for the next three months. Please read the articles and other materials that are suggested, so you are ready to contribute to the consensus discussion this winter. I'm sure we all are interested in having a process that insures the voters have the greatest voice possible in the selection of candidates for election to public office in New York State.

Because the League supports and promotes educational programs to highlight the pros and cons of controversial issues, we are working with the state League to arrange a public forum, in late October, with knowledgeable speakers for and against the proposed redistricting amendment to the New York state constitution. We'll contact all members with the details when we have them. This is an important voter proposition that will affect the redistricting of State Senate, Assembly and congressional districts in New York after each census.

The board appointed Judy Clarke as the fifth member of the Finance/Investment Committee, Joan LoCurto as the final member of the Executive Committee and Rebecca Costanzo as a director, with responsibility as Fund Development Committee Chair. These appointments are contingent on the acceptance by the appointees.

The Gift Wrapping Fund Development effort for the League has ended with the sale of Gift Wrapping supplies to the Hamburg Zonta Club and The Kidney Foundation. Last year's experience made it clear that we cannot depend on a good location at the Mall. Special thanks to Mary Ann Turkla, Flora Summe, Lori Robinson and her son, Christopher, for their work getting the supplies out of storage. and into the hands of the buyers. Flora has packaged bows and small gift bags that we'll sell for \$1 each at the Holiday Party.

-Terri Parks

Great Decisions

China's foreign policy is the topic to be discussed on Thursday, October 2 from 10 AM to noon at the League Office (1272 Delaware.) Bernice Baeumler will moderate. "China has gone to great lengths to emphasize the 'peaceful' nature of its meteoric rise. Yet few dispute that China is the dominant regional power in Asia and in recent years Beijing has begun to flex its muscles regionally in order to advance its strategic interests. What does the rapid rise of this new superpower mean for other countries in the region, and are there potential points of conflict with the US as it 'pivots' to Asia?"

Additionally, the Foreign Policy Association has announced its 2015 topics: Russia and the Near Abroad; Privacy in the Digital Age; Sectarianism in the Middle East; India Changes Course; US Policy Toward Africa; Syria's Refugee Crisis; Human Trafficking in the 21st Century; and Brazil's Metamorphosis. Any questions?

- Bernice Baeumler

Ballot Access Study

A Sampling of Primary Election Systems. “Pick Your Favorite”

Because states are free to choose their own election systems, the manner in which party primary elections are conducted varies from state to state. We have listed common primary systems below. *References to New York State’s primary system are written in italics for easy reference.* As you read over the various kinds of primaries, consider them in light of the criteria discussed in the Summer VOTER, especially the criteria important to you.

Closed Primary. *Eleven states operate closed primaries, including New York State. Only voters who are registered as members of a political party prior to the primary date may vote in the party’s primary. Independent (unaffiliated) voters are excluded from the primary election. Changing party affiliation takes an entire election cycle before a voter can vote in a “new” party.*

Open Primary. Eleven states operate open primaries, a term generally used to describe primary systems in which voters do not have to declare a party preference as a prerequisite to vote or who can do so on election day. Voters unaffiliated with a political party can vote in open primaries.

Hybrid Primaries. Twenty four states have systems that fall somewhere in between “open” and “closed” primaries. Since procedures are unique from state to state, it is difficult to categorize them.

Plurality Voting. *New York, like many states, uses a “first-past-the-post” system in which a candidate may win with only a plurality (less than 50% or a majority) of the vote.*

Top-Two Primary. Four states use top-two primaries. All candidates, regardless of party affiliation, are listed on one ballot. Voters choose their favorite candidate and the **top two vote-getters** become the candidates in the general election. This means that two candidates from the same party can advance to the second round. Top-Two systems assure that the winner receives a majority of the vote.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). Several municipalities across the US use IRV. IRV is a way of electing a majority winner among a field of three or more candidates in a single election. All candidates are listed on the ballot, but voters rank the candidates in order of preference. Ballots are counted beginning with every voter’s first choice. If a first choice candidate receives over 50% of the vote, that candidate is declared the winner. If no candidate receives 50% of the vote, then the candidate with fewest votes is eliminated and the second choice votes of the supporters of the eliminated candidate are transferred to whichever of the remaining candidates was their number two choice. The votes are counted again to see if one of the remaining candidates has a majority of the votes. The process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the votes and wins the election.

Fusion Voting (or Cross-Endorsement). *Eight states, including New York, permit fusion voting, which is the practice of multiple political parties nominating the same candidate for the same office.*

Wilson-Pakula Certificate. *Authorization given by political party leaders to a candidate for public office in New York State which allows a candidate not registered with that party to run as its candidate in a given election. The Wilson Pakula Act of 1947 bars candidates from collecting nominating petitions or running in primaries unless they are enrolled in that party or are granted permission by party leaders.*

We’ll dig into the pros and cons of different primary systems in the next Voter.

