

TheVOTER

Help LWV-RMA

**Welcome
New
Citizens.**



See Page 4 for more information

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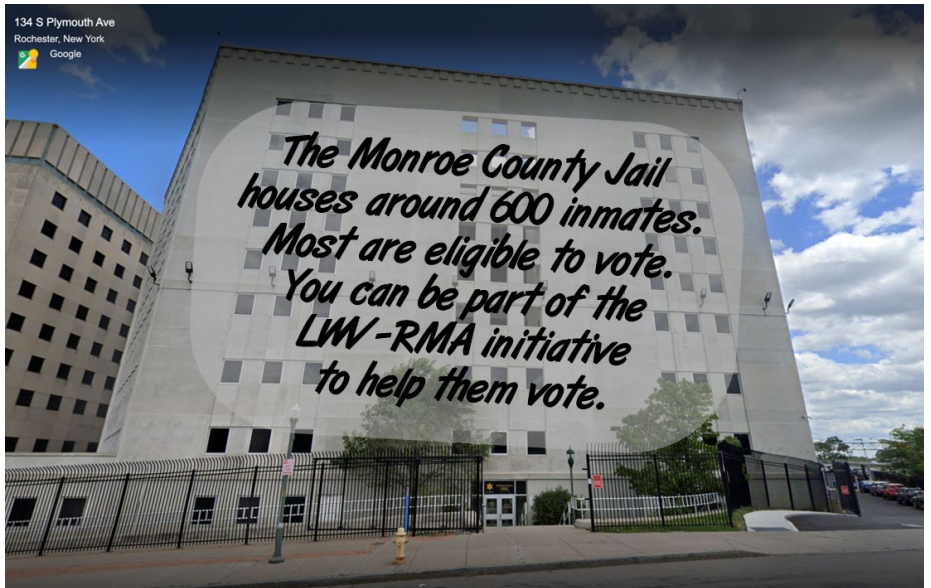
President's Corner

Voting in Jails in NY

Recently LWVNYYS studied voting in jails in NY. As of March, there were over 16,000 people in jail. Most were awaiting trial (meaning they have not been convicted of anything) and some were serving sentences for misdemeanors. Most were eligible to vote. About half of them are Black and a quarter Hispanic. This is a large group of very vulnerable people who have a lot at stake in our democracy, but are they able to participate?

The LWV designed a survey and hired law students to ask the 62 sheriffs who control the jails about voting in the jail population. The results show that there's a lot of room for improvement and the LWV is well-positioned to help. With the recent reduction in the lead-time for registration, helping incarcerated persons become voters is easier than it used to be.

The survey revealed that about 1/3 of the counties do little or nothing to encourage voting among detainees (by the description of the sheriffs themselves). Jail staff does not put high priority on voting, feeling instead that keeping things running smoothly and safely in the jail is their prime responsibility. There is also something of a conflict of interest for jail staff, who have power over these potential voters, to be the source of information about eligibility to vote, how to vote and how to learn about candidates and issues. Sheriffs are elected, as are district attorneys, so having jail officers mediating the voting process is problematic.



In late July, LWV-RMA member Judy Sternberg and I will visit the Monroe County Jail for a tour. We'll talk to some inmates about their experience with voting both in and out of jail. We'll also be looking at how the jail is organized and how we might play a role in helping people register to vote, and request and complete absentee ballots. We will also be assessing how we might help with civic education, helping prisoners learn about what things are on their ballot and how they are affected by them, as well as learning about the candidates.

The tour date is after we needed to finalize this newsletter, so look for the information we gather in the September issue. Stay tuned as we develop plans to help this captive audience become informed voters.

Barbara Grosh
President LWV-RMA

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

Reach out and let them know your priorities!

LWV-RMA Board Member Orientation

On Saturday July 8, members of the LWV-RMA Board met at the Pittsford Community Library to provide an orientation to the new members and review procedures and policies. The group agreed that the following Mission and Goals Statement was still appropriate.

To help meet the League Membership goal, a membership committee will be formed to allow focus on both recruiting new members and the administrative aspects of membership.

To help achieve the DEI goal, a committee will be formed to develop an implementation plan.

If you are interested in joining these committees, please contact president@lww-rma.org.

