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The Voter will be published six times this year. Send copy by the second Monday in October for the November-December edition to [lwvoter@verizon.net](mailto:lwvoter@verizon.net).



**September 21, 2023  
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
Alchemy Wine & Beer  
20 Union St, Blasdell, NY 14075**

Purpose: A social gathering for members of LWVB/N and anyone interested in learning about the League to connect, discuss opportunities for volunteering and leadership possibilities, introduce new members, showcase the organization's work, and discuss future plans.

Frequency: Monthly social events on the third Thursday of each month.

Focus: Traveling to different areas within the two counties to better understand local needs. The locations will be shared in the member email updates from [media@lwvbn.org](mailto:media@lwvbn.org). Save these dates.

- October 19, 2023, Niagara Falls
- November 16, 2023, East Amherst/ Clarence
- December 21, 2023, Buffalo

**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.

## **President's Letter**

Dear Members and Friends,

Another important election is happening this November. Many of our local representatives, including the Buffalo City Council, the Erie County Executive, and officials in various localities are up for reelection. All politics start local! It is our mission to Get Out The Vote – GOTV. When I first joined the League, I wondered what station that was. I have since learned that it is just as important as registering voters. We can all start now talking to our friends and family about making a plan to VOTE.

September 19 is National Voter Registration Day; we are planning to have a big push that day with a presence at various locations to help citizens register or check that their registration is up to date so that they will have a smooth voting experience in November. If you are available on Tuesday, September 19, to spend a couple of hours talking to people, please [email the Volunteer Coordinator](#) for more information.

At recent board meetings, we have confirmed the following committee chairs:

Voter Services: Barbara Gunderson

Governance: Susan Czynny

Communications: Amy Moritz

Finance: Deborah Shiffner

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI): Liz Zausmer and Timothy Priano

Membership: Timothy Priano was also appointed to a one-year term on the board.

Deborah Shiffner and Nancy DeTine were appointed to join Ramona Gallagher, Amy DiChristina, and Rebecca LaCivita on the Nominating Committee for 2023-2024.

Thank you all for your dedication and enthusiasm for the League!

The board also approved the purchase of retractable banners with our LWVBN logo, so when we are out tabling everyone will know who we are. Please contact me at [president@lwvbn.org](mailto:president@lwvbn.org) with any questions, concerns or ideas regarding our local program.

*In League, Lori Robinson*

## **Upcoming Events Hosted by the League of Women Voters of New York State**

### **Endocrine Disruptors in Plastic**

On October 3, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., join the League of Women Voters of New York State, Beyond Plastics, and Bedford 2030 on Zoom for a conversation about endocrine disruptors with John Peterson 'Pete' Myers, Ph.D., CEO and Chief Scientist of Environmental Health Sciences; New York State Senator Pete Harckham, Chair of the New York Senate Environmental Conservation Committee; and Megan Wolff, Ph.D., MPH, Policy Director at Beyond Plastics. People may be exposed to endocrine-disrupting chemicals through everyday food and beverages consumed, pesticides applied, and cosmetics used. Endocrine disruptors can decrease or increase normal hormone levels or alter the natural production of hormones in the body. Even low doses of endocrine-disrupting chemicals may be unsafe. The body's normal endocrine functioning involves very small changes in hormone levels, yet we know even these small changes can cause significant developmental and biological effects. [Click here to register.](#)

### **Our Vote – Our Power**

Join us for a Candid Discussion About the Women's Suffrage Movement and its Impact. On September 20, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., the LWVNYS and the Queens County Women's Bar Association will talk about the history of women's suffrage in New York and what's happening in today's legislative landscape. [Click here to register.](#)

## Great Decisions

**For September:** The Great Decisions group will meet on Thursday, September 7, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom to discuss Chapter 6 in the 2023 Great Decisions book: **“Famine: a renewed threat in the 21st century?”** The Foreign Policy Association, which sponsors this discussion group nationwide, says this about the topic:

*Fears of global food shortages have followed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has disrupted grain shipments from the major grain producer. But what about countries and regions that were suffering before this impending shortage? How is famine defined, and how is it different from simple food shortages? What if any remedies are there? By Daniel Maxwell*

Joan Mondul will moderate this discussion.

