



your
★ VOTER ★

Volume 23, Number 11

Summer, 2018

President

Terri Parks

Office

1272 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14209
716-986-4898
Fax 882-3797
Email lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Office Manager

Mary Ann Turkla

Office hours are flexible.
Always call before going
to the office.

LWVB/N website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11
times a year.

September Voter copy is
due Monday, August 13 .

Send copy to

Nancy DeTine at

nancy@nancydetine.com.

Yum ... you won't want to miss this!

Annual Potluck Picnic

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Chelsea Clubhouse at Canterbury Woods

Downing Lane, off Renaissance Drive

Williamsville, NY 14221

Anyone who has ever attended our summer potluck picnic knows it's an event unlike any other. League members are fabulous cooks! Bring a dish to pass and join us as we give a special welcome to new members.

We'll also hear from guest speaker Michelle Urbanczyk, CEO of Explore & More Children's Museum, the exciting new development taking shape at Canalside in downtown Buffalo. We hope to see you there!

Please let us know you'll attend by making a reservation at lwvbn.org or by calling the League office at 716-986-4898.

League of Women Voters Mission

The League of Women Voters is a good government organization that encourages informed and active participation in the political process, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League never supports political parties or candidates.

News from the Board

The first meeting of the 2018-2019 board of directors was Monday, July 9, 2018, with orientation and board training. We appreciate Lyle Toohey's assistance in this effort. Lyle is a special mentor and resource for the League. We welcomed new board members, Joan Simmons, Liz Zausmer and Janet Zehr. We also began a process of setting goals for the year.

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

The board appointed Pat Costanzo, Shirley Joy and Dr. Charles Kaars to the Finance Committee. They join Treasurer, Lori Robinson and President, Terri Parks who are required by League bylaws to be members. We expect our investments and financial picture will continue to be carefully monitored through their work.

Thank you to all who have already renewed your membership in our League for 2018-2019. Our membership year begins July 1 each year. 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.

Terri Parks, President

Special Volunteer Opportunities

This is an exciting time for the League and for all women as we celebrate one hundred 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. League photographer(s)

B. Sort and organize the League's history: What fun it will be to find treasures from our past. We invite members to join Ramona Gallagher who will lead the effort to archive our materials.

C. Suffrage Celebration committee:

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.

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

Great Decisions

Our August meeting will take place from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Thursday, August 2, at 1272 Delaware. The topic is Turkey: a partner in crime, and Ann Marie Malachowski will facilitate. "Of all NATO allies, Turkey represents the most daunting challenge for the Trump administration. In the wake of a failed military coup in July 2016, the autocratic trend in Ankara took a turn for the worse. One year on, an overwhelming majority of the population considers the United States to be their country's greatest security threat. In the context of a worsening 'clash of civilizations,' even more important than Turkey's geostrategic position is what it represents in the most institutionally westernized Muslim country in the world."

Bernice Baeumler

BMHA Elections: How Our League Helps to Make Democracy Work

The Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority holds resident commissioner elections every two years, and the League has been a crucial part of this process since it first started about 20 years ago. The League's role is as an impartial third party to monitor the elections. This involves a number of tasks: certifying candidates' petitions; holding a meeting of candidates to draw ballot positions and file necessary paperwork; putting together a voter guide and other documentation for a mass mailing to residents; hosting and moderating candidate forums (this year there were four); answering candidates' and residents' questions as they come in; collecting and certifying mail-in ballots as they arrive; and finally, counting the ballots to determine the two winners. And last of all, when applicable (as it was this time), conducting a recount if one is requested.

It is a wide-ranging project and would be impossible to fulfill without the help of many wonderful League volunteers, including (and I sincerely hope I am not missing anyone): JoAnn Mecca, Janet Massaro, Dusan, Tony, Max and Amelia Palka, Mike Egan, Laura McDade, Pat Wille, Joan Simon, Carolyn Koelmel, Ramona Gallagher, Marilee Keller, Judy Hoffman, Terri Parks, Kathleen McCarthy, and Kathie Macaluso, who all helped with tasks that need many hands, like petition certification, forums, counting and recounting ballots. Thank you, all!

