



*your*  
★ **VOTER** ★

**Volume 26 Number 9**

**May 2021**

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**LWVBN website**

[www.lwvbn.org](http://www.lwvbn.org)

**LWVNYS website**

[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)

**LWVUS website**

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

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# The Effect of Covid-19 on Schools

*Virtual panel discussion*  
**Join us!**

*Date:* Wednesday, May 19, 2021

*Time:* 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. via Zoom

From the challenges of remote learning to the lack of sports, activities and socialization ... how has the pandemic impacted our schools and our community? It's an important subject we'll explore by tapping into the experience of the people who are living it right now.

*Panelists:* A diverse group of teachers, students, parents and administrators

*Moderator:* Marian Deutschman, LWVBN Program, Issues & Events Committee Chair

**Free and open to the public!**

**Register in advance:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/>

*Inside: Details on Fighting for our Vote 2.0 and our 2021 annual meeting!*

**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**

At our annual meeting on Saturday, June 5, members will be asked to approve our 2021-22 budget. I offer some valuable background to consider as you make this important decision.

As you know, we collect membership dues each year to support our events and activities. What some – especially newer members – might not realize is that our local League keeps only a fraction of that revenue. In 2010, we set our dues at \$65 for an individual and \$100 for a two-person household. At that time, we were required to pay \$29.20 per individual to the national League and \$18 per individual to the state League, leaving us just \$17.80 to finance our work. However, those assessments have risen substantially since then – we now pay \$32 to the national League and \$23 to the state League, leaving LWVBN with only \$10 per member.

Fortunately, we've been able to augment our income through an annual appeal and other means, such as conducting elections for the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA). We've earned more than anticipated from our investments. In 2020 we obtained grants from the state League and funding from community partners to support our outreach. And of course, we have always been very frugal in our efforts.

So for the past decade, despite rising inflation and shrinking revenue, we have been able to maintain our services with no increase in dues. In fact, our League has accomplished a great deal. Our visibility in the community has grown significantly. We boosted our efforts to get out the vote in 2020. We partnered with other organizations to promote voting in underserved neighborhoods, and conducted many virtual programs and trainings via Zoom. We're continuing our partnerships with NAACP, Voice Buffalo, PUSH Buffalo and SANYS for the 2021 election. And, with our partners, we're planning a candidate forum for the primaries, especially for the Erie County sheriff and the mayor of Buffalo.

Going forward, though, we face some financial uncertainty. Covid-19 has affected us in many ways, including reducing dividends from our investments. BMHA tenant council elections came to a halt in 2020 and have yet to resume. While we are beginning the process to renew our contract with BMHA, our income from election services may not equal that of prior years.

In preparing our 2021-2022 budget, we anticipated seeking grants for several of our efforts. We also planned to withdraw from our investments the maximum amount allowed by our Investment Policy. However, we determined that we must raise dues by a modest amount – \$10 per individual membership and \$10 per household membership. Considering the value of the work we do, it's a very small amount – about the price of a movie ticket. And remember, it's our first increase in 10 years.

With all of this in mind, I hope you will support our League by voting to approve our 2021-2022 budget at the annual meeting..

*Terri Parks*

### **Great Decisions**

The Great Decisions discussion group will meet via Zoom at 10 a.m. on May 6 to discuss Chapter 5 in the 2021 Great Decisions book: China and Africa. The Foreign Policy Association which sponsors this discussion group nationwide says this about the topic: "The Covid-19 crisis has put a massive strain on what was growing a positive economic and political relationship between China and the continent of Africa. As Chinese President Xi Jinping's centerpiece "Belt and Road initiative" continues to expand Chinese power, the response to the spread of Covid-19, as well as the African government's growing debt to China, has seen pushback. What are some of the growing economic and political issues between China and Africa?" Lillis McLean will lead the discussion. Contact Fran Holmes at [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org) for additional information.

*Fran Holmes*

# Fighting For Our Vote 2.0!

*Virtual roundtable discussion*

**Thursday, May 13**  
**7:00 p.m. via Zoom and phone**

Join us and let's continue the conversation! How do we get to vote? What happens to our ballots once they are cast? How is voting made accessible to all? What are some myths and facts about voting?

