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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)

Your Voter is published 11 times a year. Send copy by the second Monday of the month to Terri Parks at [lwvoter@verizon.net](mailto:lwvoter@verizon.net).



# A Conversation with the Erie County Sheriff

**Location:** Frank E. Merriweather, Jr., Library  
1324 Jefferson St., Buffalo, NY 14208

**Date:** Wednesday, April 26, 2023

**Time:** Check In 5:30 p.m.  
Program 6:00 p.m.

Erie County Sheriff John Garcia will address current Sheriff's Department issues and questions provided by the League's Local Government Committee. Attendees will be able to submit written questions at the event.

Visit [www.lwvbn.org](http://www.lwvbn.org) or call the League office at 716-986-4898 to register.

We welcome people from the community to this free League event.

There is limited parking in the library lot. Additional parking is available in the Tops Market parking lot.

**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 Letter

Dear Members and Friends,

Happy Spring! As we spring into action, there is a lot going on, from the New York State budgets to our ongoing Committee Review Project and interesting in-person events.

Our LWV New York State Deputy Director and Advocacy Specialist, Erica Smitka, has been keeping us apprised of the Senate and Assembly activities by sending weekly legislative updates. They are full of bills being introduced as well as where the budget process is and how it is affecting the priorities of the League of Women Voters. What can we do now? Keep an eye out for action alerts along with LWWNYS's official statement on the one-house budgets. Please consider joining us to meet with our local state legislators to discuss League priorities. If you would like to be part of our Advocacy Team please email the office at [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org).

At our March meeting, the LWVBN board of directors reviewed the recommendations provided by the Buffalo State graduate student who interviewed many of our board members and current committee chairs for the Committee Review Project. They are all great recommendations to improve our local League. The board has decided to hold a strategic planning session that will include those recommendations and set goals and direction for our local League. This will take place on April 29 with an independent facilitator. If you are interested in working on this project, please call me directly; we will be vetting member participants to join the board members and committee chairs already committed to improving our local League.

Save the dates: April 26: A Conversation with the Erie County Sheriff

June 2-4: LWWNYS Convention in Albany

June 10: LWVBN Annual Meeting at Ilio DiPaolo's Restaurant

More information on these events is included in this VOTER and available on our website, [www.lwvbn.org](http://www.lwvbn.org).

Here's a shout-out to our Communications Committee. Amy Moritz, chair, has done a fabulous job of revamping our member emails using Mailer Lite. Watch your inbox for our new look. Thank you for continuing to follow LWVBN on social media and sharing with your networks; this outreach provides our League with essential visibility.

Please contact me at [president@lwvbn.org](mailto:president@lwvbn.org) with any questions, concerns or ideas regarding our local program.

*In League, Lori Robinson*

## Great Decisions

The Great Decisions discussion group will meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, April 6, via Zoom to discuss Chapter 2 in the 2023 Great Decisions book: **“War Crimes: what are they? How can they be prosecuted?”** The Foreign Policy Association, which sponsors this discussion group nationwide, says this about the topic:

“Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has resulted in widespread charges of war crimes and calls for justice. But what exactly are war crimes? Opinions of what constitutes a war crime have evolved, as have ways to identify and punish the perpetrators. How will the war crimes committed in Ukraine be dealt with?” By Francine Hirsch

Karen Keaton will moderate this discussion, made more relevant due to Russia’s war on Ukraine. Contact Fran Holmes for additional information.

## Democracy: The Next Generation

### Youth Program Outreach seeks volunteers

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara has received a grant from the national League to implement voter registration and education in high schools across Erie and Niagara Counties.

We need your help!

**Technology:** We're looking for someone to coordinate our use of the platform Outreach Circle to support follow-up with students who register to vote.

**Social media:** To complement our technology platform, we want to develop a presence on social media platforms to encourage teens to register, vote, and advocate for issues they are passionate about.

**Classroom presenters and aides:** We need a roster of volunteers to present voter education and register students in high school classrooms, along with assistants to help pass out materials and check registration forms. We'll train you on the content!

**Contact information research:** To reach more schools in Erie and Niagara Counties, we need to research names and contact information for high school principals and district superintendents.

Interested? Want more information? Contact Barbara Gunderson, Youth Program Chair.

*Barbara Gunderson, Youth Program Chair*

## Candidate Forum Staffing Opportunities

One of the activities of Leagues across the country that has received high accolades through the years is conducting candidate forums and debates following the League's rules and procedures, providing candidates with an opportunity to respond to the concerns of voters in a positive and civil manner, fair to all participants. We are proud to carry out this important effort.

We expect to be invited to moderate and keep time for a good number of candidate forums in early May and June this year as well as in October for the general election. Last year, we conducted six candidate forums for school board races in Erie and Niagara Counties. We have already accepted invitations from the Wilson and Starpoint School Districts. In addition, there will be contests for primaries for city and county races. Please consider joining our fine group of folks who moderate, keep time, and collect and review questions submitted by the audience. Send me an email at [lwvoter@verizon.net](mailto:lwvoter@verizon.net) if you would like to help in this most important endeavor.

