



The League of Women Voters
of Buffalo/Niagara

VOTER

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Reflections on Politics 2016



Bob McCarthy, political reporter for The Buffalo News
Thursday, November 17, at 6:30 p.m.
Harlem Road Community Center auditorium
Coffee and light refreshments at 6 p.m.

Bob McCarthy has covered all major elections in New York State and Western New York since 1992, including 14 national conventions. He was named by Brill's Content magazine as one of New York's 10 most influential political journalists, and is often a panelist for local and statewide debates.

Register for the event online at lwvbn.org or by calling the League office at 986-4898.

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 and Board Actions



Members should have received the printed 2016 Voters Guide in the mail by now. As in past years, we are disappointed that — despite repeated contacts — a number of candidates didn't respond to our invitation to participate. We urge folks connected to the Internet to access our www.Vote411.org or the League website, www.lwvbn.org, to read responses to more questions from candidates. Two candidates responded to Vote411 too late to be included in the print guide: Shelly Schratz and Caroline Wojtaszek. While candidates who have no opposition often don't respond, you'll see that some candidates with no opposition do. Please consider thanking candidates for their participation in a brief note or response on their website.

The 2016 Voters Guide was produced and distributed through the work of these current members of the Voters Guide Steering Committee: Barb Jezioro, Krysta Doerfler, Nancy DeTine, Mary Ann Turkla, Flora Summe, Margaret Brunson and Terri Parks. Sara Vernon and Ramona Gallagher helped make follow-up calls to candidates who didn't respond. Laura McDade again coordinated the distribution team effort for the 23,000 Voters Guide copies. Team members are recognized in this issue of the Voter (see page 6). We again appreciate a grant from the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation that helps with the cost to print the Voters Guide.

Whenever we mention our connection with the League of Women Voters, someone usually mentions that they depend on the League for useful information about the candidates on their ballot and the responses to our questions that the candidates provide.

Prior to the short board meeting on October 17, we conducted a consensus for the state League Legislative Procedures Update. The variety of opinions expressed made it a most interesting experience. League members do see things from a wide perspective and are open to share their views and concerns. We found that what seemed at first glance to be a very straightforward consensus actually contained many things that complicated our response. That led to lively discussions. What a pleasure to be among thoughtful people who can disagree without being disagreeable about issues that interest and concern them. We send many thanks to everyone who participated.

Judy Metzger & Terri Parks

September Event

Justice Sconiers Energizes Lovely League Luncheon

Retired Judge Rose Sconiers — a former justice of the State Appellate Court and State Supreme Court and former City Court judge — addressed an audience of about 70 people, predominantly women, on September 16 at the stunning Twentieth Century Club. The luncheon event was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, the Western New York Chapter of the Women's Bar Association and the Buffalo Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners.

Judge Sconiers provided powerful and empowering personal stories as examples of the four guidelines she recommends to “get more women to the table – to expand the role of women in governance.” Her initiatives are Power, Persistence, Planning and Passion. She stressed the importance of fighting, being strong, not being afraid to lose, and taking risks. “Don't be afraid to get involved with politics, because the dynamics of politics exist everywhere,” she advised, adding that women need commitment and broad shoulders to keep up the fight and that having a good mentor is helpful. She further advised that women should work to gain name recognition, especially if they are running for political office. She engaged the audience to participate by having volunteers share their own personal stories relating to four questions that were distributed to the audience, all related to perceptions of women and power.

An inspiring and delicious League luncheon was enjoyed by all.

Marian Deutschman, Chair, Local Government Committee

Voter Service Committee

Voter Service Report for September and October

Voter Registration:

August 3: Buffalo History Museum Food Truck Rodeo.

Distributed two voter registration forms and answered quite a few questions.

Ramona Gallagher & Margaret Brunson with two volunteers from UNYTS

August 27 & 28: Elmwood Art Festival

Ten voter registration forms.

Janet Massaro & friends

August 28: Burchfield Nature Preserve in West Seneca

Ten voter registration forms and lots of questions.

Agnes Annis & friends

September 10: Health fair at New Era Field (formerly Ralph Wilson Stadium)

Ten voter registration forms.

Mike Egan, Liz Zausmer & Amelia Palka with volunteers from UNYTS

September 17: Miss Buffalo Cruise with the WNY Muslims.

