



your
VOTER

Volume 23, Number 1

September 2017

Leadership Team

Judith Clarke
Nancy DeTine
Marian Deutschman
Lori Robinson
Terri Parks

Office

1272 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14209
716-986-4898
Fax 882-3797
Email lwvbn@lwvbn.org

Mary Ann Turkla

Office Manager

Office hours are flexible.
Always call before going
to the office.

LWVB/N website

www.lwvbn.org

LWVNYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWVUS website

www.lwv.org

Voter is published 11 times
a year.

The October Voter copy is
due Monday, September 11.
Send copy to Nancy DeTine
at nancy@nancydetine.com

The Coalition for Open Government presents

Open Government: Your Right to Know

On a regular basis, there are news stories regarding government officials not responding to Freedom of Information Law requests, violations of the Open Meetings Law, etc. It is important for concerned citizens and government employees to understand the legal requirements for obtaining information and conducting proper meetings. We all can learn from Bob Freeman, an expert in open government issues. The best part of this forum will be the opportunity to ask questions and hear his responses.

Guest speaker

Robert J. Freeman, executive director of the New York Committee on Open Government, a division of the New York Department of State

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Registration and refreshments provided by LWVBN at 5:00 p.m.

The Buffalo History Museum

One Museum Court, Buffalo, NY 14216

The museum is on Nottingham Terrace, just east of Elmwood Avenue at Route 198.

Free and open to the public.

League members, please register online at lwvbn.org and remember to wear your League name badge!

Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara

League of Women Voters Mission

The League of Women Voters is a good government organization that encourages informed and active participation in the political process, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League never supports political parties or candidates.

News from the Board

At the August meeting, the board completed drafting the questions for Vote411 and the 2017 Voters Guide. Work is underway for these important efforts. We welcome Nora Mikes and Amelia Palka to the Voters Guide Steering Committee.

The board accepted the charge to the Nominating Committee for next year's League election and appointed Judy Clarke, Shirley Joy and Nora Mikes as the board members on the committee. They will join the committee members elected at the June 2017 annual meeting — Janet Goodsell, Kathleen McCarthy, Lynne Vallone and chair Ramona Gallagher. It isn't too early to consider becoming a board member or officer next year. Contact any committee member to talk about joining a very special group of League members.

The board discussed our mission statement. At the national and state conventions, we were told that the general public doesn't understand the meaning of nonpartisan. We elected to change our mission statement to read: *The League of Women Voters is a good government organization that encourages informed and active participation in the political process, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League never supports political parties or candidates.*

Since 2004, the Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition (NREC) has represented the public's interest in Niagara River Greenway Projects funded by the Niagara Power Project Relicensing Settlement Agreement with the New York Power Authority. Our League is one of nine partner organizations that currently comprise the NREC. Ann Ingleman, who has represented the League on this body for many years, recently requested that we find an alternate to take her place at meetings she is unable to attend. We're pleased that Elizabeth Zausmer has agreed to be Ann's alternate for this important effort. NREC has a direct vote in the expenditure of \$100 million in river ecological funding over 50 years.

Kathie Macaluso found locations for the holiday party and annual meeting that needed to be approved prior to the board meeting. The Executive Committee approved holding the holiday party luncheon at Salvatore's Italian Gardens on Saturday, December 2, 2017. The annual meeting will be at the Fairdale Banquet Center on Saturday, June 9, 2018. Thank you, Kathie, for this fine effort. Mark your calendars for these two celebratory luncheons.

We also look forward to celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in New York State at the Twentieth Century Club on Thursday, November 9, 2017. Please mark your calendars for this luncheon. Details will be shared in the October Voter.

Terri Parks, Leadership Team Member

In Memoriam

We sadly report the recent loss of two League members.

Jean Flowers, a member since the 1980s, did timekeeping for the Hamburg Candidates Night and other forums regularly for 25 years. For several years she arranged for League members to cover naturalization ceremonies and was a volunteer for many years at WIVB News 4's Call 4 Action.

