TheVOTER





Learn what we plan to do in 2023 – exciting events and initiatives – and how you can be involved

Join us on Saturday, March 25, 2023, 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. at SUNY Empire College, 680 Westfall Road, Rochester 14620

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President's Corner

Never Waste a Good Crisis: How to Sustain the LWV by Diversifying

The LWV has been shrinking in membership for many years as have virtually all membership organizations. It's enough of a thing that Harvard professor Robert Putnam published an essay about it in 1995, with the memorable title "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital."

Fortunately, the LWV has some visionaries in our leadership who have been thinking about how to redefine the League so that it will survive and continue to be an important player in Making Democracy Work. As the League has studied itself, it's come to a few conclusions. One is that we won't survive if we don't broaden our membership beyond our historical base of well-educated white women. That's simple demographics.

We were formed when women got the right to vote, to use our new political power to broaden women's rights in every dimension. It was a big job, and it took some time. It wasn't until the eighties that women's rates of voting equaled those of men, and, notably, evidenced a gender gap in how we vote. That work has succeeded and is safely consolidated. Now, the frontlines for democratic empowerment lie largely with fighting voter suppression of people of color, whose gains from the mid 20th century are in danger following such abominations as the Supreme Court's gutting of the Voting Rights Act in Shelby v. Holder in 2013.

The field of action requires new blood.

If we're serious about Making Democracy Work, we need to tap new sectors of our community to join us in the work. We need members who are Black, Brown, immigrants, new to democracy, newly freed from prison, and/or busy making a living. Only if the League looks like America will we be effective in making American democracy responsive to the needs of all.

I hope that all our members will welcome cultural change as the League transforms itself to stay relevant. It won't happen without deliberate effort. Our society is highly segregated. If you're white and live in a middle-class neighborhood anywhere in Monroe County, you may not know any people different from yourself very well. There's a lot of potential awkwardness and discomfort in finding and incorporating the potential members who can help us transform the LWV.

But I have faith that we can do it. The first Black League president, Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, wrote a whole book on the experience of Black women in the LWV. Some of it is grim, but there's one story that makes me believe we can succeed. In 1966, Ebony magazine published an article interviewing 20 Black League members from across the country who were using the tools the League provided to work for civil rights. We offer great tools. The League is good at registering voters. The League understands voter suppression, both blatant and subtle, and works against it relentlessly, legislatively, via litigation and by calling public attention to it. The League makes information voters need to be informed voters readily accessible. The League provides state and national networks to push for progressive legislation such as criminal justice reform to reverse the era of mass incarceration. We bring a lot to the table.



LWVUS President Dr. Deborah Turner, our leader in turning the ship.

I believe that the LWV-RMA can diversify. We've been building organizational alliances for years, which have resulted in new members of color. We're holding a membership drive event on March 25 where we'll be making the ask to some people we think would bring a lot to the League. The next step will be making them feel at home. We need to incorporate them into all our activities, to join us and share their ideas and their energy for Making Democracy Work. It's exciting work, and I hope you'll all welcome new members in your corner of the League.



Membership Matters and Your Voice Matters

Find out what the League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metro Area is up to in 2023 and about exciting events or initiatives we're undertaking to promote a stronger community!

Members are encouraged to suggest people we should invite to the event and hopefully recruit. Please

send suggested names to membership@lwv-rma.org

Saturday, March 25,2023 10:00A.M. – 1:00P.M. SUNY Empire State College 680 Westfall Road Rochester, NY 14620

Find out how you can get involved!

Take a glance at what we DO!

Lunch will be provided at no charge. Non-members are invited.

Registration is required: https://tinyurl.com/LWVmembers

Questions? Please email membership@lwv-rma.org



2023 Naturalizations Have Begun and We Need Help!

The League attends Naturalization ceremonies where people are sworn in as citizens of the United States. Our League members talk about voting and encourage registering at the event. We also help other attendees at the event to register to vote.

On the morning of February 14 a ceremony was held in the Monroe County Office Building. Katherine Smith and Tamara Minter represented the League. 50 candidates for naturalization were in attendance. Also on February 14, there was a naturalization ceremony at the Federal Building. On February 23 at 11:00 am, there was a ceremony at SUNY College of Brockport.

If you are a League member, please consider volunteering for the Naturalization Committee. Meeting the new citizens and helping them register is a very rewarding project. If you have an interest, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162007@gmail.com or 585-520-5105. Thank you for considering joining the team.



