

TheVOTER



Questions about voting?

Meet Your Ballot



See how you can join this new initiative on page 3

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President's Corner

It's Time for Rent Stabilization in Rochester

On March 4, we hosted members of the City-Wide Tenant Union to tell us about rent stabilization. (The webinar is [available here](#).) Based on what we learned, the Board of Directors voted to join with others in urging the Mayor and City Council of Rochester to undertake a rental vacancy study and then opt in to rent stabilization under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA).

The ETPA was passed in 1974 and strengthened in 2019. It allows any municipality to opt into rent stabilization. A local rent guidelines board will annually set a cap on rent increases. Such caps typically follow the inflation rate. The ETPA provides enforcement from the state level. It requires that landlords maintain services promised in leases. Rent increases apply to regulated units, regardless of whether tenants move out, so it ends the incentive to evict tenants who can't afford big rent increases.

Only buildings built before 1974, and which have over 6, units and are not otherwise regulated or subsidized are affected. In Rochester that includes 680 buildings, including about 12,000 units, which are home to about 25,000 people. In Rochester about half of renters are rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 1/3 of their income in rent. Last year there were over 2,500 families evicted. At least 10% of students in the RCSD experienced a period of homelessness. People are spending months in homeless shelters because there are so few habitable and affordable rental units in Rochester. Rent stabilization would make housing more affordable for more people than any other program in Rochester.

Whenever our League takes a position on local public policy matters, it must be supported by the well-studied positions of the LWV, which may originate at the national, state or local level of the LWV. Both national and state positions of the LWV recognize the need to ensure adequate housing for all, but they endorse subsidies to builders or tenants or income subsidies, though not rent controls.

In 2023 the LWV-RMA updated our old policy on planning and zoning (renamed as our [Land Use policy](#)). We realized that gentrification is a problem which needs to be avoided. We wrote our policy to say we support policies to protect long-term residents from being driven out, not just homeowners. It's under that new position statement that we are adding our voice to the call for rent stabilization.

Barbara Grosh
President, LWV-RMA
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Help New Voters "Meet Their Ballot"

Do you have questions about voting?

- What will be on my ballot?
- How do I figure out who to vote for?
- What's the voting process like?
- Do I need ID?



Get answers!

- Come and see what a ballot looks like.
- See videos from a polling place.
- Learn about early voting and mail-in voting.

We're adding a new monthly activity this year, which we call "Meet Your Ballot." We know that many people we help register to vote never do vote. Likely they don't feel prepared and may feel intimidated by the process. Each month we will have an event at a branch library where we'll show sample ballots and videos for polling place activities such as checking in with the poll pads and feeding a ballot through the scanner. And of course, the all-important acquisition of the "I Voted" sticker! This year is a presidential year, so we'll be using sample ballots that show the elections that occur in that year. Next year we'll use sample ballots for odd-year elections. We'll show people how to research their ballots on Vote411 and invite them to sign up for reminder texts.

We'll publicize these events via handouts at naturalization ceremonies and all voter registration events. We've placed handouts in the branches where the events will be and the Rochester Public Library will also be publicizing the events. We'll put them on our social media and send out eblasts. In addition to the monthly sessions scheduled, we're happy to provide presentations wherever we get invited, such as at churches, clubs, or social service agencies.

You can find the monthly events on our website calendar. If you have questions or would like to volunteer to help, please send an email to meetyourballot@lww-rma.org.

State Budget and Support for Public Schools

The state budget may or may not have been approved by the time you read this. If it has NOT yet passed, there is still time to contact your lawmakers to share your concerns about state aid to education. To learn more about the issues and lawmaker contacts, visit <https://www.lww-rma.org/docs/2024-03.AffNet.newsletter.pdf>.



Election Security: How Voter Rolls are Maintained in Monroe County

Maintaining accurate voter lists is one of the ways New York State and Monroe County ensure the integrity of elections. Accurate rolls ensure that eligible voters, and only eligible voters, are provided with the correct ballot.