## **Panelists**

L. Nathan Hare, President and CEO, Community Action Organization of Western New York  
BJ Stasio, President, SANYS (Self Advocacy of New York State)  
Jeremy Zellner and Ralph Mohr, Commissioners, Erie County Board of Elections  
Barbara Gunderson, LWVBN Voter Services Chair

## **Moderator**

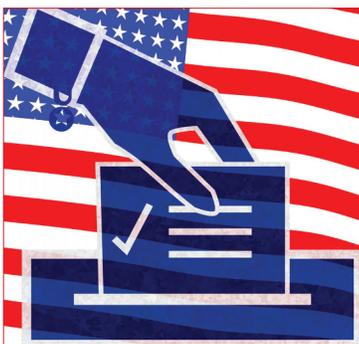
Buffalo City Court Judge Lenora Foote-Beavers  
former Chair, Diversity Committee, Women's Bar Association of Western New York

**Register in advance at:** [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_pIVk7D0WT0SJmBivo5swWA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pIVk7D0WT0SJmBivo5swWA)

Participants can ask questions after the presentation. There will be closed captioning.

If you missed our first webinar and would like to explore the history of voting with its progress and the challenges, you may watch the first webinar by visiting <https://www.lwvbn.org/> or clicking [here](#).

**Presented by LWVBN, NAACP and SANYS**



## **2021 NYS Primary Election Dates and Deadlines**

**Friday, May 28:** Deadline to register to vote in primary

**June 12 - 20:** Early voting period

**Tuesday, June 22:** Election day and last day to postmark absentee ballot

### Welcome Our New Members

The Membership Committee is pleased to report that our League membership is continuing to grow. We now number 234, including the following new members: Gayle and Thomas Nowak of Grand Island, Cynthia and Lauren Pristach of Amherst and Kathryn Eskew of Buffalo. Welcome to our League family.

*Lori Robinson and Mary Ann Turkla, Co-Chairs*

### Money In Politics Update

On April 22, the U.S. Census Bureau announced important changes to the timeline for releasing redistricting data to the states, due to Covid-19. These changes will affect many state redistricting plans, but do not remove the states' obligation to redistrict once census data become available. If states fail to act, courts will step in to draw temporary lines for the upcoming 2021 and 2022 elections. How will New York State address these redistricting changes? The MIP Committee will discuss the announcements and review our state League's "Redistricting Day of Action" event at our regular meeting on Friday, May 21. We welcome all members to join us. Call the League office for details.

*Janet Massaro*

### Healthcare Committee Update

Has everyone heard? What, you say ... heard what? Here is the news: the New York Health Act has been introduced in the State Legislature with a majority of co-signers in both the Assembly and the Senate.

This introduction is historic. After several years of being passed in the Assembly and going nowhere in the Senate, single payer/universal healthcare has a CHANCE of coming up for a vote and being passed into law. This would guarantee all New York residents healthcare through a single provider, the New York Health Fund. These bills are Assembly A-6058 and Senate S-5474. If you would like to comment about the bills as an individual, you can find your legislators' contact information on our website.

LWVNYS Healthcare Chair Madeline Zevon has issued a new memorandum of support (MOS) for the New York Health Act. "The changes in this year's MOS incorporate the expanded positions passed through our recent consensus, such as separation of health from employment, safe staffing, affordable universal access, equity and essential care to include vision, dental, hearing, and long term care." In December and January, LWVBN members generously participated in meetings of concurrence and consensus in creating this expansion.

From Jennifer Wilson of LWVNYS on Monday, April 19: the New York Health Act passed out of the Health Committee. "The bill will next have to go through the Assembly Ways and Means and Codes Committees before it can be brought to the floor for a vote by the full Assembly, but this is a GREAT FIRST STEP on the first day back from the Legislature's spring break."

Our Healthcare Committee would love to have you participate in our next meetings on April 30, May 28 and June 25; all take place at 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. Please call Alberta Roman at 695-1334 for any question or to get the Zoom link.