Tamara Minter welcomes new citizens, Pamela from the Congo (who speaks five languages), and Karlene from St. Lucia, at the naturalization ceremony on February 14.



Volunteer Engagement Opportunities - Part 1

WANT TO HELP? WANT TO BE MORE ENGAGED? WANT TO MEET NEW PEOPLE? CONSIDER THESE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE LWV-RMA!

Do you have a talent or skill, a little time, and a desire to help strengthen LWV-RMA & empower local voters? We're looking for you!

Why volunteer for any of the opportunities listed here or on page xx?

- Make a positive difference to the League, its members and the Rochester metro community
- Do the work at your convenience (very few meetings)
- Meet a great group of people, make new friends
- Use your skills and/or make new ones
- Learn about other roles in the League you may want to take on in the future

Note that training is always provided, but your initiative and creativity are valued as well.

TREASURER: What will you be doing?

- Serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2023 (hopefully with at least one successive term to follow)
- Maintain income and expense records and balance the books (Quicken)
- Produce monthly status reports
- Attend monthly Board of Directors meetings as a voting member
- Produce annual financial report for members
- Work with an ad hoc committee to produce an annual budget
- Carry out related duties
- Commit roughly 30 hours/month
- REPLY ASAP TO <u>NOMINATIONS@LWV-RMA.ORG.</u>

VICE-PRESIDENT: What will you be doing?

- Serve a one-year term beginning July 1, 2023 (hopefully with the possibility of a full two-year term to follow)
- Perform such duties as the President(s) and Board shall designate
- Preside in the absence of the President(s) and succeed the President(s) if same is unable to complete her term
- Attend monthly Board of Directors meetings as a voting member
- REPLY ASAP TO NOMINATIONS@LWV-RMA.ORG.

Be sure to check out Part 2 of this article on page 6 for additional opportunities.

PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR QUESTIONS, AND THEN WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO HELP.

WE'RE EAGER TO HELP YOU GET STARTED!

Redistricting Team

This is where redistricting stood on February 15th.

MONROE COUNTY

Monroe County legislative districts are set, and candidates are preparing their campaigns. Talk persists that a lawsuit might yet surface to challenge the new districts. However, if such a thing occurs, it seems unlikely to affect the 2023 elections.

NY ASSEMBLY

The Independent Redistricting Commission was ordered to draw new Assembly districts, and they succeeded in creating one map. See their proposed map at https://www.nyirc.gov/assembly-plan.

The Commission traveled the state to hear public reaction to their proposed map, and were scheduled to hold their last hearing on March 1st. Their next step will be deciding on revisions, if any, to their proposed map. There might still be time to submit written comments to the Commission at https://www.nyirc.gov/participate.

Do you have questions about redistricting? Or know somebody with a concern? Contact the League's Redistricting team at redistricting@lwv-rma.org.



Police Services Position Update Study Committee Wraps Up Its Work

The Police Services Position Update Study Committee, formed in November 2021, has concluded its assigned charge to study and make recommendations on LWV-RMA's Position on Police Services, initially written in 1977.

The study has led to two outcomes:

- A recommendation for deletion of the 1977 Position on Police Services, due to it being outdated and now irrelevant. That recommendation was approved by the Board and then by LWV-RMA members at our June 2022 Annual Business Meeting.
- The final assessment that a new Position on Policing/Public Safety is unnecessary. This is based on findings that the LWVNYS Positions on Criminal Justice (2021) and Pre-Arrest Profiling (2003) allow us to take action and advocate on many concerns in the policing and public safety arena.

Additionally, it was found that the City of Rochester is engaged in and has developed plans for Police Reform and Reinvention, specifically addressing areas of Mental Health Crisis Response, Police Accountability, Low Level Traffic Violations and Pretextual Stops. While much of the plan is aspirational, implementations have begun, and LWV-RMA can advocate for forward progress under current state positions.

The study included:

- Examination of current police services funding sources around Monroe County and the sharing of police resources, such as communications, collaborative planning, training, forensics, emergency responses and specialized unit deployment.
- Review of:
 - * The 2021 City of Rochester Community Response to Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 203: Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, plus the responses of other Monroe County towns and villages.
 - Implementation of reform plans by the City of Rochester and the Rochester Police Department
 - * Implementation of the Rochester Police Accountability Board
 - * Implementation of the Persons in Crisis mental health emergency response team
 - * Various models of alternatives to police response taking place in cities around the nation. This included readings and webinar viewings.
- Interviews with Julie Cianca, (then) Monroe County Deputy Public Defender and Mary Lupien, Rochester City Council VP and Public Safety Committee Member.
- Production of the educational forum held on January 23, 2023, "Mental Health Crisis Response: How Has It Changed Since Daniel Prude?"