Nora Mikes & Amelia Palka reported a delightful time and attended another event the next day.

October 4: Response to Love Center (near the Broadway Market)

Another health fair, and one with a very a large turnout: five voters were registered and many, many questions were answered.

Terri Parks & Margaret Brunson

October 6: Niagara County Community College

Registered 25 students and one professor. Delivered 18 completed forms to Niagara County and eight more to Erie County Board of Elections. We talked to a lot of students. Set up two tables in different parts of the Student Center.

Margaret Brunson, Pat Witte, Shirley Joy & Pat's sister and brother-in-law

Public Speaking:

Monday, September 19, West Seneca Library

Topic: The coming election and the pros and cons of the 2017 proposition about the New York State Constitutional Convention. Registered two more voters.

Margaret Brunson

Candidate Forums:

October 26: Union-Prospect Elementary School in Hamburg

Laura McDade, chairman; Marian Deutschman, moderator; Jean Flowers, timekeeper

October 28: Amherst Senior Center

Judy Metzger, League contact; Ann Marie Malachowski, moderator; Judy Huber, timekeeper; Sally Metzger, helper

Margaret Brunson, Voter Service Chair

Welcome to Our New Members

The following members have joined our League since our last newsletter was printed: returning member Joan Sarow and new member Laura Rao of Buffalo.

Money in Politics Committee

Part 2: Evaluating New York State's Campaign Finance Regulations

Last month in the Voter we asked you to consider New York State's existing campaign finance regulations. *Thank you* to those who submitted comments and to everyone who thought about campaign finance regulations that our state might have in place. The answers are not straightforward. Many end with a "yes, but..." One thing is certain. State regulations fall short of League goals for campaign finance reform. Here is how the state stacks up:

State law limits campaign contributions by individuals and corporations, but ... the limits are incredibly high – an individual is limited to \$5,000 to a presidential candidate but can contribute up to \$60,800 (as of 2013) to a candidate for governor! There are no contribution limits to political parties, or restrictions for lobbyists or state contractors. In fact, there are so many loopholes in the current law, it makes a mockery of the term "contribution limits."

Candidate spending can be limited when part of a voluntary publicly financed campaign program.

Candidate campaign committees are required to periodically report contributions, but ... **identifying the source of contributions is difficult**, as is pinpointing the source of money spent on political advertisements. California shines a bright light on disclosure by requiring that the names of the top money contributors be listed on political advertisements.

Many of New York's problems rest with the **New York State Board of Elections, which is charged with enforcing the state's campaign finance laws**. It is not independently administered. The board's structure — composed of four members, two from each of the two major political parties — leads to deadlock and inaction on critical issues. The board does not routinely conduct audits of campaign finance reports. Complaints are delayed or ignored and almost never investigated. Even if serious violations are uncovered, few penalties are levied and fewer are collected. In 2013 the Moreland Commission on Public Corruption concluded, "The board has failed to carry out its duty to enforce the Election Law, enabling the culture of corruption in Albany." (Commission's Summary Report, page 9)

Although Governor Cuomo gave his support for **public financing of elections in the state**, no credible action on this front has been taken. But ... New York City has had public financing of elections since 1988. The program is highly successful and has proven to be efficient and effective. Many groups, including League, regard the city's public financing program as a possible model for a statewide program.

Clearly New York State has a way to go to achieve meaningful campaign finance reform.

Stay informed. Stay engaged. Remember, if we do not demand reform of our elected officials, it will not happen.

Janet Massaro, chair, MIP Committee

Waterfront Committee

Our Outer Harbor Walking Tour

Our Outer Harbor enjoyed a successful first public meeting on September 28 — more than 200 people were at RiverWorks to hear and participate in the discussion. The next public meeting by Our Outer Harbor will be set for mid-November. Will the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation insist that mountain bike paths be installed in the Bell Slip area? Will the City of Buffalo, under the new Green Code, allow housing across from the entrance to Times Beach? The next meeting of the Waterfront Committee is set for Wednesday, November 30, 3-4 p.m., in the cafe area of the Central Library in downtown Buffalo. All are welcome!

Gladys Gifford, Waterfront Committee Chair



HOLIDAY PARTY AND PROGRAM

Seasons' Eatings

Join us for the League's Holiday Party & Program on Saturday, December 3, 2016, at Rizotto Ristorante, 930 Maple Road, Williamsville, NY 14221. Use the rear entrance to reach the banquet room.

