



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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**League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara
and supporting organizations present:**

**A LIVING WAGE:
ONE STEP TO EQUITY**

What is a “living wage”? Why do we need one?
Who’s fighting for it? What impacts on small businesses?

PANEL

Joan Malone, first Executive Director of Coalition for Economic Justice
City of Buffalo’s Living Wage – *Background and Living Wage Commission*

Andrew Delmonte, Social Enterprise Coordinator
Small Business Development Center, SUNY Buffalo State
Impact of living wage on small business sustainability

Kim Gibson, Organizer with SEIU Local 1199
(Service Employees International Union)
Initiative: Fight for \$15/Hour, including special front line guests

Victoria Reynolds, Deputy District Director, Small Business Administration
*Perspectives and potential impact of living wage and
higher minimum wages on small businesses*

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2015

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, NY - *Free parking*

EVENT IS FREE. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED.

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 Message

Copies of the *2015 They Represent You* will be mailed to current League Members the week beginning March 30. Printing was delayed because of events in Albany.

This helpful reference is one benefit of League membership. We have also sent the brochures to all public libraries, city and town halls in Erie and Niagara counties for distribution. It is also available at www.lwvbn.org. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to use the online version.

Our Action Chair, Joan LoCurto, is making lists for teams of two or three League members to visit their assembly member and state senator in April or early May. Please volunteer to be one of the team members. We will have detailed talking points from the NY State League that make the visits easy. It is most important that we take this opportunity to advocate on behalf of the League. We were able to meet with a number of our state legislators in late March for "pre-budget" lobbying for the items related to Ethics Reform and Campaign Finance Reform in the governor's budget, as well as in opposition of the "Education Investment Incentives Act" that is inconsistent with the League's position in favor of progressive taxation. The League also finds the Act "thwarts the Legislature's collective decision-making to target high-need schools, school districts and legislative districts."

Those of us who have made visits to our state assembly members and senators have enjoyed the experience. Joan will make sure that folks who have never lobbied for the League before are partnered with an experienced person. Volunteer by calling the League office or sending an email to Joan LoCurto at events@lwvbn.org.

April 14th marks Equal Pay Day, the day in 2015 when the average woman's earnings will catch up to what the average man earned in 2014. Women of color face an even larger discrepancy. It is truly shocking that more than 50 years have passed since the 1963 passage of the Equal Pay Act without achieving its goal.

We have the six delegates to the League of Women Voters of New York State convention in Albany on June 6-7 allotted to LWVBN. However, we can still accept delegates who will be credentialed by another League, but represent ours at the convention. There will be caucuses Friday evening, June 5 and workshops on Saturday morning. The first plenary session is at 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 6. The convention ends at noon June 7. Please contact me by phone or email if you would like to be a member of our League's delegation. You will surely enjoy meeting the impressive women and men like yourself who lead the other Leagues in New York State.

- Terri Parks

Great Decisions

With regret I had to cancel our March meeting because my husband fell and broke his shoulder. Hopefully we can start off Great Decisions 2015 on Thursday, April 2 at 10 a.m. - Noon at 1272 Delaware Ave. The drill will be the same: exchanging the briefing books for \$18.00, setting up leaders for the 8 topics, and perhaps comparing results of the 2014 opinion ballots published in the new book, if you saved the loose ballots. Any questions please contact me.

-Bernice Baeumler



Important Notice Change in League Office Hours

Effective March 31, 2015, the office will be open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 am to 2 pm. As always, please call before going to the office!

Equal Pay Day Advocacy Opportunity for all League Members

The League is a member of the New York State Pay Equity Coalition (NY\$PEC), which has been working for years to level the economic playing field for women and families. Now, working with the Women's Equality Coalition made up of over 850 organizations across New York, we are hoping to make major progress on passing the Women's Equality Act legislation along with the pay equity bills that the New York State Assembly has championed and will be passing again on Equal Pay Day, April 8th.

Equal pay for comparable work benefits everyone. Women's wage parity would have a positive impact the local economy and result in:

- Less difficulty making ends meet at the end of each month;
- Less stress on local safety net resources now devoted to low-income families;
- A more stable work force with lower turnover rates;
- Easier retirement planning with more time to spend on leisure activities;
- On average, each woman who is fully paid has about \$8,200 more to spend annually on housing, consumer products, medications, and to put toward retirement.

If you have not already done so, please contact your local newspaper to remind them about this issue. We seek to publicize Equal Pay Day and the disservice it is to everyone that women's earnings continue to lag behind those of men.

-Terri Parks

Campaign Finance Reform :

NYS League Has Its Say

In testimony to the Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Assembly and Senate on February 26, 2015, the League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS) urged the legislature to make *“sweeping improvements to our dismally broken campaign finance system which has for far too long undermined democracy and sown public distrust in government.”* Here are some of the recommendations from the LWVNYS statement:

- Strengthen the State Board of Elections' new Enforcement Unit by providing a steady stream of funding and giving the Attorney General jurisdiction to prosecute criminal violations of campaign finance laws;
- Further reduce campaign contributions from individuals and lobbyists and contributions to party housekeeping accounts and party committees;
- Subject corporations, LLCs, their subsidiaries and affiliates to *one* contribution limit;
- Adopt the federal rules on personal use of campaign contributions.
- Require immediate disclosure of campaign finance law violations and dispositions;
- Expand disclosure and reporting requirements of independent expenditures;
- Implement a public financing system modeled on New York City's successful program.

