



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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November, 2015

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The **VOTER** is published
10 times per year. Items
for the December/early
January issue are due
Friday, November 6, 2015

League of Women Voters Issues Luncheon for the public and League members



Good Things Happen when Government Works:

What did and didn't work and what we
learned

Thomas J. Dearing Commissioner of the Erie County Department of
Environment & Planning

Previously deputy commissioner for planning and economic development, Tom Dearing was appointed commissioner of the county's Department of Environment and Planning in June 2015. He is responsible for carrying out numerous elements of the county's Initiatives for a Smart Economy, including a variety of waterfront, smart growth, and environmental efforts. He began working for the county as a community planning coordinator in 1980, overseeing preparation of landmark programs such as the Horizons Waterfront Commission, Community Development Block Grants, Riverwalk construction and the county's Farmland and Agricultural Protection Plan. He holds a master's degree in city planning from the Ohio State University.

Friday, November 20, 2015, 11:30 a.m.

Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant, 3999 Maple Road, Amherst 14226

Make reservations online at www.lwvbn.org

or call the League office at 884-3550 by noon Wednesday, November 18, 2015.

Luncheon cost: \$20.00

Pay at the door with cash or check written to LWVBN

Please call the League office at 884-3550 if you'd like to join us only for the program.

Mission of the League of Women Voters:

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.

CONTENTS

Presidents' Report	2	Volunteers	4
Great Decisions	2	News from the State League	5
Money in Politics	3		



Presidents' Report and Board Actions



We hope you have received the *2015 Voters Guide* that was mailed October 16. We continue to be disappointed that all candidates have not elected to participate. Candidates may still respond online at Vote411 and would probably do so if enough voters contacted them and requested their response.

If you contact any candidates in your district, please do so as a voter and as someone who uses our online or printed Voters Guide. We have contacted all candidates more than once with an official League invitation. Of course, everything in the printed guide, as well as several more questions to candidates, is available from our web site (www.lwvbn.org) by clicking on the link there for Vote411. Please encourage everyone you know to learn more about candidates' views on our online Voters Guide.

We appreciate a grant from the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation to help us print the *2015 Voters Guide*. Producing and delivering the Voters Guide takes many hours of work each year. We commend and thank the people who worked especially hard on this year's edition. League member **Krysta Doerfler** designed this year's guide. **Barb Jezioro** managed Vote411 access by candidates; her dedication and skill are outstanding. **Laura McDade** once again coordinated the delivery of 23,000 copies. Many thanks go also to **Mary Ann Turkla** and **Flora Summe** at the League office for their efforts and support. **Nancy DeTine's** able proofreading and candidate follow-up contacts by **Lori Robinson**, **Pat Costanzo** and **Wynnie Fisher** were important. We will surely recognize the distribution team in the Winter Voter. All of the tasks and people who carried them out are essential to creating the professional publication that so many people in Erie and Niagara Counties use for information that comes directly from the candidates.

-Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

Suggestions Welcome for the 2015-2016 Legislative Priorities

Each year at this time, the local Leagues in New York State make suggestions for the statewide issues that should form our legislative agenda for the coming year. The suggestions will be discussed by state League Issues Specialists and approved by the state board. The priorities selected will provide the talking points we will use when we meet with our state legislators in April and May 2016.

We welcome you to join the members of the Issues and Action Committee at its next meeting at 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 3, 2015, at the Harlem Road Community Center to discuss and recommend the issues you think should form priorities for next year's legislative session. The issues selected by the committee will be submitted to our board for approval and then be sent to the state League. The issues chosen for action depend on two key things: strategy and timing.

-Terri Parks

Great Decisions for November: Human Trafficking

Ann Marie Malachowski is the leader for our Thursday, November 5, discussion on the topic Human Trafficking – A Serious Challenge for Humanity. Our discussion will take place from 10 a.m. until 12 noon at 1272 Delaware Avenue.

"Human trafficking represents many billions of dollars in international trade per annum and continues to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries. While undeniably a global phenomenon, the U.S., as one of the world's leading human trafficking importers, bears a special responsibility to combat this practice. The U.S. and the international community have adopted various treaties and laws to prevent trafficking, but to truly understand and combat the issue, they must find the root causes enabling traffickers to exploit millions of victims."

How sad to read about our country's involvement. Nonetheless, we need to be informed if we hope to help the situation.

-Bernice Baeumler,

Money in Politics National Consensus coming in January!

So that our League can participate in the LWV Money in Politics national consensus process, the next Voter will contain the consensus questions and the dates of two consensus meetings in January. One meeting will take place in the afternoon and the other in the evening to enable as many as possible of our members to participate. We hope you have saved the Money in Politics updates in the Voter to refer to them beforehand. Updates are also available at the LWVBN website in issues of the Voter published earlier this year. Mark your 2016 calendars!