*Alberta Roman and Judy Huber, Co-Chairs*

## Nuclear Landscapes and Environmental Justice

In last month's West Valley column, I introduced two anthropologists whose work deals with nuclear timescapes, the unfathomable time during which people need protection from many radionuclides in the waste from our military and peacetime uses of atomic energy. Other panelists with me in that discussion at the Society for Applied Anthropology meeting in March had something to say about environmental justice and the nuclear fuel cycle.

When you hear "environmental justice" you probably think "toxic chemicals" and "Blacks and Hispanic Americans." Rightly so, the link between Superfund toxic waste sites and minority neighborhoods was established decades ago. But another clear issue of environmental justice is the link between vulnerable indigenous minority peoples and nuclear landscapes.

The first two anthropologists to come online for my first Zoom meeting to plan the event began chatting in Polish. One was a graduate student, stuck in her home in Warsaw but wanting to get back to Fukushima to continue her fieldwork. The other had immigrated to America as a child with her parents but did her fieldwork in Kazakhstan, among nomadic pastoralists living on the still highly contaminated land where the USSR had tested its nuclear weapons.

The panel included a geographer whose doctoral fieldwork in Canada was in a nuclear community that included members of First Nations. Aboriginal peoples in another Commonwealth country, Australia, lost lands to Great Britain's nuclear testing. Pacific Islanders were hurt by French and American nuclear testing.

Within the United States, the Native American tribes have been affected at all stages of the nuclear cycle. Navajo uranium miners were exposed without occupational protection, and their water was polluted with mine tailings. One of our March panelists, now Executive Director of the American Anthropological Association, spent decades at Hanford working with the neighboring tribes on environmental and public health issues.

This brings us to our own West Valley Nuclear Fuel Services site, where any water-borne pollution that escapes from the site enters streams that flow into Cattaraugus Creek, which makes its way to Lake Erie, flowing right through the Seneca Reservation: another case of environmental injustice.

*Pat Townsend*

## In Memorium

### ***Judy Casassa***

A League member for many years, Judy Casassa was one of the most reliable volunteers at naturalization ceremonies, welcoming many new citizens on our behalf and helping them complete their voter registration forms. Judy's life was one of service to others through her career with the Erie County Senior Services and her volunteer work with many organizations, especially Blessed Trinity Church. After a brief illness, Judy died on April 7, 2021, in the Erie County Medical Center. Judy's efforts as both a professional and a dedicated volunteer benefitted many people. Please take a few minutes to read this obituary featured in The Buffalo News on April 18: [judy-casassa-obituary](#).

### ***Florence Hellwitz***

Florence K. Hellwitz, a League leader and president of the Buffalo League in the 1960s, was 102 when she died on March 3, 2021. Joan Bozer recalls that Florence was one of the "powerhouse women" in the Buffalo League when Joan first joined. Florence's son, Bob Hellwitz, has been our Board of Elections partner for voter registration at naturalization ceremonies in the past few years. Through her professional and volunteer efforts, Florence had a positive impact on many, and we were fortunate that she devoted some of those efforts to the League. Her obituary was featured in The Buffalo News on April 16; you can read it here: [florence-k-hellwitz-obituary](#).

*Terri Parks*



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

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## May 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, May 4, 4:00 p.m.**

**Program, Issues & Events Committee**

via Zoom

**Thursday, May 6, 10:00 a.m.**

**Great Decisions**

via Zoom

**Monday, May 10, 4:00 p.m.**

**Board of Directors**

via Zoom

**Wednesday, May 12, 2:00 p.m.**

**Local Government Committee**

via Zoom

**Wednesday, May 12, 4:00 p.m.**

**Waterfront Committee**

via Zoom

**Thursday, May 13, 7:00 p.m.**

**Fighting for our Vote 2.0**

via Zoom

**Monday, May 17, 7:00 p.m.**

**GOTV Committee**

via teleconference

**Tuesday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.**

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

via Zoom

**Wednesday, May 19, 6:30 p.m.**

**The Effect of Covid-19 on Schools**

via Zoom

**Thursday, May 20, 1:30 p.m.**

**Education Committee**

TBA

**Friday, May 21, 1:00 p.m.**

**Money in Politics Committee**

via Zoom