



your
VOTER

Volume 26 Number 7

March 2021

President

Terri Parks

Office

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

Office Manager

Victoria Mueller

Office Hours

Monday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Please call before coming to the office.

LWVBN website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11 times a year. April Voter copy is due Monday, March 15. Send copy to Nancy DeTine at lwvbn@lwvbn.org

SCALING THE FISCAL CLIFF

The Post-Pandemic Challenge for Local Governments

Date: Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Method: Via Zoom

Program: Expert Panel Discussion

Free and open to the public!

Long pressured by stagnant state and federal aid, declining tax revenues and more, local governments now face a whole new set of challenges due to the global pandemic. Join us for a timely conversation on the problems, possible solutions, and their potential impact on the services we all rely on.

Panelists: Mildred E. Warner, Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning and Department of Global Development, Cornell University; Gregory Raab, Professor of Political Science, Jamestown Community College, and former member of the Jamestown City Council; and Geoff Kelly, reporter, Investigative Post

Moderator: Lisa K. Parshall, Professor of Political Science, Daemen College, and Public Policy Fellow, Rockefeller Institute of Government

RSVP by Friday, March 19, 2021, online at www.lwvbn.org, via email to lwvbn@lwvbn.org, or by calling 716-986-4898. You will receive an email with instructions to join the Zoom session.

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.

President's Report

I am proud of the work our League is doing in partnership with a diverse group of other community organizations. We look forward to finally celebrating the 19th Amendment this fall by looking to the future. The Centennial Celebration Committee, chaired by Lyle Toohey, is composed of ten community organizations. Currently we are reviewing the plans we made last year and making revisions that relate to current needs and challenges.

Planning for the successful program on February 23 with our partners, the NAACP and SANYS (Self Advocacy of New York State) with Liz Zausmer, our able chair, was an interesting and enlightening experience. We decided to limit our focus to three organizations with experience in the challenges and barriers that women, people of color, and people with disabilities have experienced in casting their votes. The discussions among everyone, especially the moderator and panelists for "Fighting for Our Vote," were especially informative. The more we work in partnership with other organizations, the stronger we will be as a League.

Our continuing partnerships with other diverse community organizations have been most rewarding also. Under the leadership of Barbara Gunderson and Liz Zausmer, we have created ongoing partnerships with a number of organizations that serve different audiences and promote voting in underserved neighborhoods in Buffalo. Many League members helped in this effort through writing messages on the postcards we sent to voters in the Lovejoy District, and stuffing doorknob hangers and delivering them to targeted voters in the North District in October 2020. Barbara arranged for printing thousands of Early Voting Site flyers, informational cards and reminders that were widely distributed in both Erie and Niagara Counties. While many of our usual voter registration efforts were curtailed by the pandemic, we conducted virtual training efforts through Zoom to promote Vote411.org and urge people to vote. Our work with community partners was expanded much through these efforts.

Think of this work as you consider your donation to the LWVBN Annual Appeal this year. You may have already received the donation request in the mail. We need everyone's help as we continue our work

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

Terri Parks

Save the Date!

On Wednesday, April 21, the Waterfront Committee will present Claiming Our Outer Harbor Park from 7 to 9 p.m. via Zoom. The event, free and open to the public, will feature Sam Magavern of the Partnership for the Public Good and the PPG report Buffalo's Outer Harbor: the Right Place for a World-Class Park.

Gladys Gifford, Chair

New Membership Directory

We have just revised our membership directory and sent it to members who have email. We will be happy to print and mail a copy to anyone who submits a check for \$5.00 written to LWVBN and addressed to our office, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209. The list of board members and committee chairs will be included.

Great Decisions

At 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 4, 2021, the group will meet via Zoom to discuss “China and Latin America.” The Foreign Policy Affairs organization says this about the topic: *As the Trump administration continues to withdraw from the world stage, China is looking to fill the void. How does Latin America fit into China’s “One Belt, One Road” plan? How will the relationship with China affect the region? Should the U.S. be concerned about China’s growing ‘sphere of influence’?* Bernice Baeumler will lead us in this relevant topic. Contact Fran Holmes at lwvbn@lwvbn.org for more information.