New Registration Identification Confirmation:

When someone registers to vote, a bipartisan team at the Board of Elections (BOE) checks the identity of the voter through the voter's provided DMV number (driver's license number or non-driver ID number), or the last four digits of their social security number. If the voter does not have a DMV or social security number, they may use a valid photo ID, a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check, or some other government document that shows their name and address. If the Board is unable to verify a voter's identity before Election Day, they will be asked for ID when voting for the first time. The signature of the voter is required at registration and is digitized for comparison when the voter signs in to vote.

Updates to the Rolls:

When people move: If someone does not change their address with the BOE, there are several other ways the BOE is notified. Among them are 1) a routine electronic feed of address changes between the DMV and the BOE, 2) returned mail sent by the BOE, and 3) New York State provides information they receive from Secretaries of State and other government agencies when people register in a new state. The BOE works to confirm any changes of address with the voter prior to Election Day.

When people die: The BOE routinely receives a feed from the NYS Health Department providing information on deaths. Also, family members or others may report deaths, or mail may be returned to the BOE. In all cases the BOE validates the information before removing the person from the voter rolls.

Eligibility: The BOE has access to information from the NY and Monroe County Courts, allowing them to update the rolls if a person becomes ineligible to vote due to a felony conviction. They are also able to access information when eligibility is regained.

Status: Voters may be marked inactive or be purged from the rolls by a bipartisan team at the BOE. If there is any doubt about a voter's status, they are marked inactive rather than purged. If a voter who is marked inactive attempts to vote in person, they would be allowed to vote using an Affidavit (manual) ballot. Their eligibility would then be confirmed by a bipartisan team at the BOE before the ballot was counted. If they preferred, they could apply for a Court Order to allow them to vote by machine.

The Federal Voting Registration Act of 1993 has specific requirements that must be met before names are purged from the rolls. Voters may not be purged from the rolls simply because they have not voted. The valid reasons for purging are: request from the voter, moving out of the jurisdiction, death, and depending on state law, a felony conviction or adjudication of mental incapacity.

At the Polls:

In-person voters in Monroe County sign in on an electronic poll pad. The poll pad reflects the current information on the voting rolls as well as a digitized copy of the voter's signature. The voter is asked to confirm the address and birthday and sign. If the person has changed addresses, they would be asked to complete a new registration, and if still within Monroe County, directed to the correct polling place. The poll pads also indicate if the voter has been sent an absentee ballot, is inactive, or has already signed in to vote. This information is updated in real-time to ensure a person may only vote once.

If you have questions or receive questions on the controls related to election security or integrity in our area, please forward them to micketeditor@gmail.com and we will research and publish the correct response.

LWVNYS Training Session

On March 2 the LWVNYS held the first of a series of state wide training sessions in Rochester. Approximately 12 LWRMA members attended, including several new members. Members from the Buffalo/Niagara, Cortland, Fredonia and Chautauqua Leagues also attended, which led to the opportunity for sharing ideas across groups. Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director of the LWVNYS and the three Albany staff members attended and facilitated the various breakout sessions.

Topics covered during the sessions and a few key points from each were:

Bridge to Excellence: Strengthening Local Leagues Through DEI Mastery

- Flip the acronym on its head – start with inclusion with the goal of diversity.
- Reach out, listen, find out what the partner/ally is all about and what their needs are. How can the LWV-RMA help them to reach their goals?

The Story of Us: Evaluating and Tracking League Programs

- LWVNYS is providing a tool to help local Leagues track information on events but use of the tool is not required.
- The information gathered should make required reporting easier for local leagues.

How and Why Not to Do it All: Leading a Local League

- Increasing member engagement in leading events is key to success.
- Matching volunteers' interests to League needs is key.