**For October:** The Great Decisions discussion group will meet on Thursday, October 5, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom to discuss Chapter 7 in the 2023 Great Decisions book: **“Iran at a crossroads.”** The Foreign Policy Association, which sponsors this discussion group nationwide, says this about the topic:

*By the fall of 2022, Iran was in a state of turmoil due to widespread protests against government-enforced wearing of the hijab, a failing economy, an ineffective new president, and the looming succession of the country’s leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Abroad, renewal of the Iran nuclear deal seemed doubtful and tensions remain high between Iran, Israel, and Arab states. Many Iranians have lost hope of a better future, and the country seems at a crossroads. How should the United States deal with it? By Lawrence Potter*

Bernice Baeumler will moderate this discussion.

Contact Fran Holmes for additional information.

*Fran Holmes, Great Decisions Coordinator*

## Important 2023 Dates for Voters to Remember

### Same Day Voting – October 28

The New York State Board of Elections has approved that all those eligible to register to vote in New York State may use an affidavit ballot AND vote on Saturday, October 28. This is referred to as “Golden Day” because October 28 is the final voter registration deadline AND also the first day of Early Voting. Early Voting will be available from October 28 through November 5, 2023.

Date	Deadline Information
October 23	Last day for Board of Elections to receive absentee ballot application by letter, telefax, or through the absentee request portal.
October 23	Last day for change of address.
October 28	Last day for IN-PERSON Voter Registration; MAIL-IN registrations must be received by Board of Elections
November 6	Last day to apply IN PERSON for absentee ballot.
November 7	Last day to postmark ballot. Must be received by the local Board of Elections no later than November 14. Military Voter Ballots must be received no later than November 20.
November 7	Last day to deliver ballot IN PERSON to the local Board of Elections or to any poll site in your county.

## Meet Your League Board Members

This summer, I began a series that was posted on Facebook. We think that all League members might appreciate reading what the board members said in response to my questions. The five people below responded to my request.

### Introducing Barbara Gunderson, the League's Voter Services Chair

Why did you join the League? *"I joined LWVBN in 2018 in order to reach out to high school teachers and staff with voter education, information, and registration."*

What is your favorite thing about the League? *"My favorite thing that I've been involved in with the League is our outreach to other organizations that have voting as part of their mission – and the value I've found in the relationships I've built with members of those organizations. I also value the relationships I've built with our local League members."*

What is your favorite summer snack? *"My favorite summer snack – indeed my favorite anytime snack – is popcorn."*



### Introducing Amy Moritz, the League's Communications Chair

Why did you join the League? *"It was 2020, the year of George Floyd's death, voter suppression, and election misinformation. I was looking to channel my emotions and use the passion of the moment to help create lasting change. In the League of Women Voters, I found a respected, trusted organization that aligned with my passion for my community."*

What is your favorite thing about the League? *"I love learning and LWVBN gives me that opportunity in a variety of ways – through programs and speakers, through committee work, and through the other women and men I've met."*

What is your favorite summer snack? *"The Outshine Fruit Bars. The lemon and lime flavors are incredible."*



### Introducing Terri Parks, the League's Treasurer

Why did you join the League? *"I joined the League because it has opportunities to make important impacts related to key issues at the local, state, and national levels. The League encourages and educates voters."*

What is your favorite thing about the League? *"My favorite thing about the League is working with impassioned and knowledgeable colleagues."*

What is your favorite summer snack? *"Anything that includes ice cream, lemon, or chocolate."*



### Introducing Alberta Roman, the League's Healthcare Committee Chair

Why did you join the League? *"The reason I joined the LWVBN (I live in Niagara County) after my retirement from the Visiting Nursing Association after 17+ years was to participate in an organization dedicated to serving my community in an elemental way."*

What is your favorite thing about the League? *"My favorite thing about the LWVBN is working with active, informed, generous people."*

What is your favorite summer snack? *"My favorite summer snack today is watermelon."*





### Introducing Deborah Shiffner, the League's Finance Chair

Why did you join the League? *"I am a new board member. I am excited to participate on the board and find my role in the organization. I joined the League following my retirement. I did not know any other members at the time but was interested in supporting the right to vote, encouraging voter registration and engaging with people in our community."*

What is your favorite thing about the League? *"I am currently the person who recruits and schedules volunteers for naturalization ceremonies which occur at least monthly. I also enjoy lobbying our local legislators."*

What is your favorite summer snack? *"My favorite summer snack is ice cream. WNY has so many ice cream stands that make their own ice cream and it is a great way to explore our community."*

Thank you all for everything you do to support the League and its mission. I hope we have the other board members' responses for the November/December Voter.

