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LWVNYS Home Page
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The September Voter copy is due Monday, August 7.

Send copy to Nancy DeTine
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League Potluck Picnic

Not to be missed!

Our annual potluck picnic is famous for wonderful camaraderie and amazing homemade cuisine. So come and bring one of your own delicious specialties to share.

Date: **Tuesday, July 18, 2017**
Time: **12:00 noon**
Place: **Chelsea Clubhouse at Canterbury Woods,**
Downing Lane (off Renaissance Drive), Williamsville, NY 14221

Speaker: **Dave Spiering**, conservation project manager of the Western New York Land Conservancy, will join us for lunch and bring us up to date on the Restore the (Niagara) Gorge project, which has received funding in this year's state budget.

Can you help set up?

Judy Metzger would like one or two helpers to arrive at 11:15 to arrange food tables. Please call he to volunteer. Computer difficulties persist, so no emails, please.

Sign up now!

Please let us know you plan to attend by clicking the link at www.lwvbn.org or by calling the League office at 716-986-4898.

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.

News from the Board

The first meeting of the 2016-2017 board of directors will be Monday, July 10. All board assignments have not yet been finalized, but we are including the list of current board members and committee chairs with this Voter. Committee chairs will give you a warm welcome if you contact them.

We have begun the task of dividing the responsibilities of board president among the members of the Leadership Team. As communications chair, Nancy DeTine will also handle public relations and will be the designee to approve all copy for publication and action; in addition, as copy editor, she will receive and edit all submissions for the Voter. Lori Robinson will receive requests for action such as letters to the editor that need approval prior to a regularly scheduled board meeting and convene the executive committee to solicit that approval. As volunteer coordinator, Judith Clarke will continue to respond to requests for speakers and moderators for events. Marian Deutschman will represent the League to the public, government officials, the media and other levels of the League. She will also decide the appropriate person to contact to respond to questions about the League received by the office manager and follow through. Terri Parks will continue to prepare materials for board meetings and supervise the office manager. Board members will preside at board meetings on a rotating basis.

The Executive Committee members are Judith Clarke, Marian Deutschman, Terri Parks, Nancy DeTine, Mary Herbst and Lori Robinson.

Thank you to all who have already renewed your membership in our League for 2017-2018. Our membership year begins on July 1. Please return your interest survey as we depend on the involvement of our members for our strength. We need each of you to attend programs, help plan one, join a committee, and/or provide constructive ideas. We anticipate another productive League year with your interest and active participation. Many of you continue to include a donation in your membership check. We appreciate your generosity greatly and have, of course, sent each of you a thank you letter.

Special Volunteer Opportunities

This is an exciting time for the League and for all women as we celebrate 100 years of women's suffrage. We need folks to help us plan displays and events to honor the long road to suffrage that began with the gathering at Seneca Falls in 1848. It will be a rewarding effort. Please consider helping us prepare.

- A. LWVBN webmaster:** Kris Allen has decided it's time to retire.
- B. Facebook manager:** We need to have a more prominent presence on Facebook.
- C. League photographer(s):** Document activities for the Voter, Facebook and our website.
- D. Sort and organize the League's history:** What fun it will be to find treasures from our past!
- E. Celebration committees:**
 - 2017 Centennial for Women's Suffrage in New York State
 - 2019 Centennial for the League of Women Voters of New York State
 - 2020 Centennial for the League of Women Voters of the United States
 - 2020 Centennial for the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that granted women in the United States the right to vote.
- F. West Valley Citizens Task Force:** Represent the League at quarterly meetings of the Task Force

Please let us know if you're interested in learning more about any of these opportunities! Call the League at 716-986-4898 or send an email to lwvbn@lwvbn.org.

In Memoriam

We sadly report the death of former League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara co-president, Loretta Peszynski. Loretta died unexpectedly on June 6, 2017. She was active in the League for four years and co-president from 2008 to 2011.

