

# TheVOTER



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## President's Corner

### Thinking About How We Vote

Our democracy isn't working all that well these days, which is sparking experimentation with some of its mechanics. The LWV prepared the way for our participation in debating such experiments with a thoughtful position statement passed in 2020.

Among other things, the LWVUS position says that electoral systems should:

- Encourage voter participation and voter engagement
- Encourage those with minority opinions to participate
- Promote sincere voting over strategic voting
- Discourage negative campaigning
- Encourage meaningful discussion of issues
- Require the winner in single-seat races to receive a majority of the votes

The League in New York City advocated for Ranked Choice Voting, which meets those criteria better than the "first past the post" system we inherited from the British. Now a coalition of Leagues is pushing for LWVNYS to lobby for Ranked Choice Voting in state primaries. In discussing the proposed state position, I've learned that in NY any locality could choose to use Ranked Choice Voting for local elections. I have a strong inclination to propose it in Rochester, especially for city council at-large seats and school board seats, where voters are frequently encouraged to undervote to avoid accidentally electing someone they like less than their top choices.

#### ALL-PARTY PRIMARIES

Another electoral innovation is to change primaries so that all candidates run against each other. This is the practice in California, Washington, and Alaska. Nevada has voted to adopt it and Wisconsin is seriously considering it. The LWV-RMA voted at our January membership meeting to ask for a study at the state level, because, unlike Ranked Choice Voting, it seems that it will require changes in the state elections statute to permit localities to try it.

Nearly anyone who's eligible to vote could hold office, but only a tiny handful will appear on a general election ballot. It's the primaries where the great cull occurs, so their impact on the democratic process is immense. In Monroe County 26% of voters are not registered in a party and thus can't vote in a primary. Another six percent of local voters register in third parties, which seldom hold primaries. I don't see why these voters should be disqualified from voting in the primary. Why should partisan opinions disenfranchise them?

Watch your email for announcements. We'll be organizing webinars to delve into these electoral innovations soon.

**Barbara Grosh**, LWV-RMA President  
[president@lwg-rma.org](mailto:president@lwg-rma.org)

#### 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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5_g).

Watch Us On



If you wish to share news or recognize the activities of other members please send the information to [micketeditor@gmail.com](mailto:micketeditor@gmail.com)

## Monroe County Legislature Redistricting 2030

While it appears that the redistricting of the County Legislature following the 2020 Census is finally complete (assuming there are no lawsuits), the League is thinking ahead to 2030. Most would agree that the process used in this redistricting cycle needs improvement. The League has spoken in favor of changes to the composition of the Legislative District Revision Commission many times in the past. Since the redistricting process and the composition of the Commission are described in the County Charter, a major change will require an amendment to the Charter.

A group of LWV-RMA members has been formed to develop a League proposal in support of an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) for the next County Legislature redistricting, which will occur after the 2030 Census. Our first step will be to gather information about IRCs in New York. We anticipate that analysis of the data will help us determine why some IRCs are successful and others are not. Once we have the framework of a proposal, we will invite other community members to join the League in filling in the details of the proposal and participating in a public campaign for the necessary County Charter amendment.

We hope you'll join us in Phase 1 - contacting League members from New York counties with IRCs to obtain information on how the process works and was implemented in that county. If you've never done anything like this, it's always fun to talk with members from other local Leagues! If you are interested, please contact me at [redistricting@lwg-rma.org](mailto:redistricting@lwg-rma.org).

**Judy Weinstein**, *Government Committee*

## Redistricting Team

This is where redistricting stood on January 15th.

### MONROE COUNTY

The dispute over county legislative districts appears to be over, but that wasn't 100% certain at the time this was written.

The competing factions of various legislators and County Executive Bello agreed on a compromise map in mid-December. The map was approved by the Legislature on December 29th, and later signed by Adam Bello.

However, neither of the two lawsuits in Federal court had been withdrawn yet, and rumors of a possible third lawsuit continued to circulate.

So – it seems settled, but by mid-January that was not yet certain.

### NY ASSEMBLY

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

The Commission traveled the state to hear public reaction to their proposed map and came to Rochester on January 10th. It heard from about ten speakers, including local League President Barbara Grosh. Most speakers spoke in opposition to proposed lines that would divide Brighton and separate Pittsford and Mendon from Monroe County.

