The LWV-RMA and the Social Justice Council of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester

present

Money in Politics: Is Democracy for Sale?

Is it possible to have campaign finance reform, in spite of the Supreme Court decision in the case of Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)?

Our distinguished moderator:
Dorothy Borgus, League Member

Our expert panel:
Professor Roy Gutterman, Director of Newhouse School at Syracuse University
Scott Forsyth, of the law firm Forsyth and Forsyth
Sam Fedele, former Coordinator of Move to Amend/Rochester

Monday, November 16, 2015, at 7:00 PM
First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South
Handicapped Accessible/Parking on North side of building.
**Presidents’ Corner**

Leaves and temperatures are falling, and another election is in the books.

Let’s begin with congratulations — to all the candidates who stood for election and to those who won the right to represent us. And we thank those candidates who signed our Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC) Pledge and those who used the FEPC system to question possible violations of the pledge. Our gratitude extends to all the media who provided voters with the information needed to make good choices. We so appreciate the work of all our members! Whether you helped to plan or conduct a forum or debate, registered voters, presented information to high school Participation in Government (PIG) classes, provided one of our many Voter Services (especially VOTE411.org and FEPC), reminded your neighbors to vote, offered rides to or worked at the polls, reached out to local organizations with information, or made sure you voted, you were Making Democracy Work!

All this said, the voter turnout was abysmally low, and that’s a call to action for the League. Our immediate job now is to make sure our elected officials are well aware of which policies and actions we support. The League will be making a greater effort to be present at governmental meetings. If you can help by attending City Council, County Legislature or town board meetings, please contact Elaine Schmidt (585-530-7414 or eschmidt8@rochester.rr.com). If you’d like to visit your County and State representatives to discuss issues, please contact Katherine Smith (585-334-3991 or kathysmith292@gmail.com). And if you’d like to get involved but are not sure just what you’d like to do, contact Gin Busack (585-467-6131 or ginbusack@aol.com).

We hope you’re attending our monthly forums. The next one is “Money in Politics: Is Democracy for Sale?” and will be held on Monday, November 16, at 7:00 PM at the First Unitarian Church on Winton Road South. (Remember to listen to “Connections with Evan Dawson” on WXXI 1370AM at noon that day for a preview.)

Our board reports that Secretary Patrina Freeman has resigned her office but has asked to continue serving as a Director. We’re grateful that she will also continue to coordinate the Students Inside Albany program and work on several League committees.

And last but far from least, Ernest DuBois will now serve as our Volunteer Coordinator! We know you’ll enjoy saying “yes” when he calls you!

Happy Thanksgiving!

In League,

**Gloria S. Read** gloell@rochester.rr.com

**Mary Hussong-Kallen** mmhk@rochester.rr.com

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**Money in Politics: Is Democracy for Sale?**

Unregulated money in politics affects and threatens democracy in the United States. We know that the voice of the public is overpowered by special interest money, and we wondered if it is possible to have campaign finance reform, in spite of the Supreme Court decision in the case of Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010). Looking further, we asked:

- What was the basis of this decision?
- Does the First Amendment of the Constitution really say that candidates can be funded by abundant corporate wealth?
- What are the moral implications of this decision?
- Is this what the Founders intended?

In an effort to answer these questions and develop a common understanding of the complex issues impacting fair elections, the League and the Social Justice Council of the First Unitarian Church will co-sponsor a forum, “Money in Politics: Is Democracy for Sale?” on Monday, November 16, at 7:00 PM at the First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South. Our moderator will be Dorothy Borgus; panelists include:

- Professor Roy Gutterman, Director of Newhouse School at Syracuse University, who will explain the First Amendment;
- Scott Forsyth, of the law firm Forsyth and Forsyth, who will explain the reasoning behind the Supreme Court Decision of Citizens United; and
- Sam Fedele, former Coordinator of Move to Amend/Rochester, who will explain the consequences of unlimited money in politics.

Don’t miss this forum!
Following Up On...

NUTS, BOLTS AND MONKEY WRENCHES OF A NYS CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

On November 7, 2017, the voters of New York will be called upon to decide, “Shall there be a Convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?” The LWV-RMA and the Interfaith Alliance of Rochester (TIAR) recently held a forum to provide some of the background needed to have an informed answer to this question. The speakers addressed this and also provided some insights into changes they thought there should be in both the process for selecting delegates to the Convention and to the Constitution itself.