Great Decisions

August 3: U.S. foreign policy and petroleum

My apologies once again for my failure to remember that promotion for the July Great Decisions should have been included in the June edition of the Voter since our timing does not correspond with the summer news schedule. I'm grateful to Joan Mondul who agreed to lead our July 6 topic, Saudi Arabia in transition. All who read and attended must have been impressed with the great depth of the presentation. Joan Photiadis is slated to facilitate our fifth Great Decisions topic on Thursday, August 3, from 10 a.m. till noon at 1272 Delaware: U.S. foreign policy and petroleum. "What is the effect of U.S. petroleum security on foreign policy? For 45 years, the country has alternated between periods of energy security and insecurity, sometimes able to wield petroleum as a useful instrument of foreign policy, sometimes not. Despite the so-called 'energy revolution', the U.S. today is by no means disentangled from foreign dependence and global trends. In order to be successful, policymakers must recognize both petroleum security circumstances and patterns in the relationship between petroleum and foreign policy."

Bernice Baeumler

The Citizens' Budget Review Commission needs women. Why not you?

League members are encouraged to reply!

Did you know that Erie County has a Citizens' Budget Review Commission? The Local Government Committee has been attending meetings and reviewing the commission and its work for several years. One key finding: **Currently the commission has NO women members.**

Briefly, here's what the commission is authorized by law to do: "The Commission shall have the power to make such studies and investigations into the County's budget and finances as it deems to be in the best interest of the county." It's also charged with submitting an annual report to the legislature.

To ensure a balanced approach to budget analysis, the commission must include individuals with particular backgrounds and experience, and guidelines say appointees should represent a variety of industries. A commission member (except for ex officio members) cannot hold public or political office, be a county employee, or serve on another county board or commission during his or her ECBRC term.

Here's who members are and how appointments are made: The county executive, the chair of the legislature, and the majority and minority leaders each appoint one member. Five additional members, to be approved by a majority of the legislature, must include a certified public accountant (CPA), a banking/finance professional, an attorney with local government or finance experience, a professional with organized labor experience, an individual from the business community, and two members based on recommendations from the public. The county attorney, director of budget and management and comptroller are ex officio members.

Seriously, we know there are League members who are qualified to sit on the Citizens' Budget Review Commission! Please consider applying. It's easy: send your resume and a cover letter to the chair of the Erie County Legislature (currently Hon. John J. Mills) at 92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor, Buffalo, NY 14202. For additional information, call 716-858-8850 or use this website link:

<http://www2.erie.gov/legislature/index.php?q=erie-county-citizens-budget-review-committee>.

Lynda Stephens

Report from the State League Convention

Six members from LWV Buffalo/Niagara attended the 57th Biennial Convention of the LWV New York State at the Holiday Inn in Liverpool, NY, June 9-11, 2017. It was a busy weekend. Several of us enjoyed the Friday afternoon bus excursion to Seneca Falls and the Women's History Museum. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Melinda Grube) joined us for an informative talk and question session. She also visited each table at dinner that evening to continue responding to questions.

Our delegation was able to attend all the workshops and information sessions and all plenary meetings. Each of us will share specific information with the appropriate committee chairs from the workshops. When we met to debrief last week, we decided that the information in this article needs to be shared with our members.

The slate of officers, board members and nominating committee members was approved with no additional nominations. We're pleased to report that the new state treasurer is Lori Robinson, who will continue to be our local treasurer. The state League budget for 2017-2018 was also easily approved. The budget provides no increase in the \$20 per member payment to support the work of the state League that we each pay as part of our annual dues.

There was little discussion of the two items for the program:

1. The state board recommended an update of our position on charter schools adopted in 2006 to delete the following sentence: "In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason." The rationale for this deletion is: "The 100 charter school cap has been exceeded over the years and is no longer a relevant number." An explanation of the position will be sent to local Leagues, along with a response form.
2. The state board recommended a post-convention concurrence with the LWV of Utah's Death with Dignity position. The delegates approved the recommendation. The Schenectady County League proposed this issue as an update to the health care position. Death with Dignity legislation has been introduced in the last few years in New York, but is not covered under our current health care positions.

The state League will forward information about this issue to the individual leagues, including a copy of the Utah study. The Utah study provided information about laws in five states currently allowing terminally ill persons to request physician aid in dying, as well as a detailed history of the issue through the ages. Such legislation has become of increasing public interest and concern. Stay tuned for more information on this compelling and controversial subject.