I would also like to thank the five fine candidates who stepped up to run for office to represent their community, and the dedicated BMHA representatives with whom we worked on the 2018 election.

Finally, my sincere thanks and gratitude also go to those who were stuck with me from start to finish, which can indeed be a trying ordeal. Mary Ann Turkla's support was absolutely invaluable, as was the mentorship of Al Dozoretz, Terri Parks and the seemingly superhuman Kathleen McCarthy, whose contribution was both enormous and enormously appreciated.

Note: The League moderated three Candidate Nights for this resident commissioner election:

- May 29 at L.B.J. Apartments on Humboldt Parkway
- May 31 at Msgr. Geary Apartments on Bailey Avenue
- June 4 at A.D. Price Apartments on Jefferson Avenue

Nora Mikes, Resident Commissioner's Election Coordinator

Money In Politics Update: The United States Supreme Court Decision on Partisan Gerrymandering

On June 18, 2018, the Supreme Court decided – or, rather, decided not to decide – the case of extreme partisan gerrymandering as presented by the Wisconsin case of Gill v. Whitford. In a 7-2 decision, Chief Justice Roberts wrote that the plaintiffs lacked standing because they had been unable to show how they were personally harmed by the practice. A concurring opinion – written by Justice Kagan and joined by Justices Ginsburg, Breyer and Sotomayor – suggested that the plaintiffs might pursue different reasoning based upon the First Amendment right of association. Justice Kennedy remained silent. Justices Thomas and Gorsuch would have dismissed the case altogether. The decision left plaintiffs scrambling to fight another day.

We had hoped for a better outcome.

Janet Massaro, Money In Politics Committee Chair

Summer Reading: Recommendations from the Money In Politics Committee

The next regular meeting of the MIP Committee – 10 a.m. Friday, July 27, at the League office – will be a “book club” discussion, and we invite everyone to join us! To guide your choice of potential reads, here are committee members' reviews of some timely works we've been immersed in.

***Our Damaged Democracy: We the People Must Act*, by Joseph A. Califano Jr.**

Former Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Califano is an experienced public servant who reached high profile positions in both the Johnson and Carter administrations. In a concise and lucid style, he carefully

examines the constitutional purpose as opposed to the current dysfunction of the three branches of the federal government as well as state and local governments. He concludes with ways in which American people can reverse the damage and restore the integrity of our democracy.

JoAnn Mecca

The Crisis of the Middle-Class Constitution, by Ganesh Sitaraman

In this original, provocative contribution to the debate over economic inequality, Sitaraman argues that a strong and sizable middle class is a prerequisite for America's constitutional system. For most of Western history, he argues, constitutional thinkers assumed economic inequality was inevitable and inescapable – and they designed governments to prevent class divisions from spilling over into class warfare. The U.S. Constitution is different. Compared to Europe and the ancient world, America was a society of almost unprecedented economic equality and the founding generation saw this equality as essential for the preservation of America's republic. Over the next two centuries, generations of Americans fought to sustain the economic preconditions for our constitutional system. But today, with economic and political inequality on the rise, Sitaraman says Americans face a choice: Will we accept rising economic inequality and risk oligarchy, or will we rebuild the middle class and reclaim our republic? *The Crisis of the Middle-Class Constitution* is a tour de force of history, philosophy, law, and politics. It makes a compelling case that inequality is more than just a moral or economic problem; it threatens the very core of our constitutional system.

