



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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I could not at any age be content to take my place in a corner
by the fireside and simply look on.
*-Eleanor Roosevelt, League of Women Voters Leader and First Lady of
the World*



The 2015 Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara celebrates our members of 50+ years.

Join us at Kotecki's Restaurant
4685 Seneca Street, Buffalo, NY 14224
Saturday, June 13, 2015

The Annual Meeting will begin with coffee at 10:00 a.m.
Luncheon will be served at noon.

Special Awards:

Joan K. Bozer Leadership Award: Marian Deutschman for outstanding League leadership

LEE Award: Gladys Gifford for Long Term Commitment to the League with Energy, and Excellence

Making Democracy Work Award: Sam Magavern and Bonnie Smith, two exceptional community activists

Comments about 2015 Students Inside Albany Conference: Kate Ryan, LWVBN representative to the May Conference, student at Buffalo City Honors

**The reservation form is in the Annual Meeting Booklet.
Reservations are due at the League Office on June 3, 2014**

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

An Invitation from the President

At our Annual Meeting in June, we will especially celebrate our members of 50+ years, **Eleanor Cain, Ruth Korn, Sally Metzger, Joan Photiadis, Lenore Tetkowski, Dorothy Westhafer and Jean Wholahan** and recognize four people who are retiring from the board. **Ramona Gallahger** has been an outstanding secretary for four years. **Barb Jezioro** will continue her work as graphic editor for the Voter in an off-board capacity. **Sandy Chelnov**, the Voter Copy Editor, and **Dot Brown** have both contributed much to board discussions during their terms. I certainly hope that all of these fine League leaders will continue to be active participants in the League. We shall miss them on the board.

I hope each of you will join us on June 13 to honor the work of the League and each other. Our Annual Meeting is always a time of friendship and renewal as we commit ourselves to the work of our fine organization. The League of Women Voters continues to be a vital and important force especially in this crucial time when elections are being bought by special interests and voter registration in many states is threatened by laws making it more difficult or impossible for poor and minority citizens to register to vote.

Recent Board Actions

Thank you, **Dorothy Tao** and **Dot Brown** for creating the survey that accompanies this edition of the Voter. Please complete the survey that will assist us as we plan League activities for the coming year. Your suggestions of topics and presenters will be most valuable as well as timing for our events. We seek to involve as many League members as possible in League functions.

Please also complete the Member Interest Survey that accompanies your membership renewal form. Your interests may have changed. We also made a few changes to the form to more clearly reflect current League activity.

While the state and national dues have or will likely increase this coming year, we are pleased that we have not needed to increase our local dues. One reason for that is the generosity of our members that we celebrate in this issue of the Voter.

At the May board meeting, the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara approved the proposed new wording for the LWVNYs updated position on New York State Constitutional Convention Delegates. The results of the update will be announced at the state League convention in June.

I look forward to a most special annual meeting and do hope you will join us.

- Terri Parks

Opportunity for Service

Wanted: A special person to serve as Voters Guide Coordinator for the 2015 Voter Guide Steering Committee. We need a League member whose main job is to keep the committee on track by calling meetings and reminding the committee of deadlines through updating the Action Plan and writing the reports of decisions made by the committee. The Steering Committee has updated the Action Plan from last year already.

Term: Now through mid October, with a wrap-up later in the year

Benefits: Working with a special group of League Volunteers on the most visible example of the League's Voter Education Efforts

Please contact Terri Parks at events@lwvbn.org

Money in Politics : June Update



How did we get to “here”?

It’s an often repeated story in American political history - no sooner would reformers succeed in passing new rules and regulations on the financing of political campaigns than opponents of those changes would challenge them as unconstitutional. Reformers have long argued that campaign finance laws are justified in order to stop corruption or the appearance of corruption and, for the most part, the courts have agreed with them.

In 1974 in response to the Watergate scandals, Congress passed sweeping campaign reforms known as the **Federal Election Campaign Acts (FECA)**. Congressman James Buckley (NY) immediately brought suit against the law and in 1976 the United States Supreme Court (USSC) overturned many of its provisions.

In the crucial *Buckley v. Valeo* decision, the USSC reasoned that campaign contributions and expenditures are a form of political speech protected by the Constitution. However, because direct contributions to candidates could result in *quid pro quo* corruption, they could be limited. On the other hand, political spending by candidates, or spending by others undertaken independently of candidates, could not lead to *quid pro quo* corruption and therefore could not be limited.

In 2010, relying on the money-equals-speech logic of *Buckley*, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United* that limiting or prohibiting the financing of independent communications by “*associations of citizens*” was an unconstitutional abridgement of free speech. Thereafter, corporations and other organizations were free to use unlimited funds from their own treasuries to expressly endorse a vote for or against a specific candidate or candidates.

