



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The VOTER is published
10 times per year. Items for
the Winter issue are due
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Calling all LWVBN members



for Consensus Meetings on Ballot Access

At issue:

Should we change the way candidates for state offices in NY State
gain access to the general election ballot?

You will have two opportunities to make your opinions known.
Choose a date and time convenient for you *and come!*

**Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2015 at 1 PM,
League Office, 1272 Delaware Ave., Buffalo 14209**

**Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015 at 7 PM,
Harlem Road Comm. Center, 4255 Harlem Rd., Amherst 14226**

We'll have cocoa and cookies to warm everyone up and begin a lively
discussion.

If we are to reach consensus upon which a League position is based, it is important that League members participate. Please review the background information printed in September, October, November, and December copies of the Voter and bring the consensus questions (in this issue) with you to the meeting.

League of Women Voter's 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.

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President's Report

At its November meeting, the League board approved three legislative priorities to submit to the state League for the 2015 Legislative Agenda: Campaign Finance Reform, Natural Resources Issues (Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest, including energy conservation and energy options from renewable resources.), and the Women's Equality Agenda (WEA). We suggested that the League support the first nine items of the WEA and add the tenth item, as a separate Priority item. While we believe all ten items are very important, we feel that passage of the nine items is important enough to separate them from the final item. The state League Issues Specialists will discuss the suggestions received from local Leagues and make recommendations to the state board for approval at its December 3rd meeting.

The legislative priorities selected at that December meeting will be those we discuss with our state Senate and Assembly members in the spring. Please contact our new Action Chair, Joan LoCurto, at events@lwvbn.org if you're willing to visit your state Senator and or Assembly member with a partner, to share the League's priorities. The state League will provide detailed materials for the effort. If you haven't had this experience yet, we'll be sure to partner you with someone who has done so. Those of us who have made these legislative visits have found our representatives very approachable and gracious.

The board adopted a charge to the 2014-2015 Nominating Committee and appointed Margaret Brunson, Ramona Gallagher and Lori Robinson as the board members for the Nominating Committee.

This edition of the Voter includes a nomination form for the 2015 Making Democracy Work Award. Please consider nominating a community member who you feel has made memorable efforts to make democracy work. Recent honorees include Attorney Michael Cuzma, Erin Heany from the Clean Air Coalition and Bill Nowak. We welcome your nomination for the 2015 award.

-Terri Parks

The League of Women Voters of New York State has launched a special fundraising campaign for the Education Foundation. The **League Matters Campaign** is a three-year fund-raising effort to raise at least \$300,000 above our regular Annual Fund donations. We have already raised \$225,000 thanks to several leadership donors. This represents a tremendous vote of confidence for the state League and what it provides to all of our local Leagues in New York.

The Board of the LWV of Albany County voted to donate \$10,000 to this Campaign from their reserve funding. They feel that the state League is crucial to the work they do. This gift is issued as a challenge to other donors across the state. If we raise \$25,000 from other donors by the League's birthday on February 14, 2015, the State fund will receive the \$10,000.

This Campaign will allow the state League to increase the resources we offer to our local Leagues. We have seen a decline in volunteer numbers in recent years and an increase in the demands on the time of the volunteers we have. In order to ensure the strength of the League across this state, it is imperative that we have a strong state League providing programs and services that lessen the demands placed on our members and local leaders.

The state League Board approved a share formula for League Matters Campaign gifts so that each local League will get a portion of any gift from an individual in their area. The state League is committed to giving you what you need to keep your League visible and responsive in your community.

We thank Joan Bozer for representing the Buffalo/Niagara League on the League Matters Campaign committee and for hosting an event that brought state League leaders to discuss the state League's work with some of our local League leaders and friends.

Call the state League at (518) 465-4162 or email Kate Jankowski, Communications and Development Coordinator, at events@lwvbn.org if you have any questions about the League Matters Campaign.

Great Decisions

Having a new member, Patricia Costanzo, sign up for Great Decisions 2015 reminded me that this is the best time to invite others interested in foreign affairs to join also. We don't meet in December, January, or February and I won't be ordering the new briefing books, which cost \$18.00, until February 2. On Thursday, March 5, we will resume our discussions from 10 AM - noon at 1272 Delaware Avenue. At that time I will give out the books and we will set up facilitators for our 8 topics. If you have kept your opinion ballots from 2014, bring them; the results of the 2014 national opinion ballot report will be available for comparison.

- Bernice Baeumler



**League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara (LWVBN)
Making Democracy Work Award Application**

Please complete a separate nomination form for each person nominated and return it to LWVBN, 1292 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209 or by e-mail to lwvbn@lwvbn.org by February 7 2015.

Please direct questions to Terri Parks at lwvoter@verizon.net.