The first speaker, Prof. Peter J. Galie, Emeritus Professor of Political Science, Canisius College, began with what he saw as the purposes of a state Constitution: to articulate the aspirations of the citizens; organize government with sufficient power to act efficiently and responsibly with limits to prevent the abuse of power; and create a framework for future changes. He also addressed the differences in size and detail between the federal and state constitutions, which he attributed to the historic view of the national government as one of enumerated powers (whatever is not delegated is prohibited) while the states were originally conceived of as possessing plenary power (whatever is not prohibited is permitted).

Under the State Constitution each senatorial district elects three delegates to the Convention, and another fifteen delegates are elected statewide. Our second speaker, Hon. Brian Kolb, Assemblyman from the 131st District and the Assembly Minority Leader, addressed what he and others have seen as problems with the past processes for electing delegates. He has introduced a bill, A.4674, to provide for nonpartisan elections, impose restrictions on campaign contributions, require registration and reporting of those lobbying the convention, and mandate that state and local officers who serve as delegates vacate their public office. Prof. Galie noted that when voters choose between slates of three candidates, the result typically reflects the dominant political party in the district; he proposed that if each voter had only one vote, with the top three vote-getters representing the district, there would be a greater variety of views represented.

Both speakers addressed some of the changes they hoped a Convention would consider. Both endorsed term limits for legislative leaders and redistricting. Assemblyman Kolb was particularly adamant about the state being on the “wrong track.”

Professor Galie also addressed the ratification process should there be a Convention. The last such convention, in 1967, presented all the proposed amendments as a single question: voters had to either accept all or reject all of them. This resulted in rejection. He suggested that the 1938 model be followed, in which many of changes were included in one omnibus proposition with the more controversial ones voted on individually. (He also proposed that some issues were so “hot button” that the delegates should recognize that they should be avoided in order to avoid polarizing the convention itself.)

While both speakers favor holding a Constitutional Convention, they firmly agree that the public should be provided with the unbiased information necessary for making an informed vote on this question as well as the pros and cons of any proposed amendments that result. Prof. Galie pointed out that when a proposition to hold a Constitutional Convention appeared on the New York State ballot in 1965, nearly half of those who went to the polls did not vote on the question. In July, 2015, a Sienna College poll showed that only 6% of the public said they had heard or read anything about the upcoming 2017 vote.

The League of Women Voters of NYS is part of a coalition which is creating an educational campaign to promote public awareness of the 2017 statewide referendum. (More information will be available soon.) As part of LWV-RMA’s participation in the public awareness campaign, we will be adding a new section http://lwv-rma.org/ConCon.php to our website with information about a Constitutional Convention. We will also hold additional forums as the 2017 ballot question approaches.

Many thanks to TIAR member Neil Jaschik who served as our moderator. The forum was planned by Elaine Schmidt and Judy Weinstein of LWV-RMA and Neil Jaschik and Becky Elwell of TIAR.

Judy Weinstein
Government Committee Member

Do You Tweet?
If you use Twitter, consider following us! You’ll find great information on many topics. Look for @LWVrochesterNY next time you’re online!
Ask a League Member: Good Government Doesn’t Just Happen!

During my two years as a member of the LWV-RMA I have been challenged, guided, supported and encouraged. My journey with the League started with a simple introduction to one member and has led to my deepening friendships with many more members. But the League of Women Voters is more than a social club or networking group. The League offers concerned and motivated citizens the opportunity to share their knowledge, skills, and time in such a way that the local community is positively impacted.

According to Merriam -Webster's online dictionary the definition of the word “politics” is as follows:

activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government; the work or job of people (such as elected officials) who are part of a government; the opinions that someone has about what should be done by governments: a person's political thoughts and opinions.

Membership in the League is a gateway into grassroots political advocacy. People who are connected to information can use it to advocate for themselves, their families, and their communities - and joining the League certainly provides access to information.

Governance is not the sole responsibility of elected officials. The citizens of every state, city, town or village must inform themselves about the issues that will shape this country. No one office or officeholder should be expected or allowed to shape public policy.

If you are a member of the League, thank you for your hard work and dedication. I challenge you to spread the word. Help the League by telling your neighbors about this opportunity to join us in shaping America’s future.