There is still 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@lwg-rma.org](mailto:redistricting@lwg-rma.org).

## Rochester City Council Redistricting

The Rochester City Council has four members who are elected in districts and five members who are elected at-large. The City Council is required to reconfigure its districts after the decennial census to reflect the "one person, one vote" rule. Although the existing City Council districts met the requirements, City Council sought public input in assessing whether better lines could be drawn. The Council asked for the assistance of the League in planning and running listening sessions and developing an on-line survey. In response to resident input and in an effort to get the districts still closer in size, small adjustments were made to the district lines. After releasing the maps, a public hearing was held and the new district lines were adopted.

**Judy Weinstein**  
[redistricting@lwg-rma.org](mailto:redistricting@lwg-rma.org)



## January Membership Meeting

The January Membership Meeting of the LWV-RMA was held on Saturday January 14 via Zoom. The meeting began with an overview of the new website, <https://www.lwv-rma.org>. The site offers an easy way to obtain contact information for fellow members, learn of upcoming events, volunteer for activities, and read the Sunshine reports that were previously published in The Voter.

The attendees reviewed the proposed local Position Statement on Planning & Zoning. Cathy Kane read the proposal and summarized the pros and cons of each section. Members asked for a revision of the section of the statement which addresses displacement of residents due to development to specifically include tenants as well as homeowners.

Judy Weinstein discussed a committee being formed to study how independent redistricting commissions are working in other NYS counties or cities. This initial investigation may lead to a proposal for revising the procedures in Monroe County for the 2030 redistricting. (See more information on this committee on page 3.)

The group agreed that two proposals should be made for study by LWVNYS.

One recommendation is for a study of all-party primaries and related voting methods. The second proposed study would evaluate current economic development policies and practices by NYS and its localities, and formulate a new LWVNYS position in this area. This proposal was developed from a discussion by the LWV-RMA Book Club. (More information on both the proposed studies can be found on pages 2 and 6.)

Judy Weinstein presented the Legislative Priorities of LWV-NYS for 2023. Members voted on their top three priorities and there was a tie for third place. The top four priorities that will be submitted to the State League are (1) Election Law; (2) Criminal Justice Reform, under Judicial Issues; (3) Climate change under Natural Resources, and (4) Good Government Reform.



## New York State Equal Rights Amendment To be On 2024 Ballot

On January 24, 2023 the NYS Legislature passed the NYS Equal Rights Amendment. The following press release was issued by LWVNYS:

"Today we celebrate the second passage of the NYS Equal Rights Amendment which brings New York one step closer to our goal of codifying basic protections for all New Yorkers into our state's constitution. Over 100 years ago, the League of Women Voters of New York State was founded on the premise that women deserve to be treated as equals under NYS law. The League now stands and fights for equity for all New Yorkers. In November of 2024, New Yorkers will have the power to vote to protect and prohibit discrimination by the government based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, and sex, including their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes. This includes protection against any action that would infringe upon a person's reproductive autonomy or access to reproductive care. It is critical that New Yorkers head to the polls in 2024 and vote yes for the NYS inclusive Equal Rights Amendment. Equality is not debatable."

**Laura Bierman**, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of NYS

## Videos of LWV-RMA Public Forums are Available

Two events have been posted on our YouTube channel recently. If you could not attend live, you may wish to check these out:

### A DISCUSSION WITH JUSTIN MURPHY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v41reYv2rVM>

Justin Murphy discusses his book *"Your Children Are Very Greatly In Danger"*. The book focuses on the impact of historical systematic practices and policies that have impacted the Rochester City School District. Mr. Murphy makes three recommendations which he believes are required to address the situation:

1. A comprehensive report on potential major metropolitan reforms in education and other areas, including the viability of a unified countywide school system
2. Written policies for greater equity for enrollment and participation for suburban districts in the Urban-Suburban program
3. Intensive antiracism education for children and adults in all Rochester area school districts

### MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONSE: HOW HAS IT CHANGED SINCE DANIEL PRUDE'S DEATH?

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=V9DHJLGC4U4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9DHJLGC4U4)

