

Show #1925

Meet The Candidates with Todd Vaarwerk

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:05 Speaker 1

I am your host, Tracy LeBlanc, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Western New York Independent Living.

00:00:10 Speaker 1

Election Day 2026 is coming up in a few weeks and voting is on the minds of many people in our region and throughout the country.

00:00:18 Speaker 1

As a midterm election, this year's votes may have a significant impact on what happens in our country and region over the next two years.

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To assist voters in understanding the issues, WNYIL is hosting Meet the

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Candidates events this month in Buffalo, Batavia, and Niagara Falls.

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Joining us today to discuss the upcoming elections and our Meet the Candidates events is WNYIL's Chief Policy Officer, Todd Vaarwerk.

00:00:42 Speaker 1

Welcome to the program, Todd.

00:00:44 Speaker 2

Always a pleasure.

00:00:45 Speaker 1

Todd, why is it important that people vote?

00:00:47 Speaker 2

It's one of the duties of being a citizen.

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One of the things that makes a representative democracy a representative democracy is that people get up and vote.

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It's more about making

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your needs and desires known by choosing the people that you want to represent you.

00:01:05 Speaker 1

This year we call midterm elections.

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Can you tell us what that means and what makes these elections so important?

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Well, midterm elections are about the fact that the House of Representatives has the shortest government term in office at two years.

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The president is four years, and the Senate is six years.

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So, everything is in blocks of two.

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So, in a presidential administration, about halfway through, there's going to be a midterm election that's going to decide again the makeup of the House of Representatives in the United States Senate.

00:01:42 Speaker 2

That's what midterm election means.

00:01:44 Speaker 1

As I mentioned earlier, WNYIL is hosting Meet the Candidates events in each of our regions.

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Can you tell us about the structure of these events?

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What can someone who attends expect?

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Well, a lot of folks might do

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a candidate meet and greet where they invite all the candidates and they invite a whole bunch of people and the candidates are walking around and shaking people's hands and talking to them.

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We don't do that.

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We have a structured entry and exit for them.

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They schedule a 10-minute block of time to participate in our event, get up in front of a podium

00:02:21 Speaker 2

and start talking about why they should be elected to public office.

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And then there's an opportunity, most times there's an opportunity for each candidate to take questions from the audience that are important to members of the audience.

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The meet and greets are great, but they don't necessarily always get into the meat of the issues.

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Can you provide us with the dates, times, and locations of the three events?

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I'm gonna do my best on this.

00:02:49 Speaker 2

I know the Buffalo one is October 14th from 2 to 5 p.m.

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here at Western New York Independent Living at 3108 Main Street in the Job Club room.

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The Independent Living of Niagara County is the 20th of October from 1 to 4 p.m.

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at their offices at 746 Portage.

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And Independent Living in the Genesee region in Batavia,

00:03:16 Speaker 2

theirs is a slightly different one.

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They do kind of a lunch hour thing from like 11 to one, but I just forget what date is.

00:03:25 Speaker 1

It's the 22nd of October.

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There you go, the 22nd of October.

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So, we really want to encourage you to go to the event brought on by your local center.

00:03:36 Speaker 2

You're going to be able to meet candidates for public office.

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Even if you can't physically go, we know that the event is going to be streamed on

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Facebook, right?

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And then available on our YouTube page for you to watch, like right up to election day.

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So, if there's a particular person you want to see what they said to us, you can go to our YouTube page and review that.

00:04:02 Speaker 2

The most important thing about these dates is what they do for the consumer.

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The safety about being able to make the right decision when you vote is about how much you know about candidates when you vote for them.

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Meet the Candidates is a genuine way to have what they call an informed electorate.

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That is people with disabilities and other members of the community knowing what the candidates stand for.

00:04:30 Speaker 1

If someone is looking for more information on voting, where can they go for information?

00:04:35 Speaker 2

They can always call my office for more information on voting.

00:04:39 Speaker 2

716-836-0822 extension 101, or they can e-mail me at T, V as in Victor, A-A-R-W-E-R-K @wnyil.org.

00:04:50 Speaker 1

Great, that's all the time we have for this week.

00:04:52 Speaker 1

You have been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living.

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Our guest today was WNYIL's Chief Policy Officer, Todd Vaarwerk, and I have been your host, Tracy LeBlanc.