Pete Neal

The Politics of Voter Suppression: Defending and Expanding Americans' Right to Vote, by Tova Andrea Wang

With the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Ohio gerrymandering case and the ensuing discussion of “packing and cracking,” this 2012 book comes to mind. It presents the argument that the attempts of both major political parties to restrict and suppress the right to vote are done under the guise of “reform.” Wang discusses early years of voter suppression, the Voting Rights Act, and the election of 2000 and its consequences, and concludes with specifics on what citizens can do to increase voter participation. Wang is/was a fellow at The Century Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank founded in 1919. Wang's book is an interesting read, emphasizing that “work to support the vote and maintain the right to the ballot at the polls is intensive, and it is very much grassroots and occurs at the precinct level. Such work gives American citizens ample opportunity to not only exercise their democratic rights but also to protect the rights of others!” (p. 159)

Barbara Brooks

Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right, by Jane Mayer

If you have not had a chance to read it, please consider *Dark Money* by Jane Mayer. As someone who is a bit of a news junkie, I thought I knew everything I needed to know about the Koch brothers and their politics. I was wrong. This well-researched and well-written book is an in-depth look at what has motivated and still motivates the Koch brothers (and other billionaires) to get involved in the electoral, judicial and legislative processes of our democracy. It also provides the reader with a roadmap to understand how money has been funneled into “philanthropic” causes that pushed the political agenda of the upper 1%, beginning in the 1970s and continuing to the present day. The details of how wealthy individuals have organized together to fund conservative think tanks, academic political research foundations and other “not for profit” organizations is truly fascinating. Warning: this book has the potential to turn a person into a cynic. Please stay aware, active and engaged in our democracy.

Janet Lenichek

How Democracies Die, by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt

Most Americans believe that our unique Constitution, with its carefully crafted checks and balances governing three coequal branches of government, insulates our democracy from the failures other democratic states have experienced. The authors largely agree but contend that in addition to our written Constitution are unwritten “rules of the game” or norms of behavior that undergird our democracy and of which we are largely unaware. They identify these unwritten rules as “mutual tolerance” and “institutional forbearance.” Throughout our history, these unwritten rules have allowed opposing political players to confront the other, not as an existential threat to be annihilated at all costs, but as legitimate rivals, whose ideas are worthy of intense debate, but also of respect and acceptance. We have embraced these unwritten rules, never completely nor always satisfactorily. But they

have worked to keep our democracy strong and viable – until the present time. Now, for the first time, we find a duly elected autocrat in charge of the executive branch of government, determined to disrupt the Constitution’s balance of power and to destroy its unwritten rules. The authors provide powerful examples from history to illustrate their arguments. They ask us to confront the dangers they see. They remind us that no democracy is immune from collapse.

Janet Massaro

A Higher Truth, by James Comey

James Comey’s ten-year term as director of the FBI might have passed unremarkably into history except for some decisions he made in 2016. As it worked out, he didn’t serve for ten years, and those decisions may have ensured the election of the president we have today. The debate is now irrelevant, but many will give Comey credit or blame for the outcome. He describes his thinking behind the revelations that the FBI was investigating Hillary Clinton’s email server—and then it wasn’t, just before Election Day in 2016. Why he made those announcements is recounted in this book. He gives us a view into his character as he proclaims his respect for family, transparency, truth, nonpartisanship, and country. This is a tell-all combined with an autobiographical account of his youth, various jobs, interpersonal relations within the FBI, and the expectations of the presidents whom he served. As a fifth grader, he had been the target of bullies. Eventually, growing into the imposing height of 6’8”, he gained the confidence to prosecute members of the Mafia and resist the presidential request for “loyalty.” The book is conversational, an easy read that offers gossipy peeks into the White House, the FBI, the machinations of Dick Cheney’s aides, and unwelcome requests from the current president to bend the rules. The book offers the hope that James Comey is really all he appears to be: loyal to his country, truthful, and modest.

Janet Goodsell

Refugees Grateful for *Students Inside Albany* Experience

Two enthusiastic and unique young women from Buffalo were this year’s LWVBN representatives to *Students Inside Albany*. Although they boarded the train with a bit of trepidation, they returned describing the whole experience and all the people they met as “cool.”