There was one main bylaw change that was readily approved. It permits concurrence at convention or council for a position that is held by another state or local League to permit action related to it in New York State. Conventions are held in odd numbered years. Councils are held in even numbered years, usually by conference call. The rationale for this bylaw change is "to make the League a more nimble organization, able to take action on issues in a more timely way." The Saratoga League proposed the change and cited the concurrence with the position about sex trafficking after convention in 2013. The League was supporting the governor's Women's Equality Agenda and the League had no position at that time to allow us to actively address sex trafficking.

A number of Leagues expressed concern about the decision of the state board to support the state constitutional convention proposal on the general election ballot this November and gave directions to the state board to revisit its decision or at least not to act on it. The board will address all directions to the board at its July 2017 meeting.

Delegates from LWV Buffalo/Niagara: Marian Deutschman, Ramona Gallagher, Shirley Joy, Nora Mikes, Terri Parks, Lori Robinson

Report from the State League Convention Workshop to Discuss the League's Future

We want to make it easier to join the League and we want to be more responsive to people's needs with a focus on voters. The result of 800 responses to a survey sent to 8,000 members of LWV New York State identified three basic missions, in order: 1) voter service, 2) ballot-related public education, and 3) lobbying. We need to be technologically savvy and nimble. Amid the declining membership of LWV, the face of volunteers has changed.

We need to reinforce our commitment to help people run for office, to help them to make a difference. People don't understand "non-partisanship" of LWV. We should simply say that we do not support specific candidates or political parties. We want to become the "go-to" organization by creating buzz and widening our circle of engagement. We need to get creative and learn from each other. Advocacy training can be our focus. We need to concentrate on keeping new members engaged and asking them for feedback on our direction. Plan special events, get merchants involved, involve Chamber of Commerce groups, arrange to see attractions in our area that members are not likely to see on their own.

We need to explore alternative ways to change our slow study process to arrive at a position. We have so many positions. We should concentrate on areas that other groups aren't working on. Examples include ethics and campaign finance, election laws, environment, and health care. We can focus on education and advocacy on legislative priorities in these areas.

Marian Deutschman

Money in Politics Update

*Redistricting: It's **only** three years away!*

Yes, *indeed*. We can expect the usual fireworks in the next three years as elected officials sit down to redraw legislative district lines and try to determine who will represent us even before we enter the polling place on Election Day.

One potentially explosive issue this time is the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to consider arguments in October as to whether redistricted election maps that favor one political party over another are constitutional. The court will decide the constitutionality of *political gerrymandering based upon discriminatory intent*. The arguments before the court in October will be intense and scrupulously parsed by political parties, elected officials, and citizen observers – like the League, of course.

Our MIP Committee will be reviewing the history of redistricting and League position over the next months. If this is your issue, as it is ours, welcome to the discussion. Email lwvbn@lwvbn.org for meeting dates and times.

Here is a first list of terms:

Apportionment – the adjustment of congressional districts following the U.S. decennial census based upon the "one person one vote" U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Redistricting – how legislative district lines are redrawn to reflect the official census count.

Gerrymandering – the commonly used term for redrawing district lines that clearly favor one candidate or political party over another

Money In Politics Committee

Volunteer Coordinator's Report

Help citizens register and vote!

Now, more than ever, we need volunteers to register voters for the election on November 7, 2017. All 11 county legislators will be up for election as well as the county clerk, sheriff and comptroller.

Although the upcoming election will center on local campaigns, an important ballot proposal will ask whether citizens want a state constitutional convention. As of now, the question will appear as follows: "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?" Some other words may be added and position on the ballot (i.e., front or back) has not been decided. If the measure is approved, 204 paid delegates would be elected the following year for an unspecified term.

Registration forms for the November 2017 election must be postmarked no later than October 13, 2017, and received by the Erie County Board of Elections no later than October 18, 2017.

Since our last Voter, Joyce Bol and Josette Cunningham represented LWVBN at a naturalization ceremony on May 28, 2017. Two more ceremonies in May were attended by Marian Deutschman, Mike Egan, Judy Huber and Marie Hanrahan. Two June ceremonies were attended by Janet Goodsell, Joyce Bol and Ellen Moomaw.