A cash bar will be available at 11:30 a.m. and lunch will be served at noon.

Reservations for a Petite Filet, Chicken Milanese or a Vegetarian Selection must be received by November 22, 2016. Complete reservation form and mail it with a check payable to LWVBN to the League office, 1272 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14209.

Cost: Members \$27.00
Guests \$30.00



We plan to recognize our new members and those folks who have volunteered this past year.

Reservations for the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara Holiday Party & Program December 3, 2016

Names, as you would like them written on name tags:	Mark X for each League member	Selection:		
		Chicken Milanese	Petite Filet	Vegetarian
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Total amount of check payable to LWVBN \$ _____

Phone number: _____



GENERAL ELECTION



Election Protection Hotline

This year, with there being talk of rigged elections, it's important that we all know about the Election Protection hotlines: 866-OUR-VOTE (led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law), 888-VE-Y-VOTA (led by NALEO Educational Fund) and 888-API-VOTE (led by APIAVote and Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC). These nationwide non-partisan toll-free voter assistance helplines are available to any and all. Voters can call the hotlines to receive answers to their questions and report problems to be addressed by trained Election Protection volunteers. Call them if you notice any problems at your polling place when you vote on November 8.

Voters Guide Distribution Committee

Delivering the 2017 Voters Guides to all of Erie and Niagara Counties

What a crew!! The League owes a large THANK YOU to the following members and friends:

Wynnie Fisher, Judy Weidemann, Dorothy Tao, Paul Ziebarth, Sally Metzger, Jim and Judy Metzger, Arlene Miles and John Segman, Fran Holmes, Alice Say, Alan Dozoretz, Janet Massaro, Ramona Gallagher, JoAnn Mecca, Dot Brown, Lynne Vallone, Dick Hemann, Sue Fay Allen, Carl Klingenschmitt, Peg Mergenhagen, Mary Scheeder, Marian Deutschman, Judy Huber, Pat Costanzo, Janet Goodsell, Lee Tetkowski, Mike Fitzpatrick, Joan Photiadis, Beth Kauffman, Bonnie and Harold Asch, Carolyn Kerr, Joan Broderick, Mike Egan, Dorothy Westheimer, Phyllis Banas, Betty and Jack Howell, Laura McDade, Joan Mondul, Agnes Annis, Nora Mikes and Shirley Joy.

THANK YOU----THANK YOU----THANK YOU----THANK YOU----THANK YOU

League of Women Voters Education Fund

Donor Profile: Joan Bozer

“Why think small?!” This is a sentiment Joan Bozer often expresses. Whether it is in her work for the environment, her county, women’s history, or the League, Joan is no stranger to making a big plan and then rolling up her sleeves and getting a job done. She thinks big and works hard for those things she values. Thankfully, the League is one of the organizations she believes in. Joan is devoted to community service and is often called upon to rally support for causes in the Buffalo area and around the state. She served on the Erie County Legislature for nine terms from 1978 to 1995. But before that, she was president of the LWV of Buffalo. Her experience as president for the LWV of Buffalo, as well as leadership in other community organizations, led to her interest in elective office.

In addition to her board service in Buffalo, Joan also served on the LWVNYS board. During her time on the state board, she chaired “Briefings on the Status of Human Rights for Women Around the World” at the United Nations and since that time, she has maintained her passionate support of the state League and its projects. She is a leadership donor to the state League and has opened her home to invite others to discuss League initiatives and, most important, to develop plans to combat voter apathy and increase voter turnout at the polls.

“I’m very alarmed by the low percentage of eligible voters that go to vote in New York. [Our state ranked 49th in voter turnout during the 2015 general election.] It is a sad state of affairs.” She uses any platform she can to encourage voter participation and continues to make leadership level gifts to the LWVNYS Education Foundation because “the League is a powerful force for voter education. The more support we give to the state League, the more we can do to get people to the polls.” Joan believes the League has so much potential to do good in New York State because our mission to make sure all people have their voices heard is powerful. “The League is an inspirational force advocating for New Yorkers to vote and to be educated on issues and candidates. We need to advocate more strongly than ever before to make sure we are visible and to increase voter understanding of what a privilege it is to decide on one’s own government.” With the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in New York State coming up in 2017 and the 100th anniversary of the League in New York approaching in 2019, Joan hopes we can use these important anniversaries to gain even more visibility for the cause and reinvigorate New York citizens around participation in government. Knowing Joan, she will find a way to make sure this happens!