Fran Holmes

LWVBN Discussion Group

The group met via Zoom on Wednesday, February 17, at 7 p.m. Janet Goodsell provided the articles for discussion involving the subject of Isabel Wilkerson’s book titled “Caste: The Origins of our Discontents.” Some of us read the book but we also read the critique of the book and an interview with the author. Judy Huber provided another source on the white supremacy culture.

We discussed the differences between class, caste and race and Wilkerson’s comparisons of the United States with the history of outcasts in India and Germany. This discrimination is “a fixture in our culture that doesn’t disappear with a change in socio-economic status” making the problem of change so big and complex, said one of our participants. “We’re in silos,” said one member. “The hidden system of social domination looks like the natural order of things.” We need to hear stories and read James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Dr. Seuss (Sneetches are Sneetches). Discussion raised issues of the rebellion against Obama and its aftermath, redlining policies, and the “maturation arrest” of some of our leaders. “We need to move from looking at society as a zero sum game of winners and losers.” The year 2042 seems to be a threat to those who fear the time when America will stop being a white majority.

We shared the possibilities of expanding our own knowledge with programs of the Humanities New York group and with a Zoom program at Trinity Lutheran Church on February 24 at 7 p.m. The speaker is Debby Irving, author of “Waking up White.” Another book recommendation was “The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together” by Heather McGhee.

Liz Zausmer noted that the mission of Humanities New York is to strengthen civil society and the bonds of community, using the humanities to foster engaged inquiry and dialogue around social and cultural concerns. To realize its mission, Humanities New York has identified three broad goals with attendant objectives to guide its work over the next three years. You can find a calendar for March at their website and scroll it forward to look at other months. It is possible to get a grant to host a “conversation” or reading group discussion. Explore your own interests at their site: <https://humanitiesny.org/calendar/>.

We are always open to new members and new reading and discussion recommendations. Contact Marian Deutschman for more information. Our next virtual meeting will be on Wednesday, March 17, at 7 p.m.

Marian Deutschman

Welcome Our New Members!

The Membership Committee is pleased to report that we have added the following people to our League membership: Cynthia Coney-Trowman of Ransomville; Caroline Fulkerson of West Seneca; Susan Gibbons of Williamsville; Suzanne Tomkins of Grand Island; and from Buffalo, Joyce DiChristina, Karen Huffman, Marcia Klepfer, and Patricia Korzelius. As of February 5, we have a total of 231 members! It’s wonderful news that our League is continuing to grow and flourish.

Lori Robinson and Mary Ann Turkla, Co-Chairs



Norma Stevenson



Dorothy Westhafer

In Memorium

Winter has not been kind to some elderly members of our League, three of whom died in January and February 2021. Each was long active in the League and 91 years old. We are saddened by their passing, but believe it's fortunate that they all had active and fulfilling lives.

Eleanor (Ellie) Lawson was especially active in the Amherst League prior to the 1997 League merger. She served as its president and prepared a Voters Guide for Amherst residents at least once. She was an avid gardener and quilter and played tennis until age 85. She also chaired the AAUW Book Sale several times. She died on January 1.

Norma Stevenson died on January 25. She moderated many candidate forums at the Amherst Senior Center. She also took registrations for our Lunch & Issues meetings, and at many other League events.

Lee Tetkowski sent us these memories of **Dorothy Westhafer**, who died on February 11. Hers was "another long life well-lived to mourn and to remember with deep, long friendship."

"What pleasure as soon as she and her husband moved to Grand Island in 1988 to meet, and to discover our many common passions! As an active member of the League of Women Voters in Lockport, she immediately jumped into our local League, and soon was a dedicated board member. Leading our League's effort in fundraising, Dorothy offered a personal, generous matching fund to those who contributed. Her generous support for the League included the state League as well. One of the many responsibilities she took on was to monitor the annual lottery at the charter school in Niagara County. Dorothy shared her memory of her mother's participation in working for Women's Right to Vote and was a League member for 60 years.