Committee Members: Initially - Mary Jo Bonin, Joan Rosenthal, Dianne Stengel and Judy Sternberg; Georgia DeGregorio and Barbara Grosh joined in February and March of 2022 after Mary Jo and Dianne stepped off.

Consulting members: Sandra Frankel and Judy Weinstein

Our Own YouTube Channel

The League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metropolitan Area proudly announces that we have our own YouTube channel where you can view our past forums.

To view our past forums go to

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5_g.

You Tube

If you wish to share news or recognize the activities of other members please send the information to micketeditor@gmail.com



Volunteer Engagement Opportunities - Part 2

Do you have a talent or skill, a little time, and a desire to help strengthen LWV-RMA & empower local voters? We're looking for you!

Candidate Outreach: Each election, we prepare Vote411, our online voter guide, and try hard to organize candidate forums. We need to strengthen our team to undertake this work faster and more effectively. We would especially like members who have connections to town party committees, especially Republican town committees, to help us get fuller participation. If you'd like an excuse to build relationships with party operatives or you have such relationships and you'd like to use them to help candidates get their names before voters, this job is for you.

Datawonk: There's a lot of data to be tracked. For example, we need to update our League database with which districts our members live in. Also, we'd like to keep track of whom we register to vote and follow up to see that they make it on to the rolls. If you're patient with computer work, this might be the job for you! It can be done on your own schedule, from anywhere. Recluses, night-owls, parents who find themselves killing time at team practices, people whose spouses watch a lot of boring TV - this could be a fit!

Social Media Maven: Social media is an important way to get information out. We use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, but not as much as we should. If you can write short punchy messages and/or combine them with appealing visuals, we'd like to talk. Scrapbookers, here's a new outlet for you! There are great tools available. We could also use help running paid advertising on social media. If you've never done it, we'll teach you how. This could be a resume builder for some people!

Filmmaker: We've done a few short videos in recent years on topics like *Why a Voter Should Pick a Party When They Register, Voting After a Felony, How to Vote,* etc. We could do more. It would be great to have a team that could think about what messages we need to get out, script them, and use film or animation or stills with voice-over to convey them. There's lots of software available to make this manageable. Are you a little interested? Let's talk.

OutreachCircle Champion: LWVUS provides an app that could help us with getting out our message. It lets people use the contact list in their phone to forward a text message or email to their friends. Imagine if all the 20-somethings were to message each other reminders to vote, or everyone we talk to about the fact that former felons can vote were to message select members of their contact list! We need someone to dig in and learn to administer the app and then promote its use. You could be the one to make voting go viral.

New Americans Leadership Academy Planner: We are in discussions with the New Americans Advisory Council, which includes several different agencies that work with refugees. We know that voting rates among newly naturalized Americans are low. What can we do about it? There is some low-hanging fruit. There are some faith-based congregations which are mostly made up of New Americans. We could organize workshops to help bring them up to speed on political topics and find ways to engage them civically. Their level of knowledge of how things work is often low. What does the city do? What does the county do? What do the different parties stand for? Just exploring the ballot with a new American can give you a headache as you try to explain it. People who've enjoyed registering new Americans at naturalization ceremonies may find this role especially rewarding. We need volunteers who can plan a series of workshops, invite speakers, make presentations, invite interaction and work in multicultural groups.

Advocates: The LWV-RMA state advocacy team meets with all the state legislators who represent Monroe County to discuss budget priorities before the budget is passed, and later for bills without budget implications. Our pre-budget meetings are taking place right now and we can use some new members on our team. It's a great way to learn more about how NY State works and to get to know our legislators. We get guidance from LWVNYS on what matters to lobby on, so you don't have to be an expert to make an impact.

If you are interested in any of these activities send an email to Barbara Grosh at President@lwv-rma.org. Please Note: additional opportunities for engagement are listed in Part 1 on page 4



Member Area of LWV-RMA Website

By signing on to the Member Area of the LWV-RMA website you can access contact information for other members and even shop for LWV merchandise. Soon you will be able to sign up for volunteer activities such as voter registration events and have a calendar of the activities. You can access the Member Area directly using this link, https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/members.php.