We plan to conduct a moderator training session in April if we have new folks who are interested. It will most likely be conducted via Zoom.

*Terri Parks, Candidate Forum Coordinator*

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion: “Pulling The Race Card” Survey Comments

We surveyed the participants who attended the Pulling the Race Card event in October and others who had worked with Sarah Pearson Collins and Kezia Pearson in planning our October Pulling the Race Card discussion. The diverse group of people who attended and who shared their thoughts so freely and with enthusiasm pleased us. Though we did not have a large response, we would like to share some of the comments and recommendations we received.

“I was deeply moved and enlightened by the participants with whom I shared a table and by Sarah and Kezia themselves. I have been able to move beyond my own shyness ... to offer smiles ... to reassure the people of color I meet that I mean them no harm – and that maybe even I’m on their side.”

“The experience was a chance to interact with people of different backgrounds who had a mutual concern for others.”

“I leave this experience, and the bigger issues around race itself, with the clear understanding that more interaction with African-Americans would be good for me...”

“Sarah and Kezia could not have been more accommodating to the needs of our group. They made themselves available to attend a meeting to discuss their backgrounds, the history of their Race Card business, and offered ideas about the logistics of holding Pulling the Race Card events. They were responsive to questions via phone, text or email.”

“Sarah and Kezia have an uncanny ability to read the room and facilitate the conversations accordingly. They make it clear from the beginning that the room is a safe space; that no one, and no opinion, will be judged. During the evening Sarah and Kezia circulated, visited the various discussion groups and worked to put the participants at ease, keeping the conversations flowing.”

Attendees made thoughtful recommendations. Here is a sampling of them.

1. Orchestrate the tables better, ensuring an equal blend of race and gender if possible.
2. I suggest adding questions about affirmative action, financial reparation for historical damages, education in which is found a high percentage of black/brown children in special education, higher education in which a number of black and brown students cannot meet the financial requirements, questions related to how to best achieve more integration and collaboration amongst diverse groups.
3. How can images of black and brown people via the media that are too often negative be shown with more sensitivity?
4. I suggest a greater focus on white nationalism and its negative impact on society as a whole.

We would consider having other similar events in the future, because we would like our entire membership to have an opportunity to examine the position of our League and ourselves in an ever-changing world.

*Liz Zausmer, DEI Chair*

## Opportunity to Serve on the LWVNYS ERA Task Force

**Timeline:** January 2023 - November 2024

**Meeting frequency:** Once a month for one hour via Zoom. This will vary – some months we may meet more often and other months we may not meet at all. It primarily depends on the legislative session and what's going on with the bill.

Below is a general outline for the work an ERA task force member would be asked to do. If you do have someone interested in being your representative you can have them fill out this Google form with their contact info: <https://forms.gle/cVc34uaBCFpoqHhL6>.

### What would an appointee be doing?

- Attend meetings or have a delegate attend in their place. The meetings will be an opportunity for the state League to push out materials and updates on the amendment. It will also be a place where this task force can brainstorm effective ways to advocate for the amendment this session and to educate voters on this amendment once it gets to the ballot.
- Push information and action items out to members of their League and engage members of their League to take action
- Organize lobbying efforts with representatives on the bill. Alternatively, ensure that those who usually lobby on behalf of their League are able to prioritize the talking points of this bill.

*Erica Smitka, Deputy Director, LWVNYS*

## Vote 411 Training

Do you want to learn something new and help educate voters? Training on Vote 411 will be held virtually on **April 13 at 5:30 pm**. Come learn how the program works and start creating your page for the upcoming June primary. It's time now to set up the races – come see how.

This training will also be a great refresher for any who have used Vote 411 in the past and will be creating it again this election season. As the elections are all local this year, the local Leagues are responsible for creating the Vote 411 pages for their races. Come remind yourself how to do that!

To register for the training, click [here](#).

Please let our local office know if you are attending the training by email to [lwvbn@lwvbn.org](mailto:lwvbn@lwvbn.org).

*Nancy Rosenthal, LWVNYS VP for Voter Services*



1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## April 2023

**Tuesday, April 4, 4:00 p.m.**  
**Program, Issues & Events Committee**  
via Zoom

**Thursday, April 6, 10:00 a.m. - noon**  
**Great Decisions**  
via Zoom

**Monday, April 10, 4:30 p.m.**  
**Board of Directors**  
via Zoom

**Wednesday, April 12, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Local Government Committee**  
via Zoom

**Thursday, April 20, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Committee**  
via Zoom

**Tuesday, April 25, 5:00 p.m.**  
**Education Committee**  
via Zoom

**Tuesday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Healthcare Committee**  
via Zoom

**Wednesday, April 26, 5:30 p.m.**  
**A Conversation with the Erie County Sheriff**  
Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Library

**Saturday, April 29, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**League Strategic Planning Retreat**  
League Office