Hasana Martin  
Membership Committee Member

Welcome!

OUR NEW MEMBERS:  
Larry Burnette  
Barbara Lobb  
Judy Sternberg

OUR REJOINING MEMBERS:  
Lynda Goldstein  
Mary Myers
Paid Family Leave Campaign

LWV-RMA is pleased to be part of a local coalition supporting legislative bills for paid family leave. The Assembly has in fact already passed its version of the bill (A3870), and efforts are being directed toward gaining the support of State Senators. Many supporters of the Women’s Equality Act are leading this lobbying effort, and Katherine Smith will continue to represent our League.

It’s time for NYS to modernize our workforce laws. Proposed legislation will provide up to twelve weeks of job-protected paid family leave each year. Leave may be taken to care for a newborn child or any seriously ill family member. It’s an economic necessity for all workers with family responsibilities. It will help retain women in the workforce, and it will lower the turnover for employers. It will help smaller businesses to compete with larger companies since it will be a statewide insurance program. It will be administered through NYS’s existing temporary disability insurance program.

Please let your NYS Senator know you support S3004. Also, send a message to Governor Cuomo at www.governor.ny.gov/contact telling him to continue expressing his support.

An online petition is available at www.cssny.org/paidfamilyleave. Please take time to read and sign it!

Our state and local Leagues urge enactment of statewide paid family leave to build on NYS’s illustrious history of public health leadership.

Katherine Smith
1st Vice-President

Sign a Letter of Support for the Paid Family Leave Act!

The NYS Assembly has passed the Paid Family Leave Act but the Senate has not. Find information (including a copy of the bill) and a letter to sign at www.cssny.org/paidfamilyleave.

Sunshine Corner

MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE
OCTOBER 13
OBSERVED BY ELAINE SCHMIDT

Members of Rochester Emergency Action Committee for the Homeless (REACH) – several groups concerned with shelter for the homeless – spoke to the Legislature about a plan to manage a shelter purchased by the House of Mercy. The group proposed a budget of $150,000 to be funded 1/3 by City of Rochester, 1/3 by Monroe County and 1/3 by private donations.

Most of the agenda was passed unanimously. There was a motion by the Democrats to prohibit the sale of products containing microbeads; the roll call vote defeated the motion along party lines.

(To view the full minutes from this and other meetings, please click here: http://www2.monroecounty.gov)

WEBSTER WORKSHOP SEPTEMBER 24
OBSERVED BY LOIS WINTEKORN

The Town is looking to update the phone system in the offices. The Village is interested since it could be impacted if town offices are used on a regular basis.

WEBSTER TOWN BOARD OCTOBER 1
OBSERVED BY LOIS WINTEKORN

A public hearing was held to consider the 2016 Preliminary Budget for the Town of Webster. The Supervisor was authorized to sign an Intermunicipal Agreement between Monroe County and the Town of Webster for participation in the Irondequoit Bay Coordinating Committee.

(To view the full minutes from these and other meetings, please click here: http://www.ci.webster.ny.us)

The Observer Corps needs someone to observe Rochester City Council meetings and those of the other towns in Monroe County. Please call Elaine Schmidt 585-530-7414 if you are interested.

Elaine Schmidt
Observer Corps Coordinator

Save The Date!

Picnic in the Park – January 9, 2016
Buckland Lodge.
Watch this space (and your email) for further details!

Do You Have...
Comments?
Suggestions?
News We Can Use?
Contact The Voter at:
lwvrma-voter@rochester.rr.com
Voter Services Update

The primary goal for the Voter Services Committee is, as it always has been, to encourage all citizens to register and participate in the electoral process by casting an informed vote. Education is therefore an important element in what we do. In that regard, we are focusing our efforts on working both in local urban areas of concentrated poverty and with our youth and young adults. Barbara Grosh and Gin Busack will be working on collaborative efforts in urban areas with Beth Feldman coordinating our high school activity and Gail Wilder focusing her efforts on local colleges.

This final month before elections has been highlighted by the debate co-sponsored with WROC-TV between the candidates for County Executive in addition to two successful candidate forums. The first forum was held on October 15, co-sponsored with the Center for Disability Rights; the second, held on October 27, focused on structural racism, poverty and violence and was co-sponsored with The Faith Community Alliance of Rochester, FR=EE and the House of Mercy. These events were coordinated by the LWV team of Mary Hussong-Kallen, Barbara Grosh and Gin Busack.