LWV-RMA Mission and Goals Statement

Mission: Empowering voters. Defending democracy.

Vision: We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.

One-sentence introduction: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan grassroots membership organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Goals

1. Advocacy

Increase and enhance our efforts to advocate for positions supported by LWV-RMA, LWVNYS, and LWVUS, by incorporating an advocacy component to League activities wherever possible. Educational forums will align with local, state or national program priorities or issues of public policy concern in the Rochester Metropolitan Area.

2. Voter Registration & Participation

To further encourage all citizens to register and cast informed votes we will: expand efforts to identify and overcome barriers to voting; explore and utilize best methods of outreach and communication; and learn from and partner with leaders and organizations who have credibility in targeted communities.

3. League Membership

Recruit, retain, develop, and engage new and current members by introducing them to programs that match their interests and utilizing member feedback for continuous improvement of member experience.

4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

LWV-RMA strives to have a membership as diverse as the Rochester Metropolitan community. To that end we will continue to build relationships among various age, ability, ethnic, gender, racial and socio-economic groups; and will consciously make the ask of persons from those groups to join and become integral parts of our 21st century League. With a commitment to implementation, a DEI Plan for LWV-RMA will be formulated and adopted.



LWV-RMA Opportunity: Become Engaged By Welcoming New Citizens

For many years, United States Citizens Immigration and Services (USCIS) in Buffalo has invited LWV-RMA members to participate in Naturalization Ceremonies where qualified immigrants are sworn in as new citizens by a judge. This invitation is not common for other Leagues in New York.

The USCIS inspectors are focused on the requirements and process of citizenship. The League volunteers focus on welcoming the participants and making the event as personal as possible. They spend time chatting with the candidates, explaining the voting process and helping with the voter registration forms.

There are approximately one hundred new citizens sworn in monthly at two or three ceremonies. Candidates come from an average of 25 different countries. Ceremonies take place at multiple locations. The number of voter registration forms completed varies, and many new citizens like to deliver them personally to the Board of Elections, but volunteers have delivered as many as 50 after a ceremony.

Meeting the candidates and helping them is a rewarding experience. As volunteer coordinator Sheila Abeling states, "It warms my heart to see the joy of the candidates as they participate in the procedures. At check-in, I see worried and nervous candidates. As the ceremony proceeds, I see happiness in becoming an official American citizen."

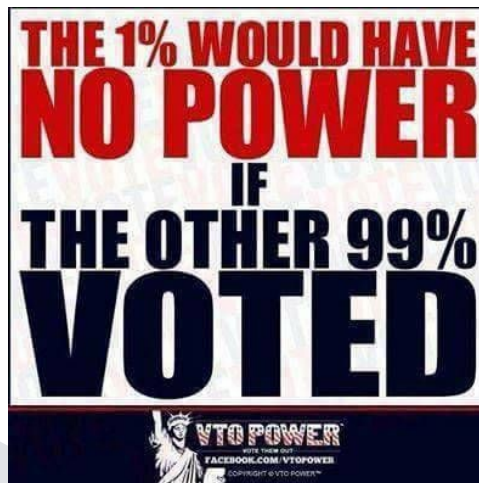
Members who have volunteered this year are: Sheila Abeling, JoAnn Kane-DeMott, Marcia Eisenberg, Beth Feldman, Anita Hawkins, Mary Menz, Tamara Minter, Katie Powell, Margret Roberts, Marilyn Rosen, Katherine Smith, Margaret Supinski, and Lois Winterkorn.

If you are interested in becoming engaged in this worthwhile activity, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162007@gmail.com.

Fair Election Practices Campaign

In recent years, fewer and fewer candidates have signed our Fair Campaign pledge, and in the last two election cycles, no candidates submitted complaints against their rivals via the Fair Election Practices Committee.

LWV-RMA submitted a query to the listserv for League presidents around the state and learned that almost no one still had an FEPC. The LWV-RMA Board therefore decided to terminate the FEPC.



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

Redistricting Team Report

Redistricting continues, maybe. This is where things stood on July 17th:

Monroe County

A lawsuit was filed to challenge the newly-drawn county legislature districts. The plaintiff's request for a restraining order (prior to June primaries) was denied in March. The defense's motion to dismiss the case was withdrawn in May. A hearing on the merits and standing was scheduled for July 27th.