The complete text of the LWV New York State statement is posted on the LWVNYS web site: www.lwvny.org

Expanding the Debate

Are the current LWV positions on campaign finance reform sufficient to respond to challenges to the nation's campaign financing system? Our Campaign Finance Committee (CFR) Committee will be using *“Money in Politics: developing a common understanding of campaign finances following Citizens United,”* provided by LWVUS as a starting point to help us answer the question. The “Money in Politics Primer” is available on the national League (www.lwv.org) web site. Download your copy and then join in the discussions. For information about the CFR Committee meetings and this study guide, please contact me.

- Janet Massaro, LWVBN Campaign Finance Committee

Come Join Us to “Think-In” the Future!



FRIENDS, we value your opinions and want to hear your ideas. This is an open invitation to stand behind democracy. With teamwork we can insure that democracy stands behind us. Sharing your thoughts and ideas will help propel our action, our power, and our mission.

Please join us in our upcoming *Fund Development Think-Tank Session*. As the League celebrates 95 years of Making Democracy Work[®] we are reaching out to you for your input to help us promote our values for future generations. If you are willing to contribute your thoughts to this development committee, even if only for one session, please email Rebecca Costanzo, Chair of our newly formed Fund-Resource Development Committee and she will provide you with the needed details. events@lwvbn.org

We are seeking a diverse group of men and women from all backgrounds to become involved in this exciting think-tank committee. If you like what you hear and learn at our first meeting we hope you will become involved in specific research and organizational tasks to help the Fund-Resource Development Committee reach its goals. All goals will be submitted to the Board for its approval before being executed. We shall not ask you to solicit donations.

- Rebecca Costanzo, Fund Development Chair

Donations to our Annual Appeal through The League of Women Voters Education Foundation

You should have received the invitation to contribute to the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara through our Annual Appeal. We have already received contributions from a good number of League members and are acknowledging your gifts with thank you letters. The state League has recently provided an easy way to donate to Local Leagues online through each League’s grants management account with the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation. It permits you to make a tax-deductible donation online to help the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara provide educational services such as the publication of the *Voters Guide* and educational programs.

The following link to the Education Foundation will enable you to make a donation to the LWVBN account: [Local League EF Donation](#). Select **LWV of Buffalo/Niagara** in the drop down menu to direct your donation to our League. We will send you an acknowledgement of your donation with our sincere thanks.

You may also make a tax-deductible donation to the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara by writing a check payable to LWVNYS-EF. Write LWVBN on the memo line to the left of your signature and mail your check to our League office.

This information is found on the LWVBN website: LWVBN.org under Make a Donation in the menu on the home page.



League of Women Voters of the United States Studies

I. Money in Politics Review

The LWVUS Money in Politics Study Committee will conduct an update of the League's position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement as to whether financing a political campaign is protected speech under the First Amendment. The campaign finance position will be updated through a study and consensus process to consider: (1) the rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and (2) how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position. Please contact Janet Massaro, chair of the LWVBN Campaign Finance Committee, if you would like to work on this update.

II. Amending the Constitution Study

During 2015, the LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Committee will conduct a study and member agreement process on amending our nation's Constitution.

Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides two ways of proposing amendments to the nation's fundamental charter. Congress, by a two-thirds vote of both chambers, may propose constitutional amendments to the states for ratification. OR, the legislatures of two-thirds of the states (34 at present) may ask Congress to call a convention to propose amendments to the Constitution; this is commonly called an Article V Convention. Amendments proposed by either method must be ratified by three-fourths of the states, 38 at present.

The first method has been used by Congress to submit 33 amendments to the states, beginning with the Bill of Rights. Of these, 27 were approved; 26 are currently in effect, while one – the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) — was ultimately repealed.

The second method, an Article V Convention, has never been successfully invoked.

In addition to other topics, our League study will explore the process for proposing an Article V Convention in order to determine whether LWVUS would support such a convention and if so, under what circumstances.

LWVBN will participate in this study if we have League members willing to lead it. Please contact me if you are willing to lead or participate.

- Terri Parks



Membership Event - "It Started With the Vote!"

Wednesday, May 6, 2015, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
1272 Delaware Ave (free parking)
Refreshments

Join us for fellowship and food. Learn more about the League and feel free to bring a friend, partner or new member.

Did you know:

Following World War II, the league helped lead the effort to establish the United Nations.

In 1952 the League joined NBC and Life magazine in sponsoring the first ever US presidential debate.

During the 1970's and 1980's, the League was an advocate for Environmental protection.

In the 1990's league was in the forefront of the National Voter Registration Act.

In 2006, the League launched VOTE 411.

We celebrate the words of Carrie Chapman Catt. "There will, never be a true democracy until every responsible adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own voice in government"

Join us on May 6 to continue Chapman Catt's quest.

- Judith M. Metzger events@lwvbn.org



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April Meetings

Thurs., 4/2, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions, League Office

Tues., 4/7, 4:30 p.m.

Issues, Harlem Rd. Community Center

Wed., 4/8, 1:15 p.m.

Local Government, League Office

Thurs., 4/9, 9:30 a.m.

Natural Resources, East Aurora

Mon., 4/13, 4:00 p.m.

Board Meeting, League Office

Thurs., 4/16, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee, League Office

Save The Date.

Pies & Pie Charts, Brunch & Budget

May 16, 2015, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Harlem Road Community Center

From roads to social services, from libraries to parks, the Erie County budget affects our quality of life every single day.
Where does the money come from? How does it get allocated?

REMINDER: All copy for the May Voter is due April 10, 2014