This was a panel discussion on the impact of the Person In Crisis (PIC) team that was formed in 2020 in response to the deaths of George Floyd and Daniel Prude. (See picture of the panelists at the right.) The supervisor of the PIC team, Leslie Gordon-Ogden, reported that the team has developed a strong relationship with the Rochester Police Department (RPD). The RPD has increased the types of calls the PIC team is called in on. The team consists of 24 members and is staffed 24/7. The main concerns for the team are:

1. Lack of resources for long term solutions, such as affordable housing and mental health follow up staff
2. Long term funding for the team

You can access recordings of all our public forums, including Candidate forums on our YouTube channel [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5\\_g/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5_g/videos).



## December 2022 Naturalization Ceremony

Judge Joseph Nesser officiated at the final 2022 Naturalization Ceremony on December 13. There were 53 candidates from 29 different countries, and 42 registered to vote at the ceremony. Beth Feldman and Margret Roberts represented the League.

Thank you, Beth and Margret, for your efforts.

The 2023 Naturalization Ceremonies will be listed on the League website soon. Every member is welcome to attend and observe. If you decide to attend, please let Sheila know that you will be attending.

**Sheila Abeling**

[sheiler162007@gmail.com](mailto:sheiler162007@gmail.com)





## Proposed LWNYS Study of Economic Incentives Offered by NYS & Its Localities

After the LWV-RMA Book Club discussed the book *Fulfillment: Winning & Losing in One-Click America* by Alec MacGillis in November, we were incensed and felt that there was a role for the League in responding to what we learned regarding abuse of economic incentives. The proposal for this study is an outgrowth of our book club discussion and was a joint effort of Georgia DeGregorio, Mary Hussong-Kallen, Elaine Schmidt, Judy Wadsworth, and Judy Weinstein.

At our annual local Program Planning Meeting in January, our proposal to request that LWNYS do a study that will evaluate current economic development policies and practices by NYS and its localities, and formulate a new LWNYS position in this area, was approved, and will be presented to LWNYS Board, and hopefully will be discussed at the state convention in June 2023.

In researching the process as it currently exists, we quickly found several examples of abuse: the local Medley Center (formerly Irondequoit Mall), the Buffalo Billion program, and a \$516 million soccer stadium in Queens.

We also came across two reports that outline the purpose and problems with tax incentives.

The first is a report entitled “*New York State Business Tax Credits: Analysis and Evaluation*” prepared for the New York State Tax Reform and Fairness Commission in 2013. It states, “There is, however, no conclusive evidence from research studies conducted since the mid-1950s to show that business tax incentives have an impact on net economic gains to the states above and beyond the level that would have been attained absent the incentives. In addition, business tax incentives violate principles of good tax policy and tenets of good budgeting.”

The second report, “*How States Are Improving Tax Incentives for Jobs and Growth*” was published in 2017 by the Pew Charitable Trusts. This report says that “evaluations of tax incentives that rigorously measure the economic and fiscal impact of their programs are required to provide policymakers with realistic, reliable information on the effectiveness of incentives, including fraud and waste.” The Pew report said of NYS:

- It has not adopted a plan for regular evaluation of tax incentives.
- The state has produced several evaluations in recent years that have helped improve incentives, but other programs are not subject to the same scrutiny.
- High-quality evaluations could help inform ongoing debates over the merits of Start-Up NY and other incentive programs.

The Pew Report was written in 2017, but it doesn’t appear that things have improved since then. In 2021 the NYS Comptroller’s office found that Empire State Development did not evaluate most of the tax incentive programs it is responsible for, and the ones that it did report on, such as Start-Up New York and Excelsior Jobs Program, did not provide supporting documentation.

We recommend that the study look at incentives in the aggregate as well as individual awards, including: the approval process, ancillary and/or hidden costs of incentives (such as the loss of school and local tax revenues needed to provide services), evaluation and oversight, and alternatives to tax and other economic incentives. We further recommend that the study findings be used to develop a LWNYS position on economic incentives.