NY Assembly

Following the court-ordered redrawing of Assembly district lines in 2022, another suit was filed. Consequently, the Independent Redistricting Commission was ordered to draw Assembly districts again. Their new map (very similar to the existing map) was approved by the Legislature and Governor Hochul in April.

Here is the new map:

<https://redistrictingpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NYIRC-Assembly-Plan-2023-1.html>

US House of Representatives

In mid-July, the New York State Appellate Division of the Supreme Court ruled that the Independent Redistricting Commission be tasked with drawing new Congressional districts again, to be approved by the Legislature. The new districts would take effect for the 2024 elections.

It's not over, not quite yet. It's widely anticipated that opponents will petition NY's highest court, the Court of Appeals, to overturn the decision.

If the Court of Appeals overturns the decision, existing Congressional districts will remain in effect. If the decision is upheld, a new map will be drawn by the Independent Redistricting Commission, probably with a schedule of hearings across New York State.

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



July 2023 Naturalization Ceremonies

On July 4, Marcia Eisenberg and Marilyn Rosen volunteered for the League at a naturalization ceremony. The ceremony was at the Genesee Country Village & Museum. There were 50 new citizens sworn in with Judge Mark Pedersen officiating.

There was another naturalization ceremony on July 19 at the George Eastman Museum. Tamara Minter, Lois Winterkorn and Beth Feldman represented the League of Women Voters - Rochester Metro Area. There were 75 candidates for citizenship.



Submitted by Sheila Abeling sheiler162007@gmail.com

VOTING:

**100% MORE EFFECTIVE THAN
COMPLAINING ON THE INTERNET**

Proposed Changes to New York Public Campaign Finance Program

In June 2023, the NYS Legislature passed S7564/A7760 which substantially changed the Public Campaign Finance Program (PCFP) in ways that will undermine the program's core objective of empowering small donors. The PCFP provides matching funds for candidates for statewide offices and the Legislature. The LWVNY, along with several other good government groups, called for the Governor to veto the bill.

As of July 25, 2023 Governor Hochul had neither signed nor vetoed the bill.

The PCFP, established by law in 2020, is scheduled to go into effect for the 2024 elections. The 2020 legislation matched donations up to \$250 only if the total donations from that donor was no more than \$250.

The new legislation allows a match on the first \$250 on contributions up to the maximum limit. That means that contributions of up to \$18,000 for statewide races, \$10,000 for senate, and \$6,000 for assembly will also have the first \$250 matched. Therefore, there is no longer an incentive to focus on small donors.

An analysis of the 2022 NYS elections produced jointly by OpenSecrets and the Brennan Center makes the need for the focus on small donors evident. The study showed that the 200 biggest donors to candidates gave almost \$16 million, which is \$2 million more than all 206,000 of the state's small donors put together. Those 200 mega donors have a larger voice in Albany than the 206,000 smaller donors.

The 2020 law ensured the candidates receiving matching funds were viable, by requiring them to have a specific number of donors. However the limits were set low enough to encourage new candidates. S7564/A7760 increased the dollars and donors as follows, which makes it more favorable for incumbents:

- For the Assembly, candidates must raise \$12,000 from 145 in-district donors (up from \$6,000 and 75 respectively).
- For the Senate, candidates must raise \$24,000 from 350 in-district donors (up from \$12,000 and 150).
- For low-income districts, the monetary thresholds will be \$6,000 in the Assembly (up from \$4,000) and \$16,000 in the Senate (up from \$8,000).

Read the complete Group Memo of Opposition at this link. <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Group-Memo-of-Opposition-to-A7760-Walker--S7564-Myrie-Makes-Structural-Changes-to-Public-Campaign-Finance-Law-1.pdf>