*Olivia Sheldon, Summer Intern*

## "You Made That Mess; You Clean It Up!"

Sounds like Mom, doesn't it, after you experimented with making play dough in her kitchen? I'm thinking of the toxic nuclear messes throughout the United States and how unlikely they are to be cleaned up by the generation that made them. In New York State we have several kinds of messes that are required to be cleaned up under the auspices of several different agencies, so let's look at a few examples:

- Manhattan Project sites from the development of the atomic bomb during WWII

The Lake Ontario Ordnance Works in the towns of Lewiston and Porter was used to store radioactive material taken there between 1942 and 1952. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) completed a partial cleanup between 1982 and 1986, but now the Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a contract to Enviro-Fix for the first step in a fuller cleanup. A timeline for the whole cleanup is still being developed by a firm of architects and engineers, according to a Buffalo News article (Aug. 8, 2023).

- Closed nuclear power plants

The three nuclear reactors at Indian Point in Westchester County shut down in 1974, 2020, and 2021. The antiquated plants were accident prone and close to a densely populated area. Recently, controversy raged over the decommissioning contractor Holtec's plan to dump one million gallons of radioactive water into the Hudson River. Decommissioning will take 12 years to complete and is accountable to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

- West Valley Demonstration Project, south of Springville in WNY

That's too complicated to answer here! Many agencies, federal and state, are involved in overseeing the work of the U.S. DOE and NYSERDA. Class A waste (the lowest level of radioactivity) can be trucked to Clive, Utah, where Energy Solutions operates a waste disposal facility. The bulky concrete waste from deconstructing the Main Process Plant Building at West Valley, loaded into intermodals, now can travel directly from the site by rail to wherever. The highest levels of radioactivity, Greater than Class C, have no place to go – Congress and the DOE need to create a solution.

*Pat Townsend*

## Membership Notes

Students may join the League of Women Voters for free and contribute to promoting voter empowerment and defending democracy.

Call to action: I encourage League members to make their voices heard and get involved in positive activism ("Good Trouble").

*Timothy Priano, Membership Chair*



August 26, otherwise known as Women's Equality Day, marked the anniversary of the certification of the 19th Amendment, which granted some women the right to vote in 1920. In 2022, LWVUS declared this day to be Women's Inequality Day in the aftermath of the Supreme Court rollbacks of reproductive freedom (in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*) and the failure of Congress to pass voting rights legislation or add the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution.

One year later, we have seen the impact of the *Dobbs* decision on women and those who can become pregnant. We have seen anti-voter laws passed in states nationwide that could silence voters at the polls in the months ahead. And a century after it was first introduced, we are still calling on Congress to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment and make it part of our Constitution.

The fight for women's equality has always been grounded in the right to vote. When some women have fewer rights and access, we cannot call ourselves equal or celebrate equality.

This August, women are standing together demanding that our rights be restored, our voices be heard, and that we ourselves be seen and treated as equals in our democracy. Together, we have the power to create a more perfect and inclusive nation that celebrates our diversity and welcomes everyone to participate. We can create the change we need and want with the power of our votes.

### **Our Campaign**

The LWVUS campaign will spread the word about women's equality on social media while lifting our voices to our legislators. We are sending Congress a petition letting them know about our women's equality wish list:

- Passing voting rights legislation;
- Adding the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution; and
- Restoring reproductive rights

Members can take action by adding their name to the petition on the [LWV.org](https://www.lwv.org) website, sharing this petition in their communities, and participating in our digital campaigns. Please share, like, follow, post, retweet social media posts from LWVUS and LWVNY to educate all about this inequality.

*Reprinted from the LWVNY 2023 August State Voter*

## **Voters Service Committee Commissions Translations of Election Reminder Card**

In June of 2023 I met with Mustafa Abdo of H.E.A.L. in West Buffalo to discuss his organization's mission for the immigrant and new citizen population in Buffalo. "H.E.A.L. International Inc. is a nonprofit charitable tax-exempt organization run and managed by former refugees to help new arrivals in the country adapt to the challenges that arise from leaving a region of conflict and violence, and arriving to a new life in the US."

