



The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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The **VOTER** is published
10 times per year. Items
for the May issue are due
Friday, April 8, 2016

New Education Bargain with Students and Parents

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

7:00 — 9:00 p.m.

The Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court, Buffalo, NY 14216
(Off Nottingham Terrace at Elmwood Avenue)
Free and open to the public



Keynote

Dr. Kriner Cash, superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools

Panel

Dr. Cash will be accompanied by a panel of his chosen
colleagues.

Education is the key to creating and maintaining strong communities and our
democracy. Come hear about Dr. Cash's vision for the future, the challenges, and
initiatives in Buffalo's public schools. Questions and answers will follow.

Make reservations online at www.lwvbn.org
or call the League office at 986-4898

Coming events

April 9: New York State Regional Workshop. See page 2.

April 27: Lunch & Issues on minimum wage. See page 3.

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	Education	6
Great Decisions	2	Membership	7
Waterfront	3	Volunteers	7
Money in Politics	4		



Presidents' Report



You should have received your copy of the *2016 They Represent You* by now. This helpful reference is one benefit of League membership. We have also sent the brochures to all public libraries and 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. Mary Ann Turkla and Flora Summe worked very hard to obtain email addresses of all local elected officials in this year's edition at the request of a number of people. Many legislators respond well to comments and questions sent to them by email. Barb Jezioro spent quite a bit of time updating the format to provide space for the changes. A number of folks delivered most of them. Special thanks to Shirley Joy who made all deliveries for Niagara County! Thank you to everyone who helped in any manner for your efforts. This is an important League service to our community.

We have four delegates to the League of Women Voters National Convention in Washington, D.C., from June 17 to 19 allotted to LWVBN, and one delegate who will carry credentials from another League: Ramona Gallagher, Janet Massaro, Terri Parks, Lori Robinson and Joan LoCurto. We're thrilled to have the representation of these fine League leaders to the national convention.

Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

LWVNY Regional Workshop April 9, 2016

We hope a good number of our members will attend the LWV New York State Regional Workshop from 10:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst 14226. LWVBN will host the workshop, which will include members from other Leagues. One among many important discussion topics: Get Out the Vote – Ways to Increase Voter Participation. Christopher Bopst will make a presentation about the New York State Constitutional Convention. He and Peter Galie, who will also speak, are two of the leading experts on our state constitution and the process that will require voter approval on the November 2017 ballot. Lunch is provided — there is a \$5 charge for materials. **You may register by fax 518-465-0812, phone 518-465-4162 with credit card or email Katrina@lwvny.org. Include your name, League, email address and phone number.**

Terri Parks

Great Decisions

Fran Holmes will launch our first Great Decisions discussion of 2016, *Shifting Alliances in the Middle East*, on Thursday, April 7, from 10:00 a.m. till noon at 1272 Delaware. "From a proxy war in Yemen to an ongoing civil war in Syria, a number of ongoing conflicts have shaken the traditional alliances in the Middle East to their core. As alliances between state and non-state actors in the region are constantly shifting, the U.S. has found itself between a rock and a hard place. In a series of conflicts that are far from black and white, what can the U.S. do to secure its interests in the region without causing further damage and disruption?" What a dilemma! Hope you can join us as we tackle it.

Bernice Baeumler



Lunch and Issues

Increasing the Minimum Wage is Good Economics



Wednesday, April 27, 2016

11:30 a.m.

Scotch 'n Sirloin

3999 Maple Road, Amherst, NY 14226

Speakers

Dr. Fred Floss Jr., SUNY Buffalo State, Dept. of
Economics & Finance
Sam Magavern, co-director, Partnership for the
Public Good (PPG)

Join us and learn the facts about how a boost in the minimum wage would affect the economy. Make reservations online at www.lwvbn.org or call the League office at 986-4898 by noon on Monday, April 25.

Luncheon cost is \$20. Pay at the door with cash or check to LWVBN. To attend the program only (no charge), call 986-4898.

Waterfront Committee Report

Action needed for the Outer Harbor

The Waterfront Committee continues to call for “public lands preserved and protected for public use” as the highest and best plan for the Outer Harbor. We are examining the proposed Green Code and find that the current version does not adequately protect the Outer Harbor from inappropriate development. Therefore, we are preparing an official LWVBN comment, and encourage everyone to send in individual comments as well.

The deadline for comments concerning the Green Code is April 22. Written comments should be mailed to Dinash Lal, Common Council Chief of Staff, Common Council Central Office, 1413 City Hall, Buffalo, NY 14202.

The next public hearing is at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, April 2, at the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, 450 Masten Avenue. Everyone, do come to this event — this will be the perfect opportunity to voice our concerns! And stay tuned for a possible press conference on this issue in early April.

Gladys Gifford, chair

Citizen Lobbying Workshop a great success!

On March 12, the League hosted a Citizen Lobbying Workshop at the Harlem Road Community Center. **Joan LoCurto** and **Judy Metzger** did an outstanding job organizing the morning and preparing a folder for each participant with useful information to assist in lobbying elected officials for whatever issue an individual might pursue and also for the League efforts to lobby New York State Senate and Assembly members for the issues selected by the state League this spring. The workshop began with a role-play of a visit to a state senator played by Karen Williyong and by two League members, Judy Metzger and Gladys Gifford. The questions and comments following their performance proved that participants were willing to offer their experiences in lobbying and sought guidance to help them.