Making your Voice Heard: Citizens and Local Leagues

- Citizen Advocates are required to ensure key legislation is approved.
- Local leagues and LWVNYS need to work together to get supported legislation passed

Engaging College Students in Their Communities and Beyond.

- LWVNYS has a presentation for college students on how NYS government works.
- The goal is to engage students as well as educate them on ways they can influence legislation

Fact vs. Fiction: Training the Public on Determining Mis and Dis-Information.

- Mis and Dis information are driving cycles of fear and polarization.
- Pre-bunk potential Mis/Dis information through conversations and handouts.
- Have structured conversations rather than arguments: Ask questions, show empathy, explore motives and only then share your own experiences and perspectives.



Voter Services Update

League members are working with Larry Burnette, a digital marketing specialist, who has volunteered to help create communication strategies for us. The first project involved election security in New York State. You'll be seeing that posting to our website soon.

Tess McFarland-Porter gave talks to social work students at SUNY Brockport.

Volunteers staffed a voter registration table at the 2nd Annual Black Family Wellness Expo held at School No. 33 on March 16th. Many thanks to those who volunteered on short notice.

As the elections near, Voter Services is receiving an increasing number of requests for voter registration and related events. Here are some of them:

- A Girl Scout troop would like to educate its 16-18-year-old members on voter registration so that they can help register students in their schools.
- The Justice Committee of the Mary Magdalene Church in East Rochester has asked for a meeting with Voter Services to discuss our work.
- The League is once again joining postcard writing campaigns organized by The Center for Common Ground to get out the vote. The current campaign is for primaries in Georgia. The postcards are provided and can be written at home or at group sessions.

As you can see, there will be many upcoming events and opportunities for voter services. Please watch your emails for descriptions of events and how to volunteer. We appreciate your interest and involvement in this important work.

Submitted by Deb Gordon and Cathy Kane

Happy 18th Birthday!

Sixteen - and Seventeen- year- olds can pre register to vote but don't actually appear on the voter rolls until they turn eighteen. The LWV-RMA is starting a new initiative to help them remember to start voting when they are eligible. Based on a list provided by the Board of Elections, we will be able to send birthday cards to pre-registered voters when they turn eighteen.

Applying stamps and address labels to the postcards will be done as we gather at First Fridays. That is also where we hope to come up with other great Get Out the Vote ideas.

Hooray! You're 18!
You're a voter!



You may have questions:

Is my address up to date? How do I vote if I go away to school? Can I vote early or by mail? How do I update my registration? Should I pick a party? There's an Equal Rights Amendment on the ballot in 2024? Answers can be found by following the QR code.



For occasional text reminders about voting, text VOTENY to 474747.

LWV LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS'
ROCHESTER METRO AREA
LWV-RMA.org
info@lwv-rma.org
call or text 585.262.3730

Naturalizations

On February 20, at the Monroe County Office Building at 11:00 A.M., 39 candidates became American citizens. JoAnn Kane-DeMott helped the new citizens to register to vote.

Also on February 20, there was an oath ceremony at 2:00 P.M. in the Federal Building. Judge Mark Pedersen officiated at the ceremony for 26 candidates. Margaret Supinski represented the League and talked about the importance of voting and helped the candidates register to vote.

There were 99 candidates for Naturalization at the George Eastman Museum on March 12. Judge Warren and Judge Pedersen officiated at the oath ceremony at 11:00 A.M. Sheila Abeling and Tamara Minter represented the League at the ceremony.

Any League member who wants to volunteer to help at naturalization ceremonies, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162007@gmail.com. Also check the League website for more information and a schedule of the 2024 ceremonies, found on a page under the "Get Involved" tab.

Submitted by Sheila Abeling



Invitation to League of Women Voters National Convention

The LWV-RMA will send three delegates to the LWVUS convention on June 27-30 in Washington DC. The national convention is held every other year. At the convention, we will elect national officers and board members, approve the program for the next two years, consider proposed new positions, and approve the budget and by-laws changes. There will also be great speakers and workshops on League issues nationwide.