Joan Herold, a longtime member of the Natural Resources Committee, died peacefully in her sleep on August 13 after a long illness.

Money in Politics Update

Voter Fraud or Voter Suppression?



In a strongly worded statement, the League has condemned the administration's Election Integrity Commission as an undisguised attempt at voter suppression. Chris Carson, president of LWVUS, responded to the commission's first meeting with the following comments:

"This Commission is undermining the public's confidence in our elections. We've already seen thousands of voters cancel their registrations since Commission vice-chair and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach requested personal voter information from all 50 states.

"The members of this Commission have a history of voter suppression efforts. Despite their claims of having no agenda, they *have* entered into this voter 'study' with preconceived results. This fishing expedition for voter information is intended to lead to more voter suppression – not improving our election process.

"Democracy only works when people stand up and vote. The League of Women Voters urges the American people not to be intimidated by this Commission: stay enrolled and encourage others to register to vote.

"Our elections have integrity. This Commission does not."

Since its inception almost 100 years ago, the League of Women Voters has fought to protect and expand the right to vote for all American citizens. The newly created Election Integrity Commission is the latest attempt to limit voting rights, this time under the false claim of widespread voter fraud. Yet the consensus among academics, investigative journalists, court findings, citizen organizations, and elected officials of both parties is that deliberate voter fraud is exceedingly rare. The few errors that have been uncovered have been proven to be the result of misunderstanding information or administrative mistakes. Such problems are to be recognized and corrected, but erecting barriers to prevent thousands of eligible citizens from voting is not the solution.

Let's address the real problems facing our election system. Here are two that merit immediate attention.

When electronic voting machines were introduced after 2000 election, the League immediately helped to educate the public about their use and benefits. But these machines are now past retirement age and must be replaced, and cyber security is a growing concern that cannot be left unattended.

Some of us may still remember when League members worked tirelessly to pass the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (the "Motor Voter" Law), which made voter registration an easy, one-step process. Today the League is supporting the Automatic Voter Registration Act of 2017 (AVR) that will automatically sign up eligible voters when they interact with a government agency. Employing the latest technologies, this legislation will improve the accuracy of voter records and cut down on costs, and could add millions of eligible new voters, especially young people, to the rolls.

Guaranteeing free, fair, accessible voting for all eligible voters remains the League's mission, because, as Chris Carson said, "Democracy only works when people stand up and vote."

Money In Politics Committee

Election Services Report

This committee should be much busier than it has been. In July, I notified a BMHA housing aide that two sites were overdue for elections. Notices were mailed to the residents at these sites. For one meeting, Marianne Poprosky agreed to serve as a Spanish interpreter. For another meeting, we contracted out with the International Institute for a Spanish interpreter. The purpose of both of these meetings was to conduct nominations for their respective resident councils. In both instances not one resident from either site showed up.

At a third site that was overdue for elections, the BMHA housing aide requested that I contact the president of that site to initiate the process for nominations and elections. I telephoned the president repeatedly, but he never returned my calls. I then sent a letter to each officer,

requesting a meeting with him or her to discuss the procedure for moving on with this process. Again, no one would answer any communication from our League. The next step, I believe, is up to BMHA.

However, in late July we conducted a mailing for a nomination meeting for Perry. This meeting is scheduled for August 23, 2017. The Perry officers were more than willing to work with us to continue their democratic process.

I want to thank Mike Egan, Kathleen Macaluso, Sally Metzger and Judith Clarke for their extremely valuable assistance in getting out this 500-plus mailing.

Alan Dozoretz, Election Services Chair

Volunteer Coordinator's Report

Since the Summer Voter was published, LWVBN volunteers have attended five naturalization ceremonies. The June calendar was finished off by Mike Egan and Marianne Poprosky at a service on the USS Little Rock. Patricia Wille and Judy Weidemann represented the League at a Burchfield Penney Art Center ceremony in July; two other July ceremonies at the U.S. Courthouse were attended by Barbara Brooks, Elisabeth Zausmer, Janet Goodsell and Deborah Shiffner. We started the August calendar with a ceremony at the U.S. Courthouse attended by Elisabeth Zausmer and Kate Wagner.