We considered the need for election information in new citizens' native languages. He is presently working on translations of our 2023 Election Reminder card to Arabic and Somali. I also met with his colleague who works with youth and women in the same communities. She suggested that the women, especially, would appreciate information in their native languages. As a result, our League contracted with the International Institute of Buffalo to translate the card into Spanish, French, Bengali, and Swahili. The sample here is in Swahili. We now have digital copies of these four translations. We have provided the Spanish translation to VOICE Buffalo and PUSH Buffalo and have sent translations to Mr. Abdo to distribute to immigrant community leaders. We are grateful that we have the capacity to serve our new citizens in this way.

*Barbara Gunderson, Voter Services Chair*

## Democracy: The Next Generation

### Youth Program Outreach seeks volunteers

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara has received a grant from the national League to implement voter registration and education in high schools across Erie and Niagara Counties. We need your help!

**Technology:** We're looking for someone to coordinate our use of the platform Outreach Circle to support follow-up with students who register to vote.

**Social media:** To complement our technology platform, we want to develop a presence on social media platforms to encourage teens to register, vote, and advocate for issues they are passionate about.

**Classroom presenters and aides:** We need a roster of volunteers to present voter education and register students in high school classrooms, along with assistants to help pass out materials and check registration forms. We'll train you on the content!

**Contact information research:** To reach more schools in Erie and Niagara Counties, we need to research names and contact information for high school principals and district superintendents.

Interested? Want more information? Contact Barbara Gunderson, Youth Program Chair.

*Barbara Gunderson, Youth Program Chair*

## News from our DEI Efforts

Did you hear about "Seeking Safety Seeking Welcome, a 21 Day Challenge about Refugees and Their Journeys"? This past June, the DEI Committee of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara collaborated with Journey's End Refugee Services to provide an online learning opportunity in honor of Refugee Week. Kathy Spillman, Advocacy Analyst and Curator of the WNY Refugee Film Festival of Journey's End, compiled a series of interviews, poems, prose, TED talks, and data-filled materials that were presented for the challenge. Our media maven, Amy Moritz, formatted the materials and sent them to participants every day for three weeks. The challenge was to spend some time each day using these diverse materials to learn about the experiences of refugees and displaced persons worldwide, nationwide and in Western New York.

We promoted the event on Facebook, our website, LinkedIn, the Voter and by word of mouth. Eighty-three people registered from various organizations that included the League of Women Voters, both local and statewide, and Leagues from New Jersey and North and South Carolina. There were also registrants from various school districts and faith-based groups, Self Advocacy of New York and the NAACP.

A follow-up survey revealed high satisfaction with the Challenge. People enjoyed the diversity of the media, listening to and reading personal stories, learning about the process of relocating, and learning about the refugee services in Western New York and the benefit of welcoming displaced persons into our community. Most respondents said they had more positive feelings about these newcomers after completing the readings and videos.

We are hoping to make the Challenge available on our website and social media so that those who did not get a chance to engage this past June can do so at their leisure. We learned from the survey that the amount of material seemed overwhelming to some people. Please know that this is not a contest or a race. It is not necessary to look at everything. Nor is it necessary to complete the materials in 21 days. The idea is to get to know some of our neighbors and their amazing stories, to share their very human experiences.

We'll let you know when and how you may access the Challenge in our email messages and in the next Voter.

*Liz Zausmer, Co-Chair, DEI Committee*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## September-October 2023

**Thursday, September 7, 10:00 a.m. - noon**  
**Great Decisions**  
via Zoom

**Monday, September 11, 4:30 p.m.**  
**Board Meeting**  
League Office

**Thursday, September 14, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Committee**  
via Zoom

**Thursday, September 21, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**  
**Third Thursday Social**  
Alchemy Wine & Beer, Hamburg

**Monday, September 25, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**  
**Communications Committee**  
Kenilworth Library

**Thursday, October 5, 10:00 a.m. - noon**  
**Great Decisions**  
via Zoom

**Monday, October 9, 4:30 p.m.**  
**Board Meeting**  
League Office

**Thursday, October 12, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Committee**  
via Zoom

**Thursday, October 19, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**  
**Third Thursday Social**  
TBA, Niagara Falls

**Monday, October 30, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.**  
**Communications Committee**  
Kenilworth Library

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