Sponsored by the state League, SIA is a conference whose purpose is to increase students’ awareness of their responsibilities in representative government. Fifty-nine 10th and 11th graders from across the state mixed three days of government participation with some fun: an evening of bowling and a pizza party.

Not only were our students the valedictorian and salutatorian of Lafayette High School’s Class of 2018, they had spent most of their lives in Thai refugee camps. Myit Nay Win arrived in the U.S. in 2015, while Rosiehna Myint has been here for eight years. Both plan careers in medicine and expressed interest in learning how government works and how it affects people’s lives, particularly those of refugees and newcomers.

Their activities in Albany included a tour of the State Capitol, holding a mock Assembly session to debate a bill, lobbying officials with persuasive arguments, and meeting Assemblyman Sean Ryan and Senator Chris Jacobs in their offices. A special event they attended was the joint session to appoint Barbara Underwood the new attorney general.



Asked about immersion in the workings of state government, Rosie’s reaction was to declare that the first thing she is going to do upon becoming a citizen will be to register to vote.

Janet Goodsell

Myit (left) and Rosie (second from right) with some *Students Inside Albany* friends

Our Nuclear Times: Article Eight

An Underground Tale with Four Characters

"I'm the oldest one here!" thought Mr. Pebble. It was obvious to everyone that Mr. Pebble had become greatly diminished. In fact, he'd turned into a tiny speck. So tiny that he could float in water – if he'd wanted to. He'd been inside a mile-thick glacier 15,000 years ago, that had scraped him off a northern part of the Canadian Shield. He'd been ground and ground against other pebbles, rough and tumble, and carried along for hundreds of miles south. A stream settled him out. So there he was, a speck among specks, in a thick bed of clay. ...

"I'm the most interesting!" thought Ms. Rad. True! She was even brilliant at times. She'd been mined out west near the Colorado, and had moved to Washington's Hanford, before heading east, always traveling by train or truck. The secret to her long-lasting radiance – she was a special agent – well, not really. But she was a genuine radioisotope who sometimes changed her identity and intensity. Plans for a cruise were stalled, that scenic tour of the Great Lakes Erie and Ontario, the Thousand Islands. ...

"I'm the toughest!" That surely was Mr. Black who'd once been a featherweight. He'd been born half a world away, beneath a natural gas dome. His slimy, noxious ancestors had evolved in a seabed, in a decomposed state. Anyway, he never gave details of his adventures through pipes, oceangoing tanker, a refinery. He was slickly transformed into a black plastic bag. Now his aging seams were starting to give way, and when he stretched he almost ripped apart. Inside, he was radioactive garbage: contaminated gloves, vials, tubes, hospital stuff. ...

"I'm the dreamer of the bunch!" thought Ms. Splinter, who was a slat on a wooden crate. She'd grown up on an Appalachian hillside, and did nothing but reminisce about birds flitting through her tree branches, a fiddle playing somewhere. ...

These four unlikely characters become neighbors. Over eons they'd be together. What else could they do but play cards? They even gambled. Smoking not allowed. But each had a wish – and it was the same one – to escape ... escape from this dark, dank place called Trench Number Nine. ...

... And so ends this episode of "Trench Number Nine" at the nuclear waste site called West Valley in Western New York.

Helpful links:

www.westvalleyctf.org www.nirs.org www.westvalleyphaseonestudies.org www.wv.doe.gov
www.chbvv.com

Note: Questions and suggestions are welcome! Email Barb at bfbuffalony@yahoo.com

Barbara Frackiewicz

June Voter Registration Events

June 9: Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, Deb Shiffner and Barb Rubin

June 9: University United Festival at UB South Campus, Scott Gehl, Judy Capodicasa, Sue Kirkland and Mary Ellen Dye

June 14: 10,000 Villages* at 738 Elmwood Avenue, Janet Goodsell and Sue Kirkland

**Sales that evening benefited LWVBN*

Additional voter registration events will be scheduled for various locations throughout the summer months.