Local Government Committee

How to make a DIFFICULT ENGAGEMENT a little easier

It's difficult to engage citizens in local government budgets even though these governments administer programs and services that have the most direct day-to-day impact on our lives. A local government budget can be difficult to understand for those of us without a background in accounting. The Erie County Comptroller's office has prepared a "**Popular Annual Financial Report**" (PAFR) that is intended to provide a readable and easy to understand demonstration of county accountability for the average citizen. You can obtain a copy at their website at www.erie.gov/comptroller or a printed copy is available by contacting the County Comptroller's office at (716)858-8400.

Midyear hearings on the 2014 Erie County Budget were held in July and County Executive Poloncarz was pleased to report that we were trending toward a modest surplus. The Legislature's budgetary review was completed in an unusually brief time with very few inquiries for commissioners and department heads. The proposed tentative budget is prepared by the county executive and submitted to the legislature by October 15th. The Erie County Charter stipulates that the proposed and adopted budgets be presented in a form which is both usable and understandable by the citizens of Erie County. That includes the manner and language of the document as well as its accessibility and transparency. The entire document is required to contain a separate statement that sets forth the major goals and objectives for each individual program and a description of the need for the program and its specific outcomes. Citizens should be able to obtain access to the results of monitoring and evaluation of program measures and performance standards.

A useful document from the office of the Erie County Executive is a publication entitled "**Initiatives for a Smart Economy**" that identifies areas poised for growth in our local economy and recommended guidelines to foster that growth. That document provides timelines, potential partners, resources and who takes the lead on each initiative. It includes 64 specific, do-able initiatives in which the County will play a lead role.

The office of the New York State Comptroller includes a "**Citizen's Guide to Local Budgets**" on its website. With the resources in this guide, they claim that interested citizens should be able to understand the challenges facing their local government and what it is doing with their tax dollars.

The annual meeting to adopt the Erie County Budget for 2015 must be held on or before the first Tuesday in December. That gives you time to access these documents and bone-up on them and/or come join our local government committee at our second Wednesday of the month meetings at 1:15 p.m. at the League office.

-Marian Deutschman, chair

VOTE 411 goes LIVE at the end of September!

Vote 411 is the League's online Voters Guide. Voters may access Vote411 from our local League website: www.lwvbn.org. Voters will be able to read about the candidates who will appear on their ballot in the November election and learn how the candidates respond to questions posed by the League. It is easy to compare candidates' views, because two candidates appear side by side at one time. Please check the site throughout October, because candidates may respond at any time prior to the election. The three state propositions with pro and con views are also included in Vote411.

Our printed 2014 Voters Guide will be mailed to all members in late October and also be available at over 350 sites including public libraries and town and city halls in Erie and Niagara County.

Outer Harbor Planning

Outer Harbor Update: LWVBN Takes Lead & Requests a Halt to Flawed Process

On September 9 the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECDHC) released its proposal for Buffalo's Outer Harbor at a public meeting at WNED headquarters. By far most of those present were dismayed to see that it bore little resemblance to the desire -- expressed by the overwhelming majority of community members who had showed up for the series of public meetings -- *to have the Outer Harbor's natural setting preserved for the public and wildlife*. Instead, for instance, the plan includes over a thousand condominium units. The "rollout" of the plan is to take place on October 1.

As a core value of the League of Women Voters is citizen participation in all parts of government, the League is particularly critical of the process undertaken by ECDHC and the limits placed on public engagement. At this time the League has taken the lead in drafting a letter to Empire State Development (parent entity for the ECHDC), requesting that the process be paused in order to allow the public to shape a citizen-driven vision for the future of the Outer Harbor. The waterfront committee of the League is recruiting co-signers of this letter by various local civic organizations and interested groups.

In the letter the League states that it regards the whole process as flawed, from its very inception. First, the Request For Proposals (RFP) for the Outer Harbor has never been not readily available to the public. Second, the "public meetings" conducted by consultants failed to engage the public in meaningful discussions. Therefore, the resulting "plan" is a vision created by consultants, not the community's vision for the Outer Harbor arrived at through consensus. Furthermore, the ECHDC has not acknowledged the need for required State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) oversight. Environmental Impact Studies need to be done in compliance with SEQRA regulations, followed by true public hearings at which participants can share their visions with each other and through which consensus can be reached.

The letter ends by requesting specifically that Empire State Development tell its subsidiary, ECHDC, *"to pause this process in order to engage the public fully and transparently through these actions: publish the RFP on its website; make the Board agendas available to the public; conduct an appropriate environmental review; conduct public hearings as required by SEQRA."* Copies of the letter are to be sent to Christina Orsi, ESD WNY Regional Director, Sam Hoyt, Governor Andrew Cuomo, Representative Brian Higgins, Mayor Brown, and to the local media.