We hope our volunteers will step up to the plate for new requests for voter registration events. Attending naturalization ceremonies is especially rewarding. Two League volunteers speak to new citizens about the importance of voting, distribute and encourage completion of voter registration forms and offer any needed assistance.

We're happy to report that our success rate in getting voter registration forms completed has increased considerably. Several volunteers have boosted results by implementing some of the ideas suggested in the instructions they receive.

In addition to registering citizens to vote, our volunteers often moderate candidates' nights, as Laura McDade did for the Hamburg School Board election on May 10, 2017.

We have several new members this year, and we'd love to have you join our effort to help citizens vote. If you'd like to volunteer, email lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Judith Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator

Join us for League Happy Hour

Appetizer specials ... \$5

Drink specials ... \$5

Informed, even-keeled discussion about issues and current events...very valuable

Come celebrate summer, friends old and new, and League issues at our monthly fourth-Thursday event. Everyone is welcome, so please feel free to bring a friend.

Thursday, July 27, 5:30 p.m.

Providence Social, 490 Rhode Island Street, Buffalo, NY 14213

May Program Recap

Ethics in Government: A Lost Cause?

On May 17, 2017, LWVBN presented “Ethics in Government: A Lost Cause?” at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site in Buffalo. An audience of 54 watched a video interview of LWVNYS Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti speaking about state corruption uncovered and prosecuted. Former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former State Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos were mentioned as examples. Bartoletti referred to the public’s “short memory” for such scandals. LWVNYS has strong government reform positions including ethics reform. Find out more using this link: www.lwvny.org.

Our first speaker, retired State Supreme Court Justice Penny M. Wolfgang, was recently appointed to the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE), an unpaid position. She described the function of JCOPE: investigating reported misconduct by state officials, employees, lobbyists, and their clients. Areas of concern include improper gifts, conflicts of interest, nepotism, abuses of official position, sexual harassment and other violations of the Public Officers Law or Lobbying Act.

When appropriate, investigated cases are referred to prosecutors who have jurisdiction. Sometimes the commission may impose civil penalties, usually fines. To prevent ethics problems, the commission provides ethics education for those who fall under JCOPE’s purview. Find out more about JCOPE using this link: <http://www.jcope.ny.gov>. Misconduct can be reported by calling the tip line, 1-800-87-ETHICS.

Our second speaker, Kevin Connor, is director of the Public Accountability Initiative (PAI), a watchdog research organization focused on corporate and government accountability. Connor emphasized “public ethics” that includes government and corporate relationships. PAI maps power relationships. Connor noted that public boards provide opportunities for conflicts of interest to develop. Such conflicts can be managed by openness and recusal during decision making.

Connor noted problem areas: erosion of anti-trust laws, campaign finance abuses, oversight bodies dominated by corporate appointees, and lack of accountability of the rich. Growing wealth inequality has led to major power and influence gaps that impact our representative democracy. Find out more about PAI using this link: www.public-accountability.org. Also explore a related site: www.LittleSis.org. The latter is an online database tracking powerful people and organizations.

Both speakers suggested that ethics in government is not a lost cause. The organizations they represent provide pathways towards ethics compliance. We the people can become more engaged in public life, demand ethical behavior, and regularly interact with elected officials. We can also use the JCOPE tip line as needed.

The May 17 program was co-sponsored by the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site and supported by the Western New York Peace Center. Event committee members included Nancy DeTine, Marian Deutschman, Janet Massaro, Kathleen McCarthy, Nora Mikes, and Lynda Stephens.

Lynda Stephens, May Event Coordinator



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

July-August Meetings & Events

Visit www.lwvbn.org for the latest event details.

Tues., 7/18, 12:00 noon
Annual Potluck Luncheon
Chelsea Clubhouse at Canterbury Woods
Williamsville

Fri., 7/21, 10:00 a.m.
Money In Politics Committee
League Office

Tues., 7/25, 4:00 p.m.
Issues Committee
Harlem Road Community Center

Thurs., 7/27, 5:30 p.m.
Happy Hour
Providence Social

Thurs., 8/3, 10:00 a.m.-noon
Great Decisions
League Office

Wed., 8/9, 1:30 p.m.
Local Government Committee
League Office