If you are having issues signing on to the page, please feel free to contact Myra Pelz at webmaster@lwv-rma.org.

Welcome New Member April Laskey

April Laskey is a Professor Emeritus from Nazareth University who received a PhD in Economics from the University of Cincinnati (UC) in 1987. April is a cisgender heterosexual woman who wants everyone to use they/them pronouns. They believe that, in a small way, it would help dismantle our gender and race-based caste system. April is practicing they (rather than he/she) for their cat and has discovered that it's extremely hard to break entrenched grammar patterns.

They found the LWV-RMA February First Friday meeting energizing, having missed intellectual conversation since retirement and Covid.

April has volunteered to be the LWV-RMA representative on the LWVNYS ERA Advocacy Taskforce. April joined the League and supports NYS ERA legislation for several reasons. One is their memory of being told in 1975 by one of their professors that they were only allowed in the UC Masters program because of Affirmative Action. Another reason for their support is the repeal of Roe vs. Wade.

Please welcome April to LWV-RMA.



Ranked Choice Voting: Would it be Good for Rochester?

MARCH 20, 7:30PM ON ZOOM

Guest speaker: Joe Maissel, chair of the Elections Reform Committee of the LWV of Port Washington/ Manhasset

Did you know that Leagues around the state are considering whether to concur with LWVNYC's position in favor of Ranked Choice Voting? And our own League is asking the state board to put a state version of it on the agenda for the spring biennial state League Convention. Should LWV-RMA also champion Ranked Choice Voting for elections in Rochester?

Come and join us and learn all about what RCV is and how it works and why so many Leagues think it's better than the plurality system we currently use. We'll look at the position, hear about how it's doing in Leagues around the state and hear the pros and cons. At our annual meeting, we'll decide whether to concur with it.

Position to be concurred with:

- We support ranked-choice voting (sometimes called "instant runoff voting") in all local elections, including primaries, specials, and general elections.
- Voters should have the option to rank at least three and at most six candidates for a given office.
- The counting should cease to reallocate votes once a candidate receives over 50% of the current round's vote.
- RCV/IRV should happen in lieu of any head-to-head runoffs that might otherwise have occurred. Adequate funding should be provided for training, equipment, staff, and voter education.

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwtceCvgjgjHN13-6vZ4yRyzDe4xfkMtjtM.



Criminal Justice Reform Needs Your Support!

LWVNYS is advocating for the passage of three criminal justice reform bills. Please consider contacting your NYS Senators and Assembly members to urge passage of these bills. Advocacy Days in January and February had big turnouts and were received favorably. There is momentum.

These local legislators are already co-sponsors of all 3 bills: Senators Cooney and Brouk and Assembly members Bronson, Clark, and Meeks. Please ask them to push for the bills to be brought to the floor for votes. Other legislators should be asked to vote for the bills. **Please advocate in your own name. Individuals are not authorized to speak on behalf of the League.**

SUMMARY OF THE BILLS

Elder Parole Bill (S.2423-Hoylman/A.2035-Davila) – provides incarcerated individuals 55 years or older that have served at least 15 years of their sentence the opportunity for a parole board hearing. Such a hearing would not automatically release anyone. If parole is denied, the bill provides for reconsideration within 2 years. People of this age who have served this much time simply want to go home to their families, get needed medical treatment, and never set foot in prison again.

Fair and Timely Parole Bill (S.307-Salazar/A.162-Weprin) – sets the standard to be used by the NY State Board of Parole in their review of parole-eligible incarcerated persons. It would require considering the individual's merit and rehabilitation during their already-served sentence and assessing their readiness to start anew on release. While the original crime would be considered, it could no longer be the only factor. The Fair & Timely bill gives the opportunity for a meaningful parole board review and determination rather than one solely focused on continued punishment. The bill does not mean release would be automatic, the discretionary decision would still be in the hands of the parole board.

Clean Slate Act (S.211/A.1029) – would seal conviction records for civil purposes, and thereby remove barriers to housing, jobs, and education for eligible formerly incarcerated individuals. A person would be eligible to have records sealed 3 years after serving a misdemeanor sentence or 7 years after serving a felony sentence. Any probation or parole must be completed, and they must have no pending charges in NY. Sex offenses are not eligible for sealing. Clean Slate will not limit background checks by law enforcement, criminal courts, and some licensing and clearance agencies. This bill has been endorsed by major labor unions, business leaders, local legislatures, and Chambers of Commerce (including Rochester). It is expected to boost economic growth, expand the state's workforce and help businesses hire employees. Find more information at: https://www.cleanslateny.org/.