Since the 2010 *Citizens United* decision other campaign finance laws have been challenged and have crumbled:

- State laws that tried to “*level the playing field*” by granting extra campaign money to candidates who were substantially outspent by wealthy opponents were declared unconstitutional.
- State laws that imposed contribution and spending limits because of well documented examples of previous corruption were struck down.
- Aggregated contribution limits based on per person per biennium were declared unconstitutional.

The remaining campaign finance laws that are the “**here**” we now inhabit include: the ban on corporations contributing directly to candidates; disclosure and reporting of campaign finances; and voluntary public financing programs. All are under attack.

The road to reform is challenging for all of us – LWV members, other active reform groups, politicians of all persuasions, and the public at large. Stay informed. Remain vigilant. The LWVBN Money in Politics Committee welcomes all League members.

- Janet Massaro, Chair, Money in Politics Study Committee

Great Decisions

Fran Holmes has agreed to lead us in our second Great Decisions 2015 topic: Privacy in the Digital Age. It is scheduled for Thursday, June 4 from 10 a.m. - Noon at 1272 Delaware. "The idea of "privacy" has undergone significant changes in the digital age, as has the idea of privacy "harm." Fearful of British spying, influence and intervention, the Founding Fathers granted citizens significant protections in the Constitution. Now, the tables have turned: Concerns about what some see as a U.S. "dragnet" and unwarranted policy intrusions have compelled other countries to revamp their own privacy protections. Legislation, both at home and abroad, hasn't kept pace with technological developments, leaving some wondering if privacy as we know it is long dead."

July 2: *Sectarianism in the Middle East*

Joan Mondul will facilitate our July topic, *Sectarianism in the Middle East* on Thursday July 2 from 10 a.m. - Noon at 1272 Delaware. "Many of the current conflicts in the Middle East have been attributed to sectarianism, a politicization of ethnic and religious identity. From the crisis in Iraq and Syria to the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the struggle between Sunni and Shi'a groups for dominance is tearing apart the region and shows no signs of abating. But for all the religious discourse permeating the conflict, much of its roots are political, not religious. How does sectarianism fit into a larger narrative of the Middle East? How have governments manipulated sectarian differences? And finally what is the U.S. doing about it? "

August 6: *India Changes Course*

Pat Costanza will lead *India Changes Course* on Thursday August 6 from 10 a.m. - Noon at 1272 Delaware. "Fed up with corruption, dynastic policies and ineffective public services, Indian voters catapulted Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party to power in the country's 2014 elections. For voters, Modi embodied real change and an India that wasn't stumbling, but running, to greatness. But for the U.S., change in India brings its own set of unknowns, heralding an age ruled by a prime minister new to national office and other policymakers who have been out of the public eye for a decade. Now, the U.S. has to determine how to best secure its interests as India asserts itself on the world stage."

Hope to see you all over the summer.

-Bernice Baeumler

Save the Date

Tuesday, July 28 at noon

**Annual League of Women Voters Potluck Picnic
& Membership Social**

A membership social in conjunction with the annual league potluck picnic will be held on July 28 at Chelsea Club House on Downing Lane at Canterbury Woods (off Renaissance Drive) in Williamsville. All members and anyone who is interested in joining the League are invited. Please bring a dish to pass and join us to learn about the League in action.

Saturday, September 19

**Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
Fall Shoreline Sweep**

at the LWV's usual place: North Squaw Island,
10 - 12 p.m. Saturday, September 19.
Ellen Gibson is the site captain.
Register through Riverkeeper after September 1.

Volunteer!

Increasing Organ Donation in New York State through Voter Registration

On April 9, Margaret Brunson, Marie Hanrahan, Kate Wagner and I attended a training session in Rochester hosted by the state League that featured presentations about a partnership between the League of Women Voters (LWVNYS) and the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD) to encourage voters we register and other people who we talk with during our voter registration drives to get sign up for organ donation on the voter registration forms. New York State lags behind all other states in donor designations. The scarcity of organs for transplants leaves over ten thousand individuals waiting for needed organs in our state. Over 500 people die each year while waiting for an organ in New York, or one person every fifteen hours.

We will have specific suggestions for League members who work at registering voters in the directions for voter registration volunteers and also publicize organ donations through the Voters Guide and on our Facebook Page and Website.

-Terri Parks

Term Limits/Ballot Access Update:

LWV New York State Board has determined Consensus for the two State Studies completed this February. The LWVBN TL/BA Study Committee thanks all members who participated in our study and consensus meetings.