Many people expressed their appreciation for the booklet, *Citizen Lobbyist*, that was in each folder. It is also available for purchase on the lwvny.org website in the Merchandise-Publications section. New member Nicole Matteson offered valuable suggestions about contacting officials from her experience working in a state senator’s office. It is better to call or write a personal letter than to respond to an online petition. However, please do respond to online requests by both the state and national Leagues. Your responses need not be long and involved. Make sure to cite specific bill numbers if you are urging action for specific legislation. Your responses should be written as an individual. Responses from the League are sent with board approval and carry the signature of a president and often the committee chair of the group that created them.

Terri Parks

Money in Politics Focus for 2016

New York's campaign finance system and closing the LLC loophole

LLCs are limited liability corporations. Companies create LLCs for many business reasons. But for some companies one reason alone is paramount — the ability to pour huge amounts of money into the coffers of political parties and candidates running for political office, frequently without revealing the names of the donors.

Back in 1996 the New York State Board of Elections (BOE) decided to treat LLCs as “individuals” under the state’s campaign finance laws, with spectacular results. When considered a corporation, an LLC could contribute up to \$5,000 to a candidate running for statewide office, but when considered an individual, an LLC could contribute up to \$60,800 to a candidate. In addition, companies could create any number of LLCs, each with the same sky-high contribution limits. Last year Glenwood Management, a huge real estate company that figured prominently in the criminal corruption trial of former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, created 22 separate LLCs, each with the ability to contribute the maximum amount to favored candidates and political parties. LLCs are equal opportunity donors. Both major parties and their elected officials benefit from the seemingly endless generosity of LLCs.

We know from our Money In Politics readings that quid pro quo corruption is difficult to prove. A nod and a wink may be sufficient. People are rightly suspicious when legislative favors are granted to certain entities or when constituent-supported legislation is defeated or not even discussed in committee. No wonder the LLC loophole has come to represent a failure of representative democracy in both fairness and transparency, and closing it the goal of reformers and many elected officials.

Here is how we can close the LLC loophole:

1. Change the Board of Elections definition. Last year the four commissioners of the BOE deadlocked 2 to 2 on a change proposal, leaving the existing definition in place. As a result the Brennan Law Center, good government groups and state legislators have sued the BOE to follow the law as written. Litigation is pending.

2. Through state legislation. In 2015 the New York State Assembly, with broad bipartisan support, passed legislation to close the LLC loophole but the bill died in the Senate Corporations Committee, chaired by Senator Michael Ranzano. This year the same bill (S.60/A and A.6975) has been reintroduced as part of the governor’s budget proposal.

The League of Women Voters supports S.60/A and A.6975. But everyone needs to speak out. League members in particular should call, write, email or visit their legislators to convey a message of strong League support for closing the LLC loophole.

Dare Thompson, president of the LWVNY, said, *“Closing the LLC loophole is an obvious and long overdue fix to limit contributions by special interests and help end ‘dark money’ in the electoral system. This one small step is just the first of many reforms needed to reduce corruption in Albany.”*

**Democracy is NOT
a spectator sport.**

Janet Massaro, chair, MIP Study Committee

The Safe Staffing Act: how it will help and what you can do



On February 18, Sarah Buckley and I addressed League members on legislation that's essential to both patients and registered nurses across the state. The Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act would require specific nurse-to-patient ratios on particular types of units in acute care facilities. The bill in the State Senate is S00782, sponsored by Kemp Hannon (R-Nassau); in the State Assembly it is A08580A, sponsored by Aileen Gunther (D-Orange).

The Safe Staffing Act is critical in many respects. Today, patients who are acutely ill require extraordinary levels of care and knowledge. Not long ago, they would have been in an ICU, but that is no longer the case. Abundant research shows that the higher the number of patients assigned to an RN, the greater their chances of morbidity, infection, readmission to the hospital or other undesirable outcomes.

We know for certain that nurses love their jobs, but they cannot take the pressure the current system places on them. They often stay long after their shift has ended to finish huge amounts paperwork. When they leave, they worry that they might have missed or forgotten something. They do not mind working hard — they just want sufficient time to complete their work and assure that their patients are well cared for and, most important, safe.

Registered nurses and enlightened elected officials have supported the Safe Staffing bill for many years. A similar law in California, has proven very successful for both patients and nurses.

We ask that you look up the bill. Read it carefully. Contact your legislators personally and encourage them to support this bill and get it passed. Your life or that of a loved one may depend on it!

Ann Converso

In memoriam

Dr. John Bozer, a longtime League member and distinguished cardiologist and clinical professor at the University of Buffalo Medical School, died on March 3, 2016. Dr. Bozer was a generous supporter of the League and usually attended several events each year with Joan Bozer, his wife of 65 years. When Joan was a candidate for the Erie County Legislature, her campaign committee called him the “King of Canvassers” because he walked door to door daily to support her candidacy. He continued to support Joan’s many civic initiatives throughout their marriage. I think he checked me out carefully the first time I volunteered to drive Joan to an event — he made sure I knew he was willing to do the honors. Theirs was a most special marriage and partnership of two people with shared interests and values and commitment to action.