Money in Politics November Update: Focus on Money and Patronage

Those who attended our Money in Politics event last month and listened to Zephyr Teachout's compelling narrative had to have been impressed with our nation's founders determination to eliminate – to the greatest extent possible – the link between money and patronage in the new republic. Would they have been at all surprised to know the struggle goes on, reinvented by each succeeding generation?

Currently the civil enforcement of federal campaign finance laws is in the hands of the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The FEC is an independent body that was created in 1974 as one of several amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), in part a response to the Watergate corruption scandals. Now in its 40th year, the FEC has evolved into a small personnel-intensive organization that is responsible for administering, enforcing, defending, and interpreting the FECA. Its six commissioners, three from each of the two major political parties, are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. An independent Inspector General's Office, created in 1989, reports to the commissioners and to Congress.

In exercising its authority, the FEC uncovers possible election law violations through a complaint system that can be initiated by internal reports and audits, referrals from other agencies, sworn complaint filings, or by any person or entity that believes a violation has been committed. Complaints *may* lead to an FEC enforcement case, called a Matter Under Review (MUR). By law these matters remain confidential until closed. They *may* be resolved through negotiation or settled through administrative fines.

Through the years the FEC has issued directives to improve its enforcement efforts. It provides status reports to respondents and has accelerated proceedings through a priority system and its Administrative Fine and Alternative Dispute Resolution programs. In an average year the FEC receives and processes campaign finance reports, statements, and related documents from more than 10,000 political committees and other filers. In FY13, 81,600 filings were received and it is anticipated filings will rise significantly in the 2016 presidential race.

In addition to its tremendous caseload, other challenges impact the FEC's efficiency. It is currently operating without permanent leadership in key offices, including the position of general counsel, which is the backbone of the agency. Although charged with the most complex of statutory missions, it is one of the smallest federal agencies with a FY15 budget of \$67,500,000. Its enforcement efforts have been exacerbated by the U.S. Supreme Court Citizens United decision that gave "association of citizens," including unions and corporations, First Amendment rights to free speech.

Most important, the FEC is hamstrung by a divided six-member commission, whose partisan votes consistently end in ties, resulting in stalemate. Earlier this year, Commission Chair Ann Ravel, a Democrat, spoke publicly about her frustrations trying to bring the commission members together to enforce campaign finance laws, including dark money disclosure and Super PAC independence. "The likelihood of the laws being enforced is slim. I never want to give up, but I am not under any illusions. People think the FEC is dysfunctional. It's worse than dysfunctional." Republican Commissioner Lee Goodman disagrees: "Congress set this place up to gridlock. The agency is functioning as Congress intended."

Information: LWV Money in Politics Study Paper, Enforcement of Campaign Finance Law. New York Times May 2, 2015. Eric Lichtblau.

-Janet Massaro, chair, Money in Politics Study Committee



**League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara
HOLIDAY PARTY**

Risotto's Restaurant

Saturday, December 5, 2015

Luncheon at 12 noon

Cost: \$22.00 per person. Guests are welcome!

The luncheon will include chicken Milanese, dressed greens and risotto with soup, beverages, and dessert. There will be a vegetarian pasta available if you request it with your reservation.

Please mail your check made payable to LWVBN, along with names of attendees, to the League Office, 1272 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209, by November 23, 2015.

A speaker from Jericho Road Community Health Center will share information about the center's services to refugees and low-income residents in Buffalo. Jericho Road assumed all programming of Vive, Inc., last March. Gifts of warm gloves or socks from attendees will be donated to Jericho Road.



LWVBN Volunteers

There were three naturalization ceremonies since the last publication of the Voter. Janet Goodsell and Judy Metzger represented the LWVBN at the Theodore Roosevelt site on September 14, 2015. Janet partnered with Lee Tetkowski for a ceremony at the U.S. Courthouse on September 17, 2015. On October 1, 2015, Kathleen McCarthy and Joan LoCurto represented our League and were able to collect several new voter registration applications.

At the request of the College Club of Buffalo, Marian Deutschman spoke on voting rights on October 5, 2015.

Our volunteers continue to offer service to our community and are greatly appreciated.

-Judith Clarke, LWVBN volunteer coordinator

Save the Dates!

**An Evening with Robin W. Kimmerer
The Honorable Harvest: Indigenous
Knowledge for Biodiversity Conservation**

Tuesday, November 10, 2015: reception 6:00 p.m., presentation 7:00 p.m.

Burchfield Penney Art Center, 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222

This event is free and open to the public.

The Western New York Land Conservancy, the Niagara Frontier Botanical Society and Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper are sponsoring this event and providing the financial support. LWVBN is one of several co-sponsors.

Dr. Kimmerer is a mother, plant ecologist, writer and SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. She is the founding director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, whose mission is to create programs drawing on the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific knowledge for our shared goals of sustainability. Her research interests include the role of traditional ecological knowledge in ecological restoration and the ecology of mosses.