This month also saw the initial reorganizational work for the Rochester Voter Alliance, a non-partisan group of many faith and community groups. Our League and The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester (TIAR) are once again assuming the role of primary sponsors of this effort. Every four years, coinciding with the Presidential elections, the Alliance spearheads a community collaboration to encourage voter registration and participation among the residents of the inner city.

The Education Study Group, a collaboration of our Rochester and Wayne Leagues, has introduced its PowerPoint presentation on the history and importance of voting to Rochester City School District seniors, starting this month with two sessions at the School Without Walls. This first effort, which also includes registration of the eligible seniors, was presented by Ellie Drake of the Wayne League, with Camille Clayton, Mary Olinger and Judy Sternberg assisting. Arrangements are now underway to schedule visits to the School of the Arts and Vanguard Collegiate High School.

Gail Wilder has continued her work with the Monroe Community College student-run “Rock The Vote” Committee. The group held a successful party during the initial Democratic Presidential Candidates Debate resulting in another thirty registrations.

Obviously, our work depends on a legion of volunteers. We are planning a huge push for 2016. The more help we have, the more we can do. We need YOU and your special talents. Please consider contacting either our new Volunteer Coordinator, Ernest DuBois (288-8303), or Gin Busack (467-6131 or ginbusack@aol.com) to join us in Making Democracy Work!

Gin Busack
Voter Services Chair

Naturalization

At Naturalization ceremonies in October our League welcomed over 100 new American citizens. Thank you to Marcia Eisenberg who represented the league on October 8 at 10:00 AM at the Monroe County Office Building, and Lois Winterkorn, league representative, at the 1:00 PM ceremony at the Federal Building. On November 12, Joan Rosenthal will represent the League at 10:00 AM at the Monroe County Office Building. Lois Winterkorn will meet the new citizens at 1:00 PM on the same day.

Anyone who is interested in observing a ceremony, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162007@gmail.com or 585-223-6819. It will be time well spent!

Sheila Abeling
Naturalization Services Coordinator

Election Services

Hopefully, you voted on November 3! Although the turnout numbers were low, I know that the League worked hard at getting people registered to vote. On Election Day League volunteers opened absentee ballots for the Monroe County Board of Elections (MCBOE). We work on this yearly project in order to help the MCBOE, but it is also a fundraiser for the League. Our League volunteers are very appreciated for stepping up and doing this job. Look in the December Voter for the names of those wonderful volunteers.

Sheila Abeling
Election Services Coordinator

Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC)

November 3 brought an end to the Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC) for 2015. A special thank you goes to all who helped make this campaign a success. Our Pledge List of candidates who signed well surpassed those in the past! Look in our December Newsletter for more details about the campaign.

Sheila Abeling
FEPC Coordinator
UNITE Rochester News

The 2nd Annual UNITE Rochester Court Academy was held on October 8 at Asbury First United Methodist Church. The event panelists included Judge Doran, Judge Miller, Judge Morrison, Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley, Monroe County Public Defender Andre Vitale, and Monroe County Commissioner of Jurors Charles Perraud.

The panelists each provided a beginner’s lesson on different aspects of the criminal justice system. Terms such as criminal procedure law, determinate sentencing, plea bargain, felony, and misdemeanor were explained. Attorneys Doorley and Vitale each described the elements of arraignment proceedings, trial, and trial resolution from the prosecution and defense viewpoint. The specifics of jury selection, service, and juror’s rights and duties were provided by Commissioner Perreaud. The judges offered information concerning their role in the courtroom and the limits under which they work.

Those in attendance were informed of the many alternatives to incarceration initiatives in the Monroe County region. The specters of crime and violence are forces that have plagued many US cities including Rochester. Monroe County elected officials are working with local agencies and service providers to reduce the need for the most punitive measures. Drug Court and Teen Court are some of the specific venues which seek to address the root causes of a person’s involvement with the criminal justice system. Other specialized courts such as Domestic Violence Court, Gun Court, and Trafficking Court seek to provide options, referrals, and/or community resources to those in contact with the criminal justice system.

Credit goes to Timothy Donaher, Cynthia Herriott-Sulliven and Melissa S. Barrett for their work in presenting this very timely and informative event.