A request was made to the state League for moderators to cover 13 forums that the State Education Department was running across the state to comment on the Every Student Succeeds

Act (ESSA) program being installed in the schools as a replacement for the plan based on the No Child Left Behind Act. Laura McDade and Agnes Annis moderated and kept time for the forum.

We have a number of new and returning members who have indicated an interest in representing LWVBN at naturalization ceremonies. I hope to see some new volunteers on our calendar. We have just six dates still open before the end of the year, including one volunteer for October 15, two volunteers each for November 2, 16, and 30, and December 7 and 21. Be sure to email Judith Clarke at jclarke272@aol.com if you are interested in any of those dates.

Judith Clarke, Volunteer Coordinator

Grand Islander Receives League of Woman Voters Award

Grand Island resident Roger Cook received the “Making Democracy Work” Award from the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, Saturday, June 3. Cook’s activism evolved from his early years in college in Michigan to Western New York, where he pursued a doctorate at the University at Buffalo. As director of the WNY Council on Occupational Safety and Health for 29 years, he was instrumental in forming coalitions like the OSHA-Environmental Network, the Ecumenical Task Force of the Niagara Frontier, the New York State Labor-Environmental Network and the New York State Coalition for Economic Justice.

More recently, Cook has been political chair of the Sierra Club, a member of the WNY Working Families Party executive board, and a co-facilitator of the Climate Justice Campaign of Western New York. On Grand Island, he’s been an active member of Quality Quest and presently serves on the Grand Island Economic Development Advisory Board.

“I want to commend the League of Women Voters who have so much to do with making our democracy work,” Cook shared in his acceptance speech. “Your candidate voter guides, your comprehensive studies and reports on legislative issues, your participation in issue campaigns and your candidate forums are an essential part of the political fabric of Western New York.”

Reflecting on the Clean Air Act – legislation passed during the Nixon Administration – Cook said that the League of Women Voters joined with stakeholders in the environmental, labor and public health arenas to stave off an assault on the act by President Reagan’s EPA administrator Ann Gorsuch. “Our local OSHA-Environmental Network was one of the strongest chapters in the country,” Cook said. He noted that Gorsuch became so unpopular that she resigned in 1983 and her deputy was jailed for lying to Congress. “The Clean Air Act and Superfund were saved, but today we see new assaults on environmental protections,” Cook noted. “Our president’s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords is but the latest in efforts to roll back environmental protections that began under the Nixon Administration.”

Cook ended his comments on an optimistic note. “Many in the majority party in the U.S. Senate and House know that climate change is real and must be addressed,” he said. “But they are intimidated by the prospect that the fossil fuel lobby will run candidates against them if they don’t protect their interests.” He noted that today hope lies at the state level where Gov. Cuomo’s Clean Energy Standard calls for 50 percent renewable energy by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050. “Over 100 New York state environmental justice, labor and community organizations in the NY Renews coalition support these benchmarks and are promoting the NYS Climate and Community Protection Act. The act would require both the private and public sector to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and create a ‘polluter penalty fund’ from fines collected on companies that fail to meet the emission limits. That fund, in turn, will be used to incentivize business investments in renewables, create hundreds of thousands of jobs, and provide a safety net for those workers, families and communities whose fossil fuel-based plants are phased out during the transition.”



“Think of it as a ‘Green New Deal’ for New Yorkers,” Cook concluded.

Reprinted with permission from the Island Dispatch, Grand Island, NY, Friday, June 9, 2017

Great Decisions

September 7: Latin America's Political Pendulum

Fran Holmes has chosen to lead our sixth Great Decisions topic for the year, Latin America's political pendulum, on Thursday, September 7, from 10 a.m. till noon at 1272 Delaware. "The pendulum of Latin American politics is swinging rightward once again. Yet as the 'pink tide' recedes, the forces of change have more to do with socioeconomics than ideology. Dramatic economic and political crises have coincided in countries like Brazil and Venezuela. Still, the final result for Latin America may be the emergence of centrist pragmatic modes of governance and with them, opportunities for the U.S. to improve relations. The new administration must look beyond the neoliberal model of the 1990s, and develop an approach to relations fit for the 21st century." Hopefully many of you will be back from summer vacations to rejoin us.