Reprinted from the League of Women Voters of New York State 2016 Education Fund Annual Report

October Event

October "Big Media and Big Money" Panel Discussion a Big Hit

What is the effect of big media and big money on political campaigns? The October 6 meeting* at the United Way provided insights from the moderator, the knowledgeable panelists and an attentive audience:

Moderator: Lee Coppola, retired dean of the School of Journalism, St. Bonaventure University. He is a veteran journalist as well as a federal prosecutor.

Panelists: James Gardner, interim dean of the UB School of Law and distinguished professor
Jim Heaney, editor and executive director of the Investigative Post

Carole McNall, assistant professor at the Jandoli School of Communication at St. Bonaventure University

Insights from the session:

Social media has played a greater role in the last two or three presidential elections, getting more information into the hands of those who are more difficult to reach through traditional media, namely the young millennials. For example, Bernie Sanders benefited from the re-tweeting of messages.

Big money buys influence and persuasion and mobilizes the base of supporters. One example of effective mobilization is organized labor.

Corruption was defined as legalized influence of politicians where lobbyists even write the legislation.

The Supreme Court decision on Citizens United removed a 100-year-old ban on contributions, thus allowing corporations to contribute as much as they want directly, rather than through PACs. The result was an increase in contributions from \$243 million in 2008 to \$800 million after the decision. Now, no state has a ban on corporate spending.

Checking the \$3 donation to campaigns on your income tax return generates an insufficient amount; therefore, candidates such as Obama declined using it for the required costly marketing campaigns.

We are more informed and less educated. One of the reasons is that a balance of information is not available online even though research and distribution of information is better now.

Our society has been "dumbed down" with focus on celebrity, sports and entertainment. Not unlike food choices, we need balance in our information rather than a steady diet of entertainment. We need to resist dependence on only one media source of information and sound bites taken out of context.

The panelists reminded us that everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts. Their recommendation was to GET INVOLVED!

Marian Deutschman, Chair, Local Government Committee

**This meeting was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, the Western New York Chapter of the Women's Bar Association, the Erie County Bar Association, and the University at Buffalo Law School.*

Great Decisions

Joan Mondul offered to lead our last topic for 2016, Cuba and the U.S., on Thursday, November 3, from 10 a.m. till noon at 1272 Delaware. "The U.S. announced in December 2014 that, after decades of isolation, it has begun taking major steps to normalize relations with Cuba, its neighbor to the south. The announcement marks a dramatic shift away from a policy that has its roots in one of the darkest moments of the Cold War — the Cuban missile crisis. Although the U.S. trade embargo is unlikely to end any time soon, American and Cuban leaders today are trying to bring a relationship once defined by a crisis in the 1960s into the 21st century." Please note: So far six people have signed up for the 2017 Great Decisions briefing book. The price is still \$25 but they are also offering a large print copy for \$15 which has text only (no color or pictures). There may still be a 10% discount but only if 10 regular copies are ordered. Since Great Decisions does not meet in December, January or February, I don't plan on ordering until February 1, so participants have until then to decide by calling Bernice Baeumler.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



November Meetings & Events

Thursday, 11/3, 10:00 a.m.
Great Decisions, League Office

Tues., 11/8 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
General Election

Wed., 11/9 1:30 p.m.
Local Government Committee, League office

Mon., 11/14 4:00 p.m.
Board meeting, League office

Thurs., 11/17 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Post-election reflections with Robert McCarthy
Harlem Road Com. Ctr., 4255 Harlem Rd., Amherst

Tues., 11/22
Reservations due for the Holiday Party & Program

Wed., 11/30, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Waterfront Committee, Central Library cafe area

Thurs., 11/24 1:30 pm
Education Committee, League Office

Be sure to check your email and our website for other events as they are scheduled!

League meetings are open to all! Come and bring a friend to learn what we're doing.

Reminder

The deadline for the Voter coincides with the date of the monthly board meeting. The deadline for the December/early January Voter is Monday, 11/14/2016. Please send committee reports, event write-ups, photos, meeting notices, and other submissions to our copy editor, Nora Mikes, by email to events@lwvbn.org