Any member can attend, but we have three voting delegates. The LWV-RMA will pay the expenses for the three delegates (registration, lodging, and travel). If you are interested in attending as a delegate, please contact Barbara Grosh at president@lwv-rma.org.

Forum Summary: *Defending Democracy in the Digital Age*

The LWVs of Alaska and Maine hosted Kate Duffy, a senior fellow for digital and cyberspace policy at the Council on Foreign Relations for a forum on Defending Democracy in the Digital Age. The forum was a discussion of how technology will impact elections worldwide in 2024 and how individuals can help defend democracy. This year will see the largest worldwide electoral cycle until 2048, with over 80 national elections taking place, directly impacting an estimated 4.2 billion people.

Some of the key points made in the forum were:

- Technology companies are decreasing their investments in trust and safety as they focus more on compliance with various regulations.
- Foreign influence operations are becoming increasingly prolific and effective
- AI tools are rapidly evolving allowing for more realistic fake audio and videos to be made
- There are more and more platforms being used by people to search for information and many of them are smaller and do not have tools to limit misinformation
- There is less cooperation between Secretaries of State and the Federal Cyber Security staff at DHS than there was in 2020 due to more concerns about potential First Amendment issues

Kate shared the following ideas for LWV and others to help reduce the impacts of the above concerns:

- Become poll workers, not only because there is a shortage, but also because if people know or recognize those involved in the process they are more apt to trust the process.
- Help fill information voids because misinformation and disinformation tend to work best when they fill an information void. For example, if people better understood the timing of counting various votes they would not be as apt to think something “funny” was going on when the numbers changed after initial counts are released.
- Learn how to flag posts for review on various platforms and then have people focused on reviewing posts leading up to and on Election Day.
- Fill information voids for marginalized populations such as immigrants (who she feels will be targeted with misinformation) but try to do it in their language and close to Election Day.
- Watch for false information being spread about certain polling places being closed or not safe and be ready to provide accurate information quickly.

The forum can be viewed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCs1Naj5qq4>

New Members

The following three people have joined LWV-RMA since our last newsletter. Welcome to the League!

Anna Jarvis

Lisa Maynard

Penelope Pankow

Penelope Pankow: “I am a 40 year resident of Rochester and former Kodak employee. I started my own business, F. Oliver’s, in 2010 and recently sold the business. I am seeking ways to be more involved in bettering our community.”

Amy Stockwell: (who joined in February) “A relatively new to Rochester (I moved in 2021), happily retired, visual artist and math enthusiast. I joined the League because democracy is not a spectator sport, and action overcomes anxiety. I want to feel that I have done my part!”

Discussing State Issues with our Albany Legislative Delegation

Over the course of three weeks in March, members of the LWV-RMA advocacy committee met with members of our local legislative delegation to Albany and/or their staff members to discuss issues identified by the LWWNYS. One issue discussed was opposition to Governor Hochul's proposed changes to state aid to education which was shared by those lawmakers with whom we met. In addition, the committee sought support for added funding for local boards of elections, fair pay for home-care workers, and increased funding for the public campaign finance board.



Shown is a composite screenshot of lawmakers, staff people, and LWV-RMA members who participated in these sessions. In the top row are the lawmakers, in the middle row are the staff members, and in the bottom row are the LWV-RMA members.

Screenshots by Tonia Canty-McKinney and Judy Wadsworth

A New Way to Vote in New York State

Up until this year there were three ways to vote in New York:

1. In-person, on election day, at your district's polling site
2. In-person, on specific days prior to election day, at any designated early polling site
3. By absentee ballot, sent to you by the Board of Elections at your request, once you provide a valid reason for not voting in person

Effective in 2024, there is a fourth way to vote. Any registered voter may apply for an early mail ballot. Each person must apply for themselves by completing the on-line form or by going to the county board of elections. The form does not require a reason for requesting an early mail ballot.