"Driving by her home on East River Road on Grand Island, I would often see her in her straw hat working at her beloved garden. She was the kind of friend who would always welcome me for an unplanned drop-in visit.

"Dorothy co-founded the Kenan Center Arts Council in Lockport. She was a strong advocate for protecting the environment, and her activism in the Lockport area transferred to the Grand Island community, where she served for years as chairman of the Grand Island Conservation Commission. Dorothy was a charter member of the Western New York Land Conservancy.

"We all will miss her. She enriched the lives of many."

Terri Parks

Auditing the West Valley Demonstration Project!

In the last administration, we heard more about inspectors general and their work because the president was eager to fire those whose investigations he found annoying. Each executive department and agency of any significance has a nonpartisan Office of Inspector General whose head is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Their job is to look for fraud, waste, abuse, embezzlement and mismanagement. Similarly, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) provides auditing, evaluation and investigative services for the Congress.

While tracking the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) requires a volunteer to study a lot about nuclear matters, it also entails digging into the reports of the IG of the Department of Energy and the GAO. This is not because of fraud or embezzlement, but because nuclear cleanup is so darned expensive and subject to so many delays.

The 2017 DOE IG report on the project delivered a scathing criticism of government management of contracts that had led to cost overruns and schedule delays. These problems were already being addressed, they claimed.

The most recent GAO report was released in January 2021. Its notable point was to remind the Congress that they have still not created a disposal destination for the transuranic wastes that had been scheduled to leave the West Valley site in 2013. The GAO staff who visited the site earlier in 2020 interviewed members of the Citizen Task Force and the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes, including Joanne Hameister, who has steadily committed her time to West Valley issues since she got involved through the League in the late 1970s.

Pat Townsend, West Valley Citizen Task Force

Money In Politics Update: An Exceptional Experience

As I write this, the Covid-19 pandemic continues, even as vaccines become more available and a bitter cold and snowy February replaces a rather benign January. Some League committees have cancelled their monthly meetings. Yet – a reminder is not necessary – our work continues, asking us to stay informed and to participate. Zoom might not be your favorite way of communication (it's not mine), but it can work.

Some of our members joined the National League's "Fair Maps Training Program" on February 16, an example of how a good Zoom does work. Knowledgeable members from around the country shared their redistricting stories with us. National League was prepared with handouts for local Leagues to use for their own redistricting activities. Our members will certainly be using them in the weeks and months ahead. They are available for everyone.

Legislative district lines will be redrawn, outrageous amounts of campaign money will be raised by candidates and parties. Democracy does not take time off. Neither do we. Contact me by phone or email. It is much more fun – and productive – when we are working together.

Janet Massaro



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

March 2021

Note: Due to social distancing and stay-at-home practices, meetings are subject to change and may take place via phone or computer. Please contact the committee chair for the latest information.

Tuesday, March 2, 4:00 p.m.
Program, Issues & Events Committee
via Zoom

Monday, March 4, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions
via Zoom

Monday, March 8, 4:00 p.m.
Board of Directors
via Zoom

Wednesday, March 10, 2:00 p.m.
Local Government Committee
via Zoom

Wednesday, March 10, 4:00 p.m.
Waterfront Committee
via Zoom

Thursday, March 11, 11:00 a.m.
Centennial Celebration Committee
via Zoom

Monday, March 15, 7:00 p.m.
GOTV Committee
via teleconference

Tuesday, March 16, 7:00 p.m.
DEI
via Zoom

Wednesday, March 17, 7:00 p.m.
Book Discussion Group
via Zoom

Friday, March 18, 1:30 p.m.
Education Committee
TBA

Friday, March 19, 1:00 p.m.
Money in Politics Committee
via Zoom

Tuesday, March 23, 6:30 p.m.
Scaling the Fiscal Cliff
via Zoom