**be a voter!**



## New Member Introduction: Rachel Brill

Currently studying for a master's in library science, Rachel has a deep interest in history, particularly civil and women's rights. Growing up in a League household, she has long seen the power of activism and organized work. Hearing from her mother, Barbara Grosh, about some of the current initiatives and projects, she knew it was time to join. She's especially happy that the LWVNYS is organizing to have the state ERA passed in 2024. She has experience with non-profit marketing and voter registration events, and looks forward to finding where she is most useful to the League. Rachel is a fourth generation League member.

## Welcome to LWV-RMA

The following new members joined during January:

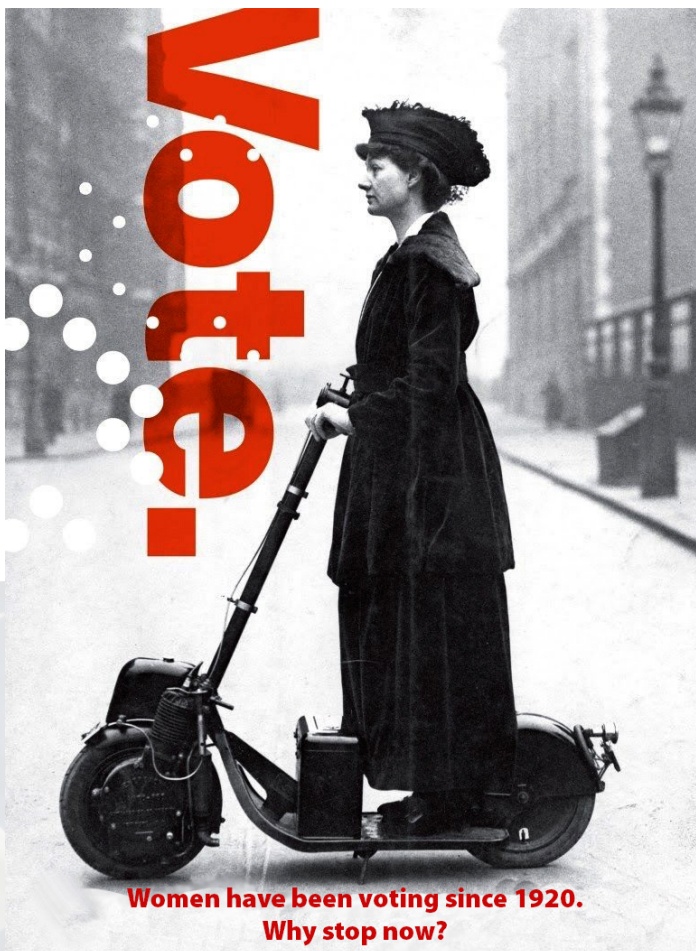
Rachel Brill

April Laskey

## In Memoriam

### MARY ALICE KENDALL

Mary Alice Kendall died on January 5, 2023 at St. Ann's Home in Webster, NY. She was born in Liberal, Kansas on September 18, 1921. She graduated from Kansas State University with a BS degree in Chemistry and was one of the first female chemists hired by Eastman Kodak in 1943. Mary Alice was very active with the League of Women Voters. She is remembered as one of the people who, in the 1950s and 60s, steered the League to prominence and productivity.



If you wish to share news or recognize the activities of other members please send the information to [micketeditor@gmail.com](mailto:micketeditor@gmail.com)



## LWV-RMA Book Club Update

LWV-RMA book club members met in December to discuss *Fulfillment: Winning and Losing in 1-Click America* by Alec MacGillis. The discussion led to a proposal to the LWVNYS for the formation of a study group. (See page 6 for details.) In January they discussed *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich.

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](mailto:vote411@lwv-rma.org))

Below are the books for the next 3 months. To see the books for future months, consult our website, [lwv-rma.org](http://lwv-rma.org), click on Get Involved and then LWV-RMA Book Club.

- February 16     *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith – discussion led by Chris Pryor
- March 16        *Sensational: The Hidden History of America's 'Girl Stunt Reporters'* by Kim Todd – discussion led by Deb Gordon
- April 20        *Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution* by Elie Mystal – discussion led by Elaine Schmidt



LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK! 

We know you'll "like" us!