While Early Mail Voting was approved by the NYS Legislature, several organizations are challenging the process in the Courts. People choosing to vote this way should monitor the legal situation and have an alternative plan if necessary. Here is a link to the New York State site with further information about Early Mail Voting. <https://elections.ny.gov/request-ballot>

LWV-RMA Board Approves Changing to 501(c)(3) Organization

At the March Board meeting, the LWV-RMA Board agreed to have members vote on the changes necessary to convert from a 501(c)(4) organization to a 501(c)(3) organization at the June Annual Meeting. The 501 designations refer to the type of tax-exempt organization LWV-RMA is considered to be under Federal and State Tax Laws. Historically most State, National and Local Leagues were formed under 501(c)(4), but many have since converted. LWV-Port Washington/Manhasset (also in NY) converted in 2023 and is advising us on the process.

The change to a 501(c)(3) organization requires changes to the NYS Incorporation Documents and the Bylaws of LWV-RMA. The changes are not significant and will be provided to members 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting for review. A webinar will also be scheduled after the mailing to review the changes and answer any questions.

In addition to allowing members to deduct their dues and donations to LWV-RMA, the change in status will provide potential opportunities for vendor discounts and grant funds.

The concern most often raised about the conversion is that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot engage in "lobbying". However, advocacy work which is not related to specific ballot issues or legislation is not considered "lobbying". And the limits on lobbying on specific ballot issues or legislation are based on the dollars, not the time, spent. Those dollar limits are much more than LWV-RMA or other Leagues generally spend.

Redistricting Update

After almost three years, redistricting appears to be finished in New York State. It began with hearings across the state in mid-2021, then stumbled through various versions, false starts, remapping, lawsuits, and more remapping. Every level of government was mapped, scrapped, and mapped again.

The final unresolved piece, NY's Congressional map, was finalized in February. Late in 2023, the Court of Appeals ordered the Independent Redistricting Commission to create another new Congressional map. They did. Their new map largely resembled the current version drawn by the court in 2022.

After a few days of back-room discussion, the Legislature's majority (Democrats) seemed to be dissatisfied with the new map, but not unhappy enough to risk another lawsuit. Rather than make big changes, they tweaked the IRC map with a few adjustments. Likewise, most Republicans opted to go along rather than fight.

The map was approved by both houses. The votes were 45-17 in the Senate and 115-33 in the Assembly. The bill was signed by the Governor shortly afterwards. State Republican Chair Ed Cox announced that the party would not sue to challenge the new map.

It's over.

Submitted by Dave Garretson

Voter Intimidation and the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is working to educate our members on identifying and reporting voter intimidation as we approach the November 2024 election.

While voter intimidation is not new, it is evolving. Current intimidation tactics include things like:

- Threatening people for registering to vote or helping others to vote
- Misrepresenting oneself as an election official
- Aggressively asking questions about prior voting record or voter registration
- Claiming that an individual has committed voter fraud
- Phone calls implying that voting makes personal information available to the public or government/law enforcement authorities
- Recording voters' license plates
- Threatening violence or prosecution
- Behaving in other intimidating or deceptive ways that make people feel unsafe

Laura Bierman, Executive Director LWWNY, stated "In New York State, we have seen the proliferation of bad actors looking to sow distrust in our election process. In the fall of 2023, individuals, falsely claiming to be representatives from the boards of elections, were going door to door claiming that voters were illegally registered to vote. "

The State League issued a letter to all local Leagues asking them to watch for this behavior and report it to the state League. We were pleased that the NYS AG issued a cease-and-desist letter to the organization and reports have diminished. Leagues continue to report activities in counties across the state."

The LWWUS and LWWNY work with election lawyers to obtain injunctions and bring charges against individuals and groups who intimidate voters. They are setting up processes to deal with reports of intimidation quickly as the election approaches.