Your NYS legislators need to hear from you.

If you are not sure who represents you, search for your address for:

the Assembly at https://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/

and for the Senate at https://www.nysenate.gov/registration/nojs/form/start/find-my-senator.

Reach out and let them know your priorities!

We want The Voter to be informative and interesting to our readers. If you have ideas for articles or comments on the newsletter, please share them with micketeditor@gmail.com. And please remember to take pictures (including selfies) at events and send them in!



LWV-RMA Book Club Update



Book club members meeting via Zoom in February

LWV-RMA book club members met in February to discuss *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith.

The book club meets at 4:30 P.M. on the third Thursday of the month via Zoom. A link will be sent to everyone who expresses an interest to Judy Weinstein. (vote411@lwv-rma.org)

Below are the books for the next 3 months. To see the books for future months, consult our website: https://www.lwv-rma.org/lwv-rma book club.php.

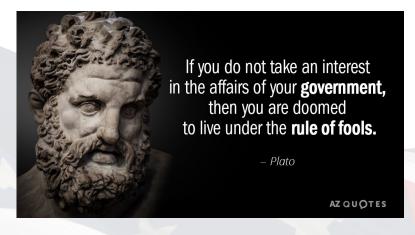
March 16 Sensational: The Hidden History of America's 'Girl Stunt Reporters' by Kim Todd – discussion led Deb

Gordon

April 20 Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution by Elie Mystal – discussion led by Elaine

Schmidt

May 23 The Avoidable War by Kenneth Rudd – discussion led by Georgia DeGregorio





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.

March

- The Propagandists' Playbook: How Search Engines Are Manipulated for Political Gain (1:00 P.M.-2:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 3 **LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:00 A.M. 1:00 P.M.) Bill Gray's Seabreeze, 4870 Culver Road
- 6 Lessons from Tocqueville in America (12:00 P.M.-1:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 7 Forgotten No More: Civic Seals and Re-affirming the Civic Mission of Schools (2:00 P.M-3:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 8 **LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 9 From Common Sense to Common Purpose (3:00 P.M.-4:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 9 Civic Education as a Matter of National Security (7:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- Finding Fairness in a Polarized Country: Practicing Civil Discourse (4:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M. via Zoom)

- 16 **LWV-RMA Book Group** (4:30 P.M. via Zoom)-Sensational: The Hidden History of America's 'Girl Stunt Reporters' by Kim Todd
- 20 LWV-RMA Ranked Choice Voting: Would It Be Good for Rochester? (7:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 25 **LWV-RMA Membership Drive** (10:00 A.M.-1:00 P.M. at SUNY Empire State College, 680 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY 14620)

April

- 7 **LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:00 A.M. 1:00 P.M.) Bill Gray's Seabreeze, 4870 Culver Road
- 12 **LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 20 **LWV-RMA Book Group** (4:30 P.M. via Zoom)-Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution by Elie Mystal

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

For Updated Calendar Information, Event Information 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 In Person!

Join us for social time at Bill Gray's at Sea Breeze. 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. And we have a lot of fun. Come when you can, leave when you must. No need to register, just come!

March 3

April 7

May 5

June 2

July 7



February First Friday on a cold 6 degree day.

First Friday happens every month.



PO Box 10573 Rochester, NY 14610 585-262-3730 www.LWV-RMA.org

APRIL VOTER DEADLINE IS MARCH 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.

Rochester VOTER

A Monthly Publication of the League of Women Voters/Rochester Metropolitan Area

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

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The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV-RMA

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Join the League Today!



Name:	
Address:	
City:	State:
Telephone:	E-Mail: _
Check Amount:	
Level of Membership:	
Please send this form and your check payable to League of Women Voters/RMA to:	

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

	Individual/Associate	
	Household	
	Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass	
	Carrie Chapman Catt	,
	Student (full or part time at an accredited institution) $\ \ldots \ \ldots \ \ldots$ FREE	
	Low income, call office at 262-3730 \$liding \$cale	
1	or send an email to: info@lwv-rma.org	1

or join us online at: https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/newmem/new-mem-reg.php?org_id=LWVR

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