Terri Parks

Education Committee

Visit to School 33

The Education Committee has been seeking local examples of successful initiatives amidst prevalent negative publicity about Buffalo's public schools. When a group of members visited School 33, the Bilingual Center, we observed a shining example of a dedicated principal, Miguel Medina, the only Spanish-speaking principal in the city system. He enthusiastically showed us the Reggio Emilia Approach, an early childhood program which values the young children's curiosity and eagerness.

This is the only public school in Buffalo using this approach, now in its third year of implementation. Groups of expert professional educators gained approval from the Buffalo Board of Education to use this program in the turnaround plan for School 33, a high-needs receivership school whose students are predominantly Hispanic, and where a large majority qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch.

Reggio Emilia is an innovative approach that values and respects the whole child, and recognizes that needs and interests within each community differ. Since children's natural curiosity drives their eagerness to understand the world, they should influence the direction of age-appropriate planned activities. The teachers work to learn what the children want to explore. The first year at School 33 focused on the environment. Play and learning are not separated. The second year focused on documentation. The children make drawings, paintings, and sculpture, and are guided to make books telling about their work. Using all of their senses, they use many objects to form the shapes of letters as they learn to write them. There are many displays explaining the values of the activities. Children's individual work fills the walls.

As soon as you enter the South Buffalo school, you face examples of bright, creative original artwork, such as the topographical map of New York made of used crayons standing upright. Each pre-K and kindergarten classroom has soft lighting, rugs and different work areas encouraging individual choices. Teaching in pre-K through grade 3 is conducted half in Spanish and half in English. The teachers are dedicated and committed, and willing to learn from each other. They have had much teacher development to implement the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

The social-emotional part of each child is considered very important. There are counselors and social workers, and there is a mini health clinic in the building.

Changes have been seen in behavior, vocabulary, story writing, incremental improvement, and artistic expressions. In June the school will have its second exhibition at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

Lee Tetkowski



Volunteer Services

Welcoming new citizens

New citizens sworn in at ceremonies in the U.S. Courthouse were welcomed in January by JoAnn Mecca and Patricia Wille, and in February by Judith Casassa and Elizabeth Preble.

On February 16, Kathleen McCarthy and Mary Egan braved snow-drifted streets to represent LWVBN at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site — in fact, they were the only representatives from any of the usual civic groups in attendance! While there, Mary Egan spoke with Stanton Hudson, executive director, who offered LWVBN the use of a room when it is not otherwise occupied. Committee chairs may find this useful. There is a parking lot.

Judith Clarke, volunteer coordinator

Join the Riverkeeper Shoreline Sweep on April 23



Please join fellow League members from 10:00 a.m. till noon on Saturday, April 23, as we help to clean up Unity Island in observation of Earth Week. Unity Island (formerly Squaw Island) is at 1726 Niagara Street near Amherst Street. Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper is organizing and handling registration for the annual event at 40 sites across Western New York. To register online, go to bnriverkeeper.org/cleanup, or call Jarrett Steffen at 716-852-7483. Be sure to click on Unity Island as your preferred site, or tell Jarrett. Print out the liability waiver and bring it with you to Unity Island. More questions? Email Ellen Gibson at ellengt@aol.com.



Membership Report

Welcome, new members!

At the Citizen Lobbying Workshop on March 12, we were happy to receive membership applications from Roberta Bothwell of Williamsville, Nora Mikes and Amelia Palka of West Seneca and Sara Vernon of Buffalo and delighted that most of them signed up to be part of the interview teams this spring. Nicole Matteson, who joined LWVBN recently, attended as well. We gave each new member a League pin to wear when representing the League. We're also pleased that Anne Creaven has rejoined us. To all, welcome to the League!

Sue Stievater, chair



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



April Meetings & Events

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

Issues Committee, Harlem Road Com. Cntr

Tues., 4/5, 7:00 p.m.

Buffalo Public Schools Presentation
The Buffalo History Museum.

Thur., 4/7, 10:00 a.m.

Great Decisions, League Office

Sat., 4/9, 4:00 p.m.

LWVNY Regional Workshop
Harlem Road Community Center

Mon., 4/11, 3:00 p.m.

Waterfront Committee, Central Library

Mon., 4/11, 4:00 p.m.

Board Meeting, League Office

Wed., 4/13, 1:30 p.m.

Local Gov., League Office

Sat., 4/23, 10:00 a.m.

Riverkeeper Shoreline Sweep

Wed., 4/27, 11:30 a.m.

Lunch and Issues
Scotch 'n Sirloin Restaurant

Thurs., 4/28, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee, League Office

REMINDER: The next deadline for the Voter is Friday, April 8. All copy, photos, etc., should be sent to Sandra Chelnov

Important: The League Office has a new phone number: 716-986-4898. The office will be open on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. till 3 p.m.; Mary Ann will usually work from home on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m. and Fridays from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.