As a writer and a scientist, she focuses not only on the restoration of ecological communities, but also on the restoration of our relationship to land. She is the author of "Gathering Moss," which incorporates both traditional indigenous knowledge and scientific perspectives and was awarded the prestigious John Burroughs Medal for Nature Writing in 2005.

**Western New York Land Conservancy
Honors Ellen Neumaier**

At its first gala on September 30, the Western New York Land Conservancy presented the Henry J. Kreher Conservation Award to Ellen Neumaier, who played a major role in the protection of the Mill Road Scenic Overlook in the Town of Aurora, among other conservation projects. Ellen has been a longtime supporter of the Land Conservancy. There were quite a few League members present to applaud Ellen for her efforts for this worthy organization.

Should the LWV of New York State vote concurrence with the LWV Ohio position to raise the age at which youths are prosecuted as adults?

New York is one of only two states that still automatically process 16- and 17-year-old offenders as adults. Nearly 50,000 16- and 17-year-olds arrested in New York State face the possibility of prosecution as adults in criminal court each year. More than 600 children ages 13 to 15 are prosecuted in adult criminal courts. Youths in adult prisons are twice as likely to report being beaten by staff and face the highest risk of sexual assault. About 80% of youths released from adult prisons reoffend, often going on to commit more serious crimes. At \$352,000 a year to keep a juvenile incarcerated, New York's costs are the highest in the nation.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio has conducted a full study on juvenile justice and arrived at a position that children under the age of 18 are not adults and their treatment within the system should relate to their stage of development with the purpose of rehabilitation.

At Lunch and Issues on October 16, Buffalo City Court Judge Susan M. Eagan made a fine presentation of the current practices in New York State and recent efforts to improve treatment of youth offenders that are being promoted in the state legislature, by Governor Cuomo and the Raise the Age Commission he created. Her presentation included information from www.raisetheagency.com and the commission's final report, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/ExecutiveSummaryofCommissiononYouthPublicSafetyandJusticeRecommendations.pdf>. The League of Women Voters of New York State's PowerPoint presentation, with cogent information to assist League members, is posted on the LWVBN website: www.lwvbn.org.

All of these sources should help you if you choose to join the board of directors at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, November 9, 2015, at the League Office, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo 14209, to vote concurrence with the Ohio League position. Only League members may discuss and vote on concurrence.

-Terri Parks

News from the League of Women Voters of New York State

League Day at the United Nations: Thursday, December 3

The New York State League is pleased to offer its annual League Day at the United Nations on Thursday, December 3, 2015. This year's briefings will cover two topics: **Global Healthcare Issues** and **Educating the Youth of the World**. The briefings will take place from 10 a.m. till noon, followed by lunch in the Delegates' Dining Room and optional tours of the U.N. The registration form is included with this Voter and is also available online at https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/INvmPPc4Hpebf0PLNzaRnw.

From Sally Robinson, State League Advocacy Chair

If you have an interest in serving on the study committee for the **Legislative Procedures update**, please contact the state office (Katrina@lwvny.org). The update would be focused on two aspects of our current position in particular, although it might consider other parts:

1. reference to a part-time legislature
2. ambiguous reference to length of terms.

A recent LWVUS announcement interpreted the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to permit state and local Leagues to lobby in support of raising state or local minimum wages or adopting a living wage position. The state League is forming a committee of League volunteers to look at the issue and possibly make a recommendation on a state minimum wage to the board. For more information on the **living wage concurrence**, contact Barb Thomas at barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com.

We are also forming a **long-range program planning committee** to look at the last decade or two of program planning, including what studies and updates were undertaken, and analyze the effort involved and the results. Please email or call the state office (Katrina@lwvny.org or 518-465-4162) if you are interested in serving on either committee.



OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



November Meetings & Events

Tues., 11/3, 4:00 p.m.
Issues Committee, Harlem Road
Community Center.

Thurs., 11/5, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions, League Office

Mon., 11/9, 4:00 p.m.
Board Meeting, League Office
Concurrence for Raise the Age

Tues., 11/10, 6:00 p.m.
An Evening with
Robin W. Kimmerer
Burchfield Penney Art Center

Wed., 11/11, 1:15 p.m.
Local Government, League Office

Fri., 11/20, 11:30 a.m.
Lunch and Issues
Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant

Mon., Nov. 23,
Deadline for Holiday Party Reservations

Thurs., 11/26, 1:30 p.m.
Education, League Office

REMINDER: The next deadline for the Voter is Friday, November 6. All copy, photos, etc., should be sent to Sandy Chelnov (chelnovs@gmail.com). Voter copy will go to Barb Jezorio only after it has been edited and proofread. Barb will then design and lay out the Voter before sending it to the printer. Thanks, everyone!