Bernice Baeumler

Membership Report

Time to Celebrate

We have gone back to January 2017 and are listing all those who have joined the League family since then, because this year, 2017, is the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in New York State.

It is exciting to add so many new names to the League's long list of distinguished members. Bring your vitality, enthusiasm and creative new ideas to all our activities and programs and together we can do even more to make democracy work for everyone.

Welcome, welcome, welcome! Ellen Tomczak, Barbara Dadey, Lynn Ellis, JoAnn Wahl, Lindsay Norval, Amy Glidden, Aleigha Carpenter, Kristen deGuehery, Karen Rhodes, Elaine Puchlerz, Mary Louise Clark, Charles Kaars, Suzanne Kirkland, Carolyn Mazur, Patricia Slive, Roberta Metrose, Ellie Lawson and Janet Zehr.

Find your niche, become involved and, most important, stick around.

Janet Massaro, Membership Chair

New Look for the Voter

Continuing our efforts to update and build our brand image, we are very excited to introduce a new design for the Voter. Special thanks to Krysta Doerfler, the professional designer who so generously volunteers her abundant talents, and to Terri Parks, Voter editor. And to Barb Jezioro, who has retired as layout editor, our sincere gratitude for years of dedication.

Nancy DeTine, Communications Chair

League Happy Hour on Wednesday for this month only

Immediately AFTER our September 27 program

Don't miss \$5 drinks and appetizers, plus a chance to continue the conversation about open government.

Wednesday, September 27, 7:45 p.m.

Providence Social, 490 Rhode Island St., Buffalo, NY 14213

Citizens' Budget Review Commission

Erie County Needs Your Perspective

The Summer Voter reported the unfortunate lack of women on this commission. We know there are many League members who are more than qualified to contribute valuable insights. We hope you'll consider applying. Simply send your resume and a cover letter to the chair of the Erie County Legislature (currently Hon. John J. Mills) at 92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor, Buffalo, NY 14202. For additional information, call 716-858-8850 or use this website link: <http://www2.erie.gov/legislature/index.php?q=erie-county-citizens-budget-review-committee>.

Lynda Stephens

Voter Service Report

As primary and general elections approach, plans are underway for candidate forums and voter registration events throughout the area.

Important dates are coming up as well:

September 12: Primary Day

September 26: National Voter Registration Day

October 13: Last day to register to vote in the general election

November 7: Election Day

If you have suggestions for possible voter registration events, please email me at margbrunson@yahoo.com.

Margaret Brunson, Voter Service Chair

Remember to wear your League Badges

We are so pleased with our new magnet-backed name badges! We hope you'll wear them not only at League events but whenever you represent the League. If you haven't received yours yet, we'll make sure it's waiting for you at the next League program you attend — just be sure to sign up online. You can also arrange with Mary Ann Turkla to pick it up at the League office. Badges for new members will be ordered once a year in February.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA

1272 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September 2017 Events and Meetings

Tuesday, 9/5, 4:00 p.m.

Issues Committee

Harlem Road Community Center
Amherst

Thursday, 9/7, 10:00 a.m.-noon

Great Decisions

League Office

Monday, 9/11, 4:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

League Office

Wednesday, 9/13, 1:30 p.m.

Local Government Committee

League Office

Wednesday, 9/13, 3:00 p.m.

Waterfront Committee Meeting

Central Library

Wednesday, 9/27, 5:00-7:30 p.m.

Open Government: Your Right to Know

Buffalo History Museum

Wednesday, 9/27, 7:45 p.m.

League Happy Hour

Providence Social

Thursday, 9/28, 1:30 p.m.

Education Committee

League Office