If you become aware of voter intimidation please provide as much information as possible (who, what, where, when) to president@lww-rma.org as soon as possible.

Voter intimidation is prohibited by Federal and State Laws for any voting-related activity.



LWV-RMA Book Club

Book Club members meet on Zoom at 4:30 P.M. on the third Thursday of the month. Books remaining for this program year are:

May 16 - *American Midnight: The Great War, a Violent Peace, and Democracy's Forgotten Crisis* by Adam Hochschild.

July 18 - *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America* by Heather Cox Richardson.

If you would like to participate in the discussion of one of our books or join the Book Club, send an email to Judy Weinstein at bookclub@lwv-rma.org to be sent the Zoom link. Participation is **not** limited to League members.

LWV-RMA Book Club Reviews *Poverty, by America*

During their March 21 discussion, members of the LWV-RMA Book Club discussed *Poverty, by America*, by Matthew Desmond. Social scientist Desmond argues that the United States, despite its vast wealth and prosperity, suffers from poverty and inequality unseen anywhere else in the developed world, and that poverty in America persists because it *benefits* many Americans to keep other Americans poor.

Desmond argues that the choices we can make (both at a policy and individual level) could empower the poor and eradicate poverty.

Seen below are those who attended the March 21 discussion.



Calendar



Events sponsored by LWV-RMA are bolded below. The sponsors and other information on all events can be found by viewing the event on the LWV-RMA calendar. See link below.

April

- 5 **(Fri) LWV-RMA First Friday** 11:30 A.M.–1:30 P.M. at I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 10 **(Wed) LWV-RMA Board Meeting** 6:00 P.M.–7:30 P.M. at Spot Coffee
- 27 **(Sat) Meet Your Ballot** 12:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M. Lyell branch library, 956 Lyell Ave.

MAY

- 3 **(Fri) LWV-RMA First Friday** 11:30 AM–1:30 P.M. at I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 8 **(Wed) LWV-RMA Board Meeting** 6:00 P.M.–7:30 P.M. via Zoom
- 11 **(Sat) Meet Your Ballot** 12:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M. Arnett branch library, 310 Arnett Blvd
- 18 **(Wed) LWV-RMA Board Meeting** 6:00 P.M.–7:30 P.M. via Zoom

Note: For links to Zoom meetings, please visit our website: www.lwv-rma.org

For events scheduled after publication, event information, Zoom links, and registration (if required) see:

https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/calendar4_responsive.php?org_id=LWVR

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

Join First Friday for Social Time at I-Square in Irondequoit.

There's no agenda but we talk about everything League and lots of political discussions. A lot of great ideas originate at First Fridays and a lot of work gets done.

- April 5
- May 3
- June 7



Whenever you attend a League event, take pictures & email them to The Voter editor at micketeditor@gmail.com.



Board of Directors meetings are currently via Zoom. Board meetings are open to all members. See calendar for dates and times and contact Barbara Grosh for link.

Forums are open to the public. Calendar information is subject to change.

For more complete information, consult our website at www.LWV-RMA.org, call 262-3730 or e-mail us at info@lwv-rma.org

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**MAY VOTER DEADLINE IS
APRIL 15!**

League of Women Voters
The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, political organization which encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.
The League of Women Voters is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principal and in practice.
League membership is open to any person who subscribes to the League’s purposes and policies.
Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

Looking for info on a League committee or activity? Look no further!

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Join the League Today!



Name: _____
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Check Amount: _____
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Please send this form and your check payable to
League of Women Voters/RMA to:
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Rochester, NY 14610
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https://members.lww-rma.org/members/newmem/new-mem-reg.php?org_id=LWVR

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate	\$75
Household	\$105
Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass	\$150
Carrie Chapman Catt	\$200
Student (full or part time at an accredited institution)	FREE
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or send an email to: info@lww-rma.org		