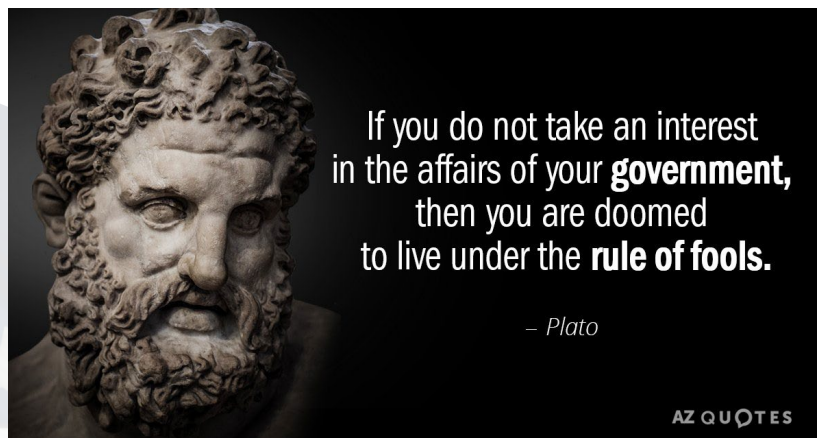
Contact Governor Hochul's office at

1-518-474-8390

or

www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form

if you agree she should veto S7564/A7760



Helping Formerly Incarcerated Understand Their Voting Rights

Editor's Note: Periodically The Voter will publish articles describing activities of other Chapters which might inspire our members to take action. This article was originally published by the Asbury Park Newsletter on May 23, 2023 and written by Alissa Deleo.



Annette Scott (center) leads a weekly class on voting rights for those on parole or probation. Photo Credit: Alissa Deleo.

NEPTUNE CITY, NJ — Annette Scott of Neptune is on a mission to help the formerly incarcerated understand their voting rights as they re-enter society, ensuring that those who wish to may cast their ballots in the June 6 statewide primary election.

Each Wednesday, Scott, a League of Women Voters of Southern Monmouth County (LWVSMC) board member, conducts a one-hour course at NJ Reentry's office, 72 Morris Ave., Neptune City, where those on parole or probation in New Jersey are given the opportunity to register to vote and decide if they would like to become poll workers.

"I inform them of their voting rights," Scott said, adding, "I explain how understanding their voting rights in New Jersey can help them, their community and their families."

During the weekly classes, Scott, assisted by Donna Lembo, helps formerly incarcerated citizens in their registration process by reviewing and mailing each application.

In March 2018, Scott formed a partnership between the LWVSMC and the Monmouth County chapter of the New Jersey Reentry Corporation to launch the Reenter-Register-Vote (RRV) initiative, which makes the voter registration process a regular part of a citizen's reentry into society once their sentence is complete.

Scott's program has now helped over 5,000 citizens vote and has successfully "planted seeds of interest that she hopes will grow into full participation in our democracy."

Twice a year before the primaries in June and the general election in November, Scott offers voter registration to those in parole facilities in Cumberland, Passaic, Camden and Mercer counties.

"When I tell them they can cast their vote and I see the look on their face and how they want to fill out the voter application — I'm happy," she said.

Scott also visits Morris and Camden jails to complete voter registration with detainees who have not been sentenced. She hopes to soon be offering this service in Monmouth County.

Scott said she is passionate about educating individuals on the importance of voting in all elections, not just presidential ones.

"Too many think that their vote doesn't count or that they can only vote for the president," Scott explained. "I educate them on the history of voting rights and encourage them to exercise their right to vote in local elections, such as for the mayor of their town, council members, state senators, and board of education."

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation is a nonprofit agency with a social mission to remove all barriers to employment for citizens returning from jail or prison. Former Gov. Jim McGreevey is chairman of the nonprofit's board.

The League of Women Voters is a 102-year-old nationwide, nonpartisan organization that originally encouraged women's suffrage and assisted women with the voting process."

This article was originally published by the Asbury Park Newsletter on May 23, 2023 and written by Alissa Deleo.

be a **Voter!**

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.


August

- 4 LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.)
I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 8 News Literacy Project’s How to Fact Check in the AI Age (7:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M. via Zoom.)
- 9 LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. via Zoom)

September

- 1 LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.)
I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 9 LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M. via Zoom)

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



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!

Come to First Friday for Some Social Time at I-Square in Irondequoit!

Join First Friday In Person Join us 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. And we have a lot of fun. Come when you can, leave when you must. No need to register, just come!

Aug 4
Sept 1



First Friday happens every month.

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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**SEPTEMBER VOTER
DEADLINE IS AUGUST 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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https://members.lwv-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
Low income, call office at 262-3730	\$sliding \$scale
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