Margaret Brunson, Voter Service Chair

Naturalization Ceremonies

Kate Wagner and Kathleen McCarthy welcomed 41 new citizens at the June 1 naturalization ceremony at the Buffalo History Museum. Ramona Gallagher and Judy Weidemann represented the League at the June 20 ceremony at the International Institute of Buffalo, where 39 candidates became citizens. Ramona and Judy also welcomed 56 new citizens at the June 28 ceremony at Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park.

Patricia Wille, Volunteer Coordinator for Naturalization Ceremonies

Election Services

June brought another large mailing and the Election Services Committee arrived to tackle the task with gusto and talent. My humble and great appreciation goes out to those who answered the call: Judith Clarke, JoAnn Mecca, Mary Herbst, Judy Huber, Janet Goodsell, Nora Mikes, Terri Parks, Ann Craven, Scott Gehl, and Marlene Katzel. Their efforts made this mailing possible. Special thanks go to Judith Clarke for her delectable chocolate cookies and to Nora Mikes for a scrumptious Czech dessert.

I visited Schwab Terrace and conducted a nominations meeting at that site. An election will occur there next month.

Again, my deepest appreciation to all of those who assist this committee,

Alan Dozoretz, Elections Services Committee Chair

Education Forum Recap: *Perspectives on What Works in Public Education*

After spending the year learning about the establishment and activities of community schools in Buffalo, including revisiting the International School #207 with John Starkey, touring Highgate Heights School #80 with principal Gayle Irving-White, and meeting with David Mauricio, who has overseen the establishment of community schools over the past several years, the highlight of the Education Committee's year was our May 23, 2018, forum *Perspectives on What Works in Public Education*, an informative panel featuring the following national and local educators:

Sherry Cleary, executive director, New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, who discussed what works in pre-k and the equally important need for a birth to five and even birth to age eight educational agenda.

David Mauricio, chief of Strategic Alignment & Innovation, Buffalo Public Schools, who offered his perspectives on promising practices in urban settings related to community school opportunities. He emphasized the necessity of parent/community engagement in programs such as My Brother's Keeper, which provides 11th grade students, particularly boys and young men of color, with opportunities to gain authentic leadership experience(s) and develop service projects beneficial to the schools they attend and the communities they live in.

John Cotter Starkey, principal of School #207, the International High School, described his outstanding efforts to better inspire and integrate immigrant and non-English speaking students into the community. He described visiting homes and reaching out to identify successful members of the community to address and inspire students.

Wendy Paterson, dean of the School of Education at Buffalo State College, who spoke passionately on elementary education and the teaching of teachers to teach reading in urban schools at the college level, and described her vision of how elementary and secondary education standards and practices affect the transition to higher education.

The panel was followed by a spirited discussion with audience members, who reported they learned a lot about public education efforts. Evaluations for the program averaged 4.85 out of 5, with one attendee saying the panel could have been presented nationally!

Dorothy Tao and Lee Tetkowski



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Summer 2018 Calendar

Tuesday, 7/24, Noon-2:00 p.m.

League Pot Luck Picnic

Chelsea Clubhouse at Canterbury Woods

Friday, 7/27, 10:00 a.m.

Money in Politics Meeting

League Office

Thursday, 8/2, 10:00 a.m. – noon

Great Decisions

League Office

Tuesday, 8/7, 4:00 p.m.

Issues Committee

Harlem Road Community Center

Wednesday, 8/8, 1:30 p.m.

Local Government Committee

League Office

Monday, 8/13, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

League Office

Please remember to wear your League name badge to all League events.

We thank the sponsors from our Celebration of 100 years of Women Suffrage in New York State:
the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women, Ingold Law, Kirsits & Associates
and New York State Women, Inc., Buffalo Niagara Chapter