Any person from the communities in Erie and Niagara County who has contributed to the community in a meaningful way to make democracy work is eligible for the award. This Application needs to be completed by the nominator.

Nominator: _____

Organization: _____

E-mail address: _____

Nominee: _____

Contact Information for the nominee

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Profession (current/previous): _____

How long has this individual been active in the community? _____

About the nominee

In one sentence, tell us why the individual you are nominating should be considered for the Making Democracy Work award.

1. The League of Women Voters celebrates community leaders: individuals who have envisioned a way to improve the community and have mobilized others to work with them to effect a change that has benefited the broader community. How does the individual you are nominating exemplify community leadership?

Amherst Unit

Lunch & Issues:

Citizen Science, Environmental Health & Social Justice in Buffalo's West Side

William Schneider PhD. in epidemiology and community health will be our guest speaker
Friday, January 16, 2015

Scotch and Sirloin Restaurant, 3999 Main St., Amherst

Luncheon is at noon, followed by presentation

Cost is \$18, all included. The public is invited.

Please make reservations by January 14 with Judy Metzger, or Sally Metzger, events@lwvbn.org

Our Volunteers at Work . . .

Laura McDade and Marie Hanrahan represented the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara (LWVBN) at the Hamburg Middle School Naturalization Ceremony on October 16, 2014. At the end of October, Janet Goodsell and Mike Egan represented the League at the U.S. Courthouse for a Naturalization Ceremony. The LWVBN was represented by Judy Weidemann and Jayne Murray at the November 6, 2014 Naturalization Ceremony at the Courthouse.

In addition to the Naturalization Ceremonies for new citizens, LWVBN sponsored a Candidate Forum in Hamburg on October 22 that was organized by Laura McDade. Marian Deutschman was the moderator and Jean Flowers, the timekeeper. A grateful thank you to all.

-Judy Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator

22,000 Voter Guides!

The League is most grateful to the following people who assisted in distributing 22,000 VOTER GUIDES: Lynne Vallone, Gina Vallone, Wynn Fisher, Judy Weideman, Dorothy Tao, Barbara Rubin, Debra Shiffner, Judy and Jim Metzger, Arlene Miles, John Segman, Marlene Katzel and Aaron Amrose, Alan Dozoretz, Janet Massaro, JoAnn Mecca, Ramona Gallagher, Dot Brown, Kelly Murphy, Dick Hermann, Sue Faye Allen, Mary Scheeder, Marian Deutschman, Judy Huber, Pat Costanzo, Janet Goodsell, Lee Tetkowski, Laura McDade, Joan Photiadis, Bonnie and Harold Asch, Carolyn Kerr, Joan Broderick, Mike Egan, Dorothy Westhafer, Phyllis Banas, Betty and John Howell, Joan Mondul, Agnes Annis, Sally Moehlau, Beth Kauffman. Many hours were put in by Flora and Mary Ann in the office to bring the routes up to date.

THANK YOU --- THANK YOU ---THANK YOU --- THANK YOU ---THANK YOU --- THANK YOU!

-Laura McDade

Transportation-Waterfront Committee: Buffalo Outer Harbor Update

The future of the Outer Harbor on Buffalo's waterfront continues to be the focus of the League's transportation-waterfront group. We monitor the activities of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), which oversees these public lands. We anticipate that a large public forum will be organized soon, to give all of the public a chance to share concerns and visions with each other about this unique waterfront asset.

Help us energize the public to be directly involved in the decisions of the ECHDC! The group meets as needed on Monday afternoons; we do much of our work via email. To participate, please send your contact information directly to Gladys Gifford, events@lwvbn.org

Ballot Access Study Part IV

In the November *Voter* we listed some of the pros and cons of getting on the ballot in different primary election systems. This month we will discuss two other systems that, although quite different from one another, share a common feature – both ensure that the winning candidate in any primary election receives a majority vote.

Top Two Vote Getter (TTVG). Any registered voter can vote for any candidate from any party and the two candidates receiving the most votes go on to compete in the general election regardless of party affiliation.

Proponents say:

- Candidates reflecting the views of a broader range of the electorate may be successful.
- Nonaffiliated voters would have a voice in nominating general election partisan candidates.
- The major political parties will not control the primary election process because third party and unaffiliated candidates will be treated the same and can compete in the primary.
- TTVG eliminates the need for costly runoff elections.
- TTVG primary is easier to understand than other election reform options.

Opponents say:

- An incentive for party registration is removed which could reduce effectiveness of political parties.
- Voters may have less choice because the two top vote getters could be from the same party.
- Ballot access in primary elections may be lost for minor party candidates and there will be less chance for them to succeed in general elections.
- General election turnout may decrease because only “top two” candidates will appear on the November ballot.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). All voters rank all candidates by preference. The lowest ranked candidates are eliminated in a step by step process until one candidate receives a majority vote. This system essentially operates as a series of runoff elections. IRV determines a winning candidate in one election.

