



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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Friday, May 6, 2016

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA
PRESENTS:

**INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE
IS GOOD ECONOMICS**



Wednesday, April 27, 2016
11:30 a.m.

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

Speakers

Dr. Fred Floss, Chair, Department of Economics & Finance,
SUNY Buffalo State

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. *All guests please make reservations by April 25.*

This event is open to the public. Students especially welcome.

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.

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Presidents' Report



There were 24 members of our League at the State League Regional Workshop on April 9 at the Harlem Road Community Center. We were especially happy to have several of our newest League members present and contributing to the discussions of the day. It was a good opportunity to connect with League leaders from the Greater Rochester and Chautauqua County Leagues as well as with our State President, Dare Thompson, and key staff from the state office.

The busy day was highlighted by a presentation about the history of constitutional conventions in New York State by Christopher Bopst, a leading authority on New York State's Constitution. The November 2017 ballot will include the ballot proposition for voters to select whether a constitutional convention should be convened for the New York State Constitution. This proposition is required every 20 years. LWVBN will invite Christopher to present his comments at a public forum sometime this coming year.

The 2015 Nominating Committee, chaired by Judy Weidemann, presented a slate of officers at the April board meeting. Many thanks to Judy, Ramona Gallagher, Kathleen McCarthy, Joan Mondul, Lori Robinson, Judy Clarke and Mary Herbst for your outstanding work to present a complete slate of able leaders for LWVBN. Once again the committee has selected a good mix of people who will continue on the board and who will join it as new members. Many thanks for your thoughtful and able work on behalf of LWVBN.

Many thanks also to the Budget Committee for its fine work to craft a budget that proposes judicious use of funds for League program events this coming year without proposing any increase in dues. One key reason for this is the work that Alan Dozoretz and his committee do to facilitate elections for the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. Thank you, Amy Witryol, our most able Budget Committee chair, Margaret Brunson, Joan LoCurto and Lori Robinson.

One important use of the state League Education Foundation funds is the annual Students Inside Albany conference. LWVBN will be well represented this year by Buffalo City Honors School junior, Sage Cihak. Thank you, Janet Goodsell, for obtaining applications from two well-qualified students for this year's program. It was difficult for the board to choose between them. We look forward to learning about Sage's experience at the annual meeting.

The board approved the appointment of Shirley Joy as a member of the Finance Committee. This brings the committee to its required total of five members. Shirley will join Judy Clarke as members who may be appointed annually to serve on the committee. The Finance Committee policy requires the finance chair, treasurer and a president to serve also to monitor our investments and our year-to-date income and expenses.

Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

Great Decisions for May: The Rise of ISIS

Fran Holmes has kindly stepped up to bat once again to lead our second discussion for *Great Decisions 2016, The Rise of ISIS*, which will take place Thursday, May 5, from 10 a.m. till noon at 1272 Delaware Avenue. "Born out of an umbrella organization of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) burst onto the international stage after it seized Fallujah in December 2013. Since then the group has seized control of a number of critical strongholds in the country and declared itself a caliphate, known as the Islamic State. Still, the question remains: What is ISIS, and what danger does it pose to U.S. interests?" This is probably one of our hottest topics ever. Hope everyone can attend!

Bernice Baeumler

Money in Politics Update: New LWVUS positions on amending the U.S. Constitution

The LWVUS board has announced new positions that evaluate U.S. constitutional amendment proposals and set guidelines to govern the constitutional convention process under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. (Please note, these positions do not apply to the N.Y. State Constitution, unless adopted by the State League.)¹ They are as follows:

Considerations for Evaluating U.S. Constitutional Amendment Proposals

The LWVUS (“The League”) will only support a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution if it advances and conforms to an LWVUS position.

The League believes the following should be considered in identifying an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment:

- a) Whether the public policy objective addresses matters of such acute and abiding importance that the fundamental charter of our nation must be changed;
- b) Whether the amendment as written would be effective in achieving its policy objective;
- c) Whether the amendment would either make our political system more democratic or protect individual rights;
- d) Whether the public policy objective can be achieved by a legislative or political approach that is less difficult than a constitutional amendment;
- e) Whether the public policy objective is more suited to a constitutional and general approach than to a statutory and detailed approach.

Position on Constitutional Conventions under Article V of the U.S. Constitution

The League believes an Article V Constitutional Convention should be called only if the following conditions are in place:

- a) The Constitutional Convention must be transparent and not conducted in secret. The public has a right to know what is being debated and voted on;
- b) Representation at the Constitutional Convention must be based on population rather than one state, one vote, and delegates should be elected rather than appointed;
- c) Voting at the Constitutional Convention must be by delegate, not by state;
- d) The Constitutional Convention must be limited to a specific topic;
- e) Only state resolutions on a single topic count when determining if a Constitutional Convention should be called;
- f) The validity of state calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention must be determined by the most recent action of the state. If a state has enacted a rescission of its call, that rescission must be respected by Congress.

1. Because of time constraints, LWVBN did not participate in the Constitutional Amendment Study, which was the second part of the Money In Politics Study. We thank the 246 Leagues throughout the country that did participate and for the new positions that we can now use in our advocacy and lobbying activities. Complete position statements are on the LWVUS website.