[www.facebook.com/lwvofrma](https://www.facebook.com/lwvofrma)



# Calendar

## February

- 1 Scholar Exchange: A Celebration of African American History and the First Amendment (2:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 3 LWV-RMA First Friday (11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.) Bill Gray's Seabreeze, 4870 Culver Road
- 7 Political Equality: Concept and Measurement (3:00 P.M.-4:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 8 LWV-RMA Board Meeting (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 8 *Unbroken and Unbowed: A History of Black Protest in America* (7:00 P.M.-8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 15 *Common Sense Americans: Electoral Count Act success and promising issues for this Congress.* (8:00 P.M.-9:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 16 *Saying It Loud: 1966—The Year Black Power Challenged the Civil Rights Movement* (1:00 P.M.-2:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 16 LWV-RMA Book Club - *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith (4:30 P.M. via Zoom)

- 22 *The Lincoln Miracle: Inside the Republican Convention That Changed History* (1:00 P.M.-2:00 P.M. via Zoom)
- 28 Infrastructure Development and Democratic Participation (3:00 P.M.-4:15 P.M. via Zoom)

## March

- 3 LWV-RMA First Friday (11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.) Bill Gray's Seabreeze, 4870 Culver Road
- 8 LWV-RMA Board Meeting (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 16 LWV-RMA Book Club - *Sensational: The Hidden History of America's 'Girl Stunt Reporters'* by Kim Todd (4:30 P.M. via Zoom)

Whenever you attend a League event, take pictures & email them the Voter editor at [micketeditor@gmail.com](mailto:micketeditor@gmail.com).



**Note: For links to Zoom meetings, please visit our website: [lwv-rma.org](http://lwv-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](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 for Informal Conversations!

Join First Friday in person for informal conversations— for a few minutes or for the full two hours, just for fun and to learn more about League activities:

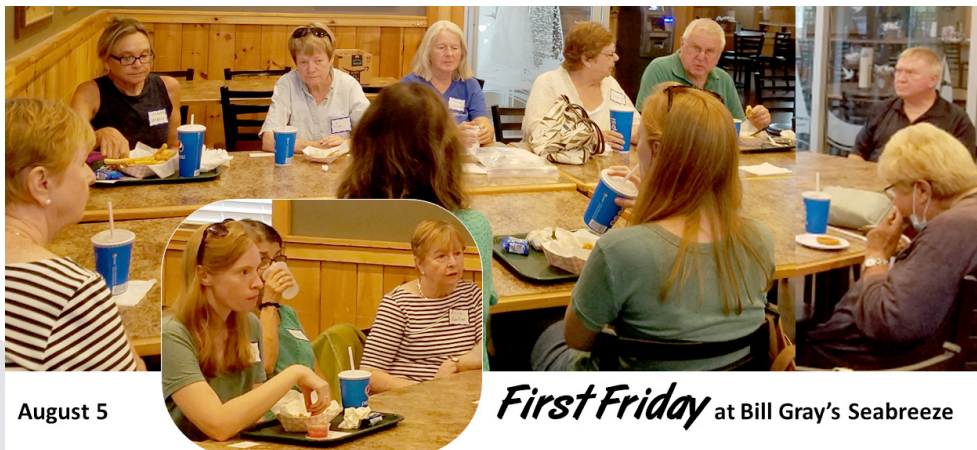
February 3

March 3

April 7

May 5

June 2



August 5

**First Friday** at Bill Gray's Seabreeze

First Friday happens every month.

photos by Mary Micket

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](http://www.LWV-RMA.org), call 262-3730 or e-mail us at [info@lwv-rma.org](mailto:info@lwv-rma.org)

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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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Judy Wadsworth*

*Layout/Design,  
Chris Burleigh*

## MARCH VOTER DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 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.**

## Join the League Today!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form and your check payable to  
League of Women Voters/RMA to:

LWV-RMA  
PO Box 10573  
Rochester, NY 14610  
or join us online at:

[https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/newmem/new-mem-reg.php?org\\_id=LWVR](https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/newmem/new-mem-reg.php?org_id=LWVR)

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate	..... \$75
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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
or send an email to: <a href="mailto:info@lwv-rma.org">info@lwv-rma.org</a>	