So far hundreds of local citizens have attempted to engage in this process of deciding the future of Buffalo's Outer Harbor. Let us work together to make this engagement a meaningful and fruitful one. After all the Outer Harbor is to be held in the "public trust," meaning that it is to be preserved for public use and that government is required to maintain it for that purpose. Please join your League . . . and make your individual voice heard as well!

- Gladys Gifford

A Request from the Membership Committee

To our knowledge LWVBN has 8 people who have been members for at least 50 years. If you think you are in this category, please let the office know. (884-3550) We are in the process of updating our records. Thanks to all.

Our new members since January are Josette Cunningham, Barbara Rubin, Deborah Costanza, Shirley Joy, Ann Marie Jason, Nicole Morris McLaughlin, Deborah Shiffner and Judith Schiffert.

-Judy Metzger, Membership Committee

Save the Date

League Day at the United Nations, November 13

The annual League Day at the United Nations will be held on **Thursday, November 13**. All members, family and friends are invited to join us for a fun and educational day. The day includes a tour of the UN building, lunch in the Delegates Dining Room and a briefing by key UN experts. The topic this year is "Water for Life" the UN International Decade for Action 2005-2015.

From the "Water for Life" website, <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/background.shtml>:

Water is essential for life. No living being on planet Earth can survive without it. It is a prerequisite for human health and well-being as well as for the preservation of the environment. However, four of every ten people in the world do not have access to even a simple pit latrine; and nearly two in ten have no source of safe drinking water. Every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. According to the World Health Organization, each and every day some 3,900 children die because of dirty water or poor hygiene; diseases transmitted through water or human excrement are the second-leading cause of death among children worldwide, after respiratory diseases. Water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Water-related natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and tsunamis exert a heavy toll in human life and suffering. And all too regularly, drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition.

Beyond meeting basic human needs, water supply and sanitation services, as well as water as a resource, are critical to sustainable development. It is a major source of energy in some parts of the world, while in others its potential as an energy source remains largely untapped. Water is also necessary for agriculture and for many industrial processes. And in more than a few countries, it makes up an integral part of transport systems. With improved scientific understanding, the international community has also come to appreciate more fully the valuable services provided by water-related ecosystems, from flood control to storm protection and water purification.

The registration form is on the next page and is also posted on the state League website. Encourage all to join us on November 13 at the United Nations.



REGISTRATION FORM

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NYS EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC.
in association with United Nations Department of Public Information
and Zonta International District 4
INVITE YOU TO ATTEND

Briefings on "Water for Life"

UN International Decade for Action 2005-2015

Come hear how water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, and educational opportunities for families across the world.

Thursday, November 13, 2014

1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

United Nations Headquarters in NYC -- First Avenue at 46th Street

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Day Phone: () _____ **E-Mail:** _____

COST/PAYMENT INFORMATION

- Optional** Tour of the UN (Space limited and exact time TBD) \$ 15
- Optional** Lunch in the Delegates' Dining Room \$ 50
 - o *Include Lunch, Dessert Bar and Coffee/Tea only*
 - o *UN requires proper attire: jeans, shorts, sneakers will NOT be permitted*
- 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. **Briefings Program** in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium \$ _____
 - o **\$50 League Members or Members of Sponsoring Organizations**
 - o **\$60 Non-Member \$ 40 Students**
- Discounted fee to members of sponsoring organization for all three activities:**
Tour, Lunch, & Briefing \$ 110
- ROUNDTRIP BUS FROM ALBANY TO NYC (one stop at New Paltz NY Thruway Exit 18)** \$ 45

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

My Check for \$ _____ is enclosed (make payable to LWVNYS EF) **OR**

Please charge my: MasterCard VISA American Express Discover

Card Holder's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN TO:

United Nations Briefings/LWVNYS62 Grand Street** Albany, New York 12207**

Fax: 518-465-0812 (Credit Card Registrations ONLY)

E-Mail: lwnvy@lwnvy.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 518-465-4162

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October Meetings

Tues., 9/30, 4:30 p.m.

Issues Committee, Harlem Rd. Com. Cntr.

Wed., 10/8, 1:15 p.m.

Local Government, League Office

Thurs., 10/2, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions, League Office

Thurs., 10/9, 9:30 a.m.

Natural Resources, East Aurora

Mon., 10/6, 4 p.m.

Board Meeting, League Office

Thurs., 10/16, 1:30 p.m.

Charter Schools/Education, League Office

Wed., 10/8 10:00 a.m.

Transportation, League Office

Wed., 10/22, 1:00 p.m.

Ballot Access, League Office

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Last Day to register for the General Election – October 10
- Change of Address for Registered Voters must be received by the County Board of Elections by October 15 to be processed in time for the General Election
- **Change of Enrollment** for the 2015 Primary Election must be postmarked before midnight on October 10, 2014.
- **General Election** – November 4th

All Copy for the October Voter due 10/3/2014