Volunteer Services

New Guidelines for LWVBN participation at naturalization ceremonies

We are recommending some changes in the League's participation in naturalization ceremonies at the U.S. Courthouse that should increase the number of voter registration forms we are able to have completed by new citizens:

1. League volunteers should try to remind the presiding judge to tell the new citizens, before they are dismissed, that volunteers from the League of Women Voters are there to assist with voter registration forms.
2. Following the ceremony one League volunteer should go to the Jurors Area on the 2nd floor (straight down the hall after exiting the elevator). The second volunteer should remain in the courtroom to assist any new citizens still there. After the courtroom is clear this second volunteer should join the first in the 2nd floor Jurors Area. In both cases it is important to CIRCULATE among the new citizens, approaching them to offer assistance or inquiring if they have filled out the forms handed to them in the courtroom. For most ceremonies Mr. Michael Cecchini, Deputy County Clerk, may be there to pick up the completed voter registration forms. His back-up is Lyn Wilson. You should plan on being at the courthouse until about 10:45 a.m.

Volunteers at other sites such as the Buffalo History Museum or Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site are also encouraged to remind the judge that the League is present and available to assist. Again, do CIRCULATE among the new citizens asking if they have completed their forms and offering help.

With this kind of assertiveness, Joyce Bol was able to garner 20 new voter registration forms at a recent courthouse ceremony. It does require a bit more effort, but the payoffs are huge!

Subsidies available for parking

The LWVBN board has also approved a small subsidy of \$5.00 to help with parking fees. An invoice form will be sent out with your Instructions and Greetings. Send the form with receipts to LWVBN, 1272 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209. The subsidy is retroactive to July 1, 2015. If you participated in a ceremony and incurred parking fees between that date and this issue of the Voter you may not have receipts. Simply enter the dates you participated and you will be reimbursed. As always, we encourage the use of public transportation. Consider the option of parking at the League office and taking the bus from there. There is a bus a few minutes after 8:00 a.m. that stops right at the corner of Mohawk Street. The bus stop to return is directly across the street from the courthouse.

The past month has been a busy one for our volunteers. JoAnn Mecca and Janet Goodsell helped with the Enterprise Charter School Lottery on April 1. Marian Deutschman gave a presentation at the Women's Network Group (WiNG) at Sodexo on March 17. Naturalization ceremonies included eight LWVBN volunteers: Kathleen Macaluso, Judy Weidemann, Josette Cunningham, Judy Huber, Joyce Bol, Ann Converso, Judy Casassa and Marian Deutschman.

Our volunteers are what make the LWVBN successful in fulfilling its mission. Their efforts are greatly appreciated!

Judy Clarke, Voter Services



Membership news

Our League has five new members this month. We want to welcome Marja Nordman, Natalie Photiadis and Patrick Hill of Buffalo, Elise Fay Murphy of Amherst and Mary V. "Ginna" O'Leary of Orchard Park.

Sue Stievater, Membership Committee Chair

Buffalo Public Schools Forum

New Education Bargain with Students and Parents is the title of a forum that was presented by the League at the History Museum, Tuesday April 5, 2016.

As concerned citizens, we know that educating our young people is the key to creating and maintaining strong communities as well as our democracy. We are also aware of the many problems public education faces in these challenging times, so it was good to hear about some positive efforts to prepare children to read and thereby succeed.

Anne Botticelli, Chief Academic Officer, Buffalo Public Schools, described the push to insure that Buffalo students will read well by the time they leave third grade. Statistics show that many children who lack reading skills by the end of third grade do not graduate from high school. For this effort to succeed, according to Botticelli, smaller classes, coaching of both students and teachers, and wrap-around services are necessary. With this help, families can navigate the system and children can get an education.

Additional panel members included Yvonne Minor-Ragan, recently retired president of *Buffalo Promise Neighborhood*, who pioneered a similar program at Westminster Community School and discussed methods for encouraging parents to get involved. Anne S. Ryan, Executive Director, *Read to Succeed Buffalo*, described how RTSB promotes early childhood literacy by working in settings ranging from home based childcare centers to pre-kindergarten and elementary schools. Miguel Medina, Principal, School 33 - Bilingual Center, described the *Reggio Emilia* approach to learning that utilizes a child's own interests and curiosity as sources for developing reading, vocabulary and writing skills in the early grades. The panelists also participated in a question and answer period that followed.

Dorothy Tao, Education Committee

Important Opportunity

League of Women Voters of New York State Advocacy Training/Lobby Day

Come to Albany and learn about our advocacy agenda, hear directly from the Issue Specialists about our expected action for the 2016 legislative session, and lobby your own legislators!

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Presentations by issue specialists

1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.: Members lobby own legislators (appointments must be made by attendees in advance)

3 p.m. – 5 p.m.: Observe Senate and Assembly in session

Location: Cornerstone at the Plaza, Empire State Plaza, Albany, N.Y. (former Sign of the Tree Restaurant)

Directions and parking: information to come

Presenters will include:

Dare Thompson, LWVNYS President; Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director; and LWVNYS Issue Specialists including election reform, women's issues, ethics, financing education, transportation, health care and more

Registration fee: \$15 (includes lunch)

Registrations must be received by **May 6, 2016**, and can be made online at:

https://secure.lgfforms.com/form_engine/s/i_ElCaUOhYyrY6YYjXYp0g



OF BUFFALO/NIAGARA
1272 Delaware Ave, Buffalo, NY 14209-2401



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



May Meetings & Events

Tues., 5/3, 4:00 p.m.
Issues Committee, Harlem Road Com. Cntr

Tues., May 10, 10 a.m.
Advocacy Training/Lobby Day, Albany, NY

Wed., 5/4, 3:00 p.m.
Waterfront Committee, Central Library

Wed., 5/11, 1:30 p.m.
Local Gov., League Office

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

Thurs., 5/26, 1:30 p.m.
Education Committee, League Office

Mon., 5/9, 4:00 p.m.
Board Meeting, League Office

REMINDER: The next deadline for the Voter is Friday, May 6. All copy, photos, etc., should be sent to Sandra Chelnov (chelnovs@gmail.com).

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.