Term Limits Consensus

Although a sufficient number and geographic diversity of local Leagues participated in the term limits study to have made consensus possible, the necessary 2/3 agreement was not there to reverse **the League's opposition to term limits at the state level.**

Ballot Access Consensus

In New York State, candidates for elected office most often gain access to the general election ballot by obtaining political party ballot lines via various mechanisms. The Ballot Access study, adopted at the June 2013 state convention, examined the role of political parties in the process of gaining access to the general election ballot. The study explored the process of gaining party lines on the general ballot via (1) New York's closed primary system, (2) fusion voting, and (3) Wilson-Pakula certificates. The study included discussion and comparison of the different forms of primary systems and other states' experiences with fusion voting. A new position in favor of retaining fusion voting was adopted by the state Board in April 2015. No consensus was reached with respect to the issue of opening up state primaries to non-affiliated voters. **New position: The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the continuation of Fusion Voting in New York State whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed.**

-Janet Massaro, Chair, TL/BA State

LWVBN Volunteer Activity

Mary Egan, Joyce Bol, and Pat Wille represented the LWVBN at Naturalization Ceremonies at the U.S. Courthouse in April. Kathleen McCarthy and Sandra O'Hara greeted new citizens at the May 7, 2015 ceremony.

In addition, our volunteers moderated and kept time for School Board Candidates' Nights as follows:

- Ken-Ton PTSA School Board Candidates' Night on May 1, 2015. Marian Deutschman was the moderator and Joan Mondul served as timekeeper.
- Hamburg Candidates Night, May 6, 2015, sponsored by Hamburg PTSA. Laura McDade moderated and Jean Flowers served as timekeeper.
- Williamsville Candidates Night, May 7, 2015, sponsored by Williamsville PTSA Council. Terri Parks moderated and Ramona Gallagher screened questions.
- East Aurora Candidates' Night, May 11, 2015 sponsored by LWVBN. Ellen Moomaw moderated and Margaret Brunson was timekeeper.

-Judith Clarke, LWVBN Volunteer Coordinator

Living Wage Concurrence Snapshot

- **What?**
Proposed League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara concurrence with LWV Kansas Living Wage Position
- **When?**
Saturday, June 13, 2015, at LWVB/N Annual Meeting
- **Where?**
Kotecki's Restaurant, 4685 Seneca Street, West Seneca
- **What is "concurrence"?**
WV has a process to determine agreement with a League position that has been studied and adopted by another League.
- **What is the benefit of a concurrence?**
A League that concurs with a specific position may then *advocate* policies that support the position, without having to duplicate the original League study.
- **What is a Living Wage?**
A wage enables sufficient worker income, *without* government assistance, for food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, education, child care, and a small amount of discretionary income.
- **Does a living wage provide a middle class income?**
No, but it does provide one step to equity.
- **Why adopt a Living Wage?**
 - a. Reduce poverty.
 - b. Promote self-sufficiency.
 - c. Reduce tax dollars spent on support programs.
- **Which employers might be affected by LWVB/N concurrence with the LWV Kansas Living Wage Position?**
Erie and Niagara County government employees, and employers that receive county contracts and/or subsidies

-Lynda Stephens, Chair, Social Economic Justice Education Committee



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara deeply appreciates the gifts to the League received from June 1, 2014 until May 13, 2015 from the people below. Most donations were received at the time of membership renewal, in memory of deceased League members, or in response to our Annual Appeal letter. Your generous support enables the League to continue its Voter Service efforts and work for current League issues. Contributions were made directly to LWVBN or to our League through the LWNYS Education Foundation.

MEMBER**CONTRIBUTORS**

Bernice Baeumler
Phyllis Banas
Margaret Bisson
Joyce Bol
Elsa Bondar
Joan & John Bozer
Joan Broderick
Lawrence Brooks
Dorothy Brown
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Judith Capodicasa
Rosemary Cardoso
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Freddie Cheek
Sandra Chelnov &
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Judith Clarke &
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Martha Pott
Scandinavian Women's
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The League of Women Voters

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June Meetings

Tues., 6/9, 4:30 p.m.
Issues, Harlem Rd. Community Center

Thurs., 6/4, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions, League Office

Wed., 6/10, 1:15 p.m.
Local Government, League Office

Sat., June 13. 10:00 a.m.
Annual Meeting, Kotecki's Restaurant

Thurs., 6/18, 1:30 p.m.
Education Committee, League Office

Mon., 6/24, 3:00 p.m.
Waterfront Committee, Central Library

REMINDER: All copy for the Summer Voter is due Friday, July 3, 2015