Proponents say:

- Voters may have more choices because there will be greater opportunity for third party and unaffiliated candidates to participate.
- Voter turnout may increase because voters will have a greater choice of candidates without worrying about the spoiler effect.
- The high cost of having separate runoff elections is eliminated.
- Negative campaigning may be reduced because candidates can benefit if they are the voters’ second choice.

Opponents say:

- Confusion will result because American voters and Election Administrations are unfamiliar with IRV.
- Candidates without majority support may get elected if voters do not rank all possible choices.
- Costs will increase because of administration difficulties and need to change vote tally equipment.
- Large candidate fields could turn elections into name recognition contests.

In 2009, the League of Women Voters of New York City began a study of IRV as an alternative to high cost, low turnout, runoff elections in NYC and in 2010 adopted a position in favor of IRV for the following reasons:

- IRV saves taxpayer dollars by eliminating the need for a separate runoff election.
- IRV helps absentee and military voters because it allows adequate time to order, receive and return a ballot.
- IRV would better protect the majority principle since under the current system a winning candidate could be the last choice of the majority of voters.
- IRV reduces negative campaigning because candidates may need the support of other ranked candidates and won’t get it if their opponents’ supporters are antagonized.

IRV has not been adopted by New York City. In 2013 New York City spent approximately \$13 million to hold a runoff election for the office of Public Advocate – an office that has an annual budget of less than \$2.3 million and three dozen full time staff. There is now renewed interest in reforming NYC’s runoff election system. The NYC Campaign Finance Board has come out in support of IRV in place of the current runoff system.

**** A clarification from October Voter:** A Wilson Pakula certificate is authorization given by political party leaders that allows a candidate not registered in that party to run as its candidate. It does not bar candidates from collecting petitions

Ballot Access Study Consensus Questions

1. Which do you prefer?
 - a. Opening New York State primaries to nonaffiliated voters **OR**
 - b. Continued use of the current closed primary system in New York State.

2. Do you support the adoption of ranked-choice voting in New York State?
[Yes] [No]
 - 2a. If yes, which do you support the adoption of?
 - a. Instant Runoff Voting **OR**
 - b. Top Two Vote Getter (TTVG)/Open Primary system

 - 2b. If you support Instant Runoff Voting, in which elections do you support its use?

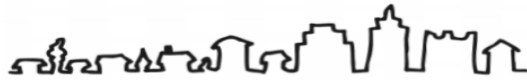
<ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) For Statewide Offices(i) Primary Election(ii) General Election(iii) Both	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(b) For State Legislative Offices(i) Primary Election(ii) General Election(iii) Both
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3. Do you believe that Wilson-Pakula should be repealed?
[Yes] [No]

4. Should New York State retain fusion voting?
[Yes] [No]
 - 4a. If yes, should NY State retain its system of fusion voting
 - (a) Only with Wilson-Pakula **OR**
 - (b) Only without Wilson-Pakula **OR**
 - (c) Whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed

Happy Birthday to Jean Wholahan - 100 years!

Congratulations are in order to Jean Wholahan, who turns 100 on December 2. Jean joined (what was then) the League of Women Voters of Grand Island, Kenmore & Tonawanda back in the late 1950s and was active especially in the years prior to the merger of the local Leagues into the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara in 1995. She faithfully kept track of membership, attended to the budget and, with her husband Al, put together the first listing of public officials. Originally mimeographed, this information was put on computer (Al had one of the first computers around!) and printed, becoming the pamphlet that is today called "They Represent You!" and is distributed throughout Erie and Niagara Counties. Thank you, Jean, for your years of service to the League!



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December and early January Meetings

Mon., 12/1, 3:00 p.m.
Transport/Waterfront, Central Library

Thurs., 12/11, 9:30 a.m.
Natural Resources, East Aurora

Wed., 12/17, 1:00 p.m.
Ballot Access, League office

Thurs., 12/18, 1:30 p.m.
Charter Schools/Education, League Office

Tues., 1/6, 4:30p.m.
Issues, Harlem Rd. Community Center

Mon., 1/12, 4:00 p.m.
Board Meeting, League Office

Thurs., 1/8, 9:30 a.m.
Natural Resources, East Aurora

Wed., 1/14, 1:15 p.m.
Local Government, League office

Thurs., 1/15, 1:30 p.m.
Charter Schools/Education, League Office

Fri., 1/16, 11:30 a.m.
Lunch & Issues, Scotch & Sirloin

A Reminder:



Holiday party at Chef's Restaurant, 291 Seneca Street, Buffalo, NY 14204
Monday, December 1, 5:00 p.m.



All Copy for the Winter Voter due 12/19/2014