Hasana Martin

When You Travel...

Do you look for a local League in cities and regions around the country when you travel?

Back in October we received an email from Cecile Scoon, President of the Bay County, Florida LWV, inviting us to join her and a group of Leaguers from around the state of Florida who were visiting our area for a few days. What a pleasure to meet them as they visited the Susan B. Anthony Center at the University of Rochester!

We all attended a fascinating presentation about Susan B. Anthony, offered by Catherine Cerulli, JD, PhD, Director of the Center. Catherine brought Susan B. to life in new ways by sharing information from archive materials most of us never knew existed.

Unfortunately, our time was limited as their visit coincided with our annual televised candidate debate at WROC-TV Channel 8 that evening – but they were impressed that the reason for our time crunch involved television coverage. (As we all do, they find that getting media coverage is a challenge.) We were equally impressed to learn that they have two men on their state staff!

We all agreed that we have more to learn from one another and hope to keep in touch – with the Susan B. Center, as well!

And we have one more little gem to share: besides reminding us of the rich history our area offers, we learned that the Center posts wonderful Susan B. quotes on Twitter! Check out “Susie B. Says“. We feel certain you’ll come to know her in a whole new and fascinating way!

Katherine Smith and Mary Hussong-Kallen

Watch and Listen to our Forums on YouTube!

The League is trying something new, something that has had success in other cities. We are now recording our forums and posting the videos on YouTube for your viewing pleasure. Can’t make the forum? Not a problem. Catch a ‘replay’ on YouTube!

To access the League’s YouTube videos, please click on this link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5_g

Enjoy!

Amazon Smile

The state League has joined a new program to help raise funds. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the state League every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com you’ll find the same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a 0.5% of the purchase price to the state League’s Education Foundation. To shop at Amazon Smile, simply go to smile.amazon.com instead of just amazon.com and search for the League of Women Voters of NYS as your selected charitable organization.

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK! We know you’ll “like” us! www.facebook.com/lwvofrma
Info/Action Meeting for Paid Family Leave 11/4/15

Candidate Forum
sponsored by LWV-RMA, FR=EE, House of Mercy & Faith Community Alliance 10/27/15
Coming Events!

November

3  Election Day! Take a Friend to Vote!
6  First Friday (Corner Bakery Café, 1367 Mt. Hope Avenue)
10 Board Meeting (6:30 PM at Brighton Town Hall)
12 Naturalization Ceremony (10:00 AM at Monroe County Office Building)
12 Naturalization Ceremony (1:00 PM at Federal Building)
16 Forum: Money in Politics (7:00 PM at First Unitarian Church)
17 Book Club (1:00 PM at The Greenhouse Café)

December

1  Board Meeting (6:30 PM at Gates Town Library)
4  First Friday (Corner Bakery Café, 1367 Mt. Hope Avenue)
10 Naturalization Ceremony (10:00 AM at Monroe County Office Building)
10 Naturalization Ceremony (1:00 PM at Federal Building)

Happy Holidays!

First Fridays

Are you free for lunch or a mid-day coffee break? If so, we’d like to spend it with you – and note our new location: the Corner Bakery Café in College Town!

When:  First Friday of the month between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM
Where:  1367 Mt. Hope Avenue (free parking behind)
What:  Chatting with other League members – topics are up to you
If you’ve wanted to get to know more members, here’s an opportunity – because we think the work we love to do is more fun when we get to know one another better.

See you on:
Friday, December 4
Friday, January 8
(New Year’s Day moves us to the 2nd Friday)
Friday, February 5
Friday, March 4
Friday, April 1
Friday, May 6
Friday, June 3

FREE PARKING (ramp garage and open air lot) BEHIND THE RESTAURANT!

Be sure to check your email and our website for other events as they are scheduled!
Goals of the League of Women Voters:

- To encourage informed citizen participation in government and politics
- To influence public policy through education and advocacy

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV-RMA

Editor, Mary Hussong-Kallen
Layout/Design, Chris Burleigh

Join the League Today!

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________

City: _____________________________ State: __________________________ Zip: __________

Telephone: _____________________________ E-Mail: ______________________

Check Amount: _____________________________

Level of Membership: _____________________________

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League of Women Voters/RMA to:
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Rochester, NY 14610

or join us online at: www.lwv-rma.org/join.php