

TheVOTER



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF ROCHESTER METRO AREA

Presents
a 2-part
webinar:

What do NYS kids learn about our racist history? *And what do you know?*

Session 1 - Slavery in New York State
Monday, April 17, 7:00 – 8:30 P.M.

Session 2 - 20th Century Racist Policies
Monday, April 24, 7:00 – 8:30 P.M.

Led by The
Antiracist Curriculum
Project Leaders

**Kesha James
& Shane Wiegand**



See page 3
for details.

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President's Corner

LWVUS and the Structure Transformation Plan

The leadership of our national League did some introspection a few years back and realized that changes needed to occur for the League to survive. Like almost all membership organizations, new younger members were not joining to replace older members, so the average age was climbing while membership was falling. LWVUS began planning how to turn the ship in about 2015. I admire the process.

There are basic questions in play. What are you joining when you join the League? The national and state levels were not actually membership organizations at all. You joined at the local level and the local League made payments to the state and national organizations, but you were not a member and couldn't vote. Instead, the local leagues were members and voted at the state and local level. That's one thing that will be changing. We'll have a unified membership system with a common national dues structure. The national and state offices will be strengthened, providing more services to local Leagues, making it possible for local Leagues to focus on mission-oriented work and less on administrative tasks required to keep the lights on.

New York is one of the better-off state Leagues. New York is a populous state with 47 local Leagues. Our state has an office and staff and we are able to coordinate work between the locals to work for state issues. Many states are in a different position. When you only have 5-7 local Leagues, they can't support strong state offices, so the impact of the Leagues in these states is not what we might wish. Considering the ongoing challenges to voting rights and the power that non populous states have nationally via the Senate, the national power of the LWV has been limited.

In the past couple of years, the LWVUS has hired a wonderful group of young staff known as the Organizing Team. They offer some new tools designed to help us be more effective. It's a tough job they have, teaching us old dogs new tricks, but I have hopes. One thing I'm hoping is that they might offer up-to-date web tools that would make it easy for us to ask members to contact their representatives at different levels. Lots of advocacy groups offer that, but with our decentralized structure, it's been beyond our means.

I'm on a national working group to give input on the questions that will come up as the newly structured League shares data. I'm hoping to be able to help structure the new system to make our work easier here and to make us more powerful at state and national levels as well. Some of our New York members on the working groups are lerier than I am about strengthening the state and national levels. They're afraid the local Leagues will suffer. The example of Common Cause is cited. Apparently Common Cause used to be an organization of local chapters, but now it's just a national membership organization. I believe that we locals are dedicated to our local voter service work and that won't happen.

It's invigorating to me to participate in the process, learning about the League beyond Rochester. The consultants who are working on the proposed plans will submit them to state representatives in June. I'll keep you posted on how things develop.

Barbara Grosh, LWV-RMA President
president@lwg-rma.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!

What do NY kids learn about our racist history? And what do you know?

2-PART WEBINAR

MONDAY, APRIL 17 AND MONDAY, APRIL 24, 7PM-8:30PM

We've seen bitter cultural wars in some states over teaching about racism and slavery. New York has largely escaped the vitriol, but that doesn't mean our curriculums are great. Most of us know that slavery and Jim Crow happened in the South and lynching happened in the South. You'd think there was never any racial problem in New York at all. The Antiracist Curriculum Project, hosted by PathStone, and co-led by Rochester educators Kesha James and Shane Wiegand, is working to change that. They have developed lesson plans for K-12 teachers covering the history of slavery in New York as well as racist policies in the 20th century which have made residential segregation deeply entrenched. They also teach about the resistance to slavery and racism.

In 2022, the League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metro Area invited Kesha and Shane to tell us about their curriculum. We learned a lot and gave them our Making Democracy Work award. We believe that the information they've put together for school kids needs to be learned by adults as well, because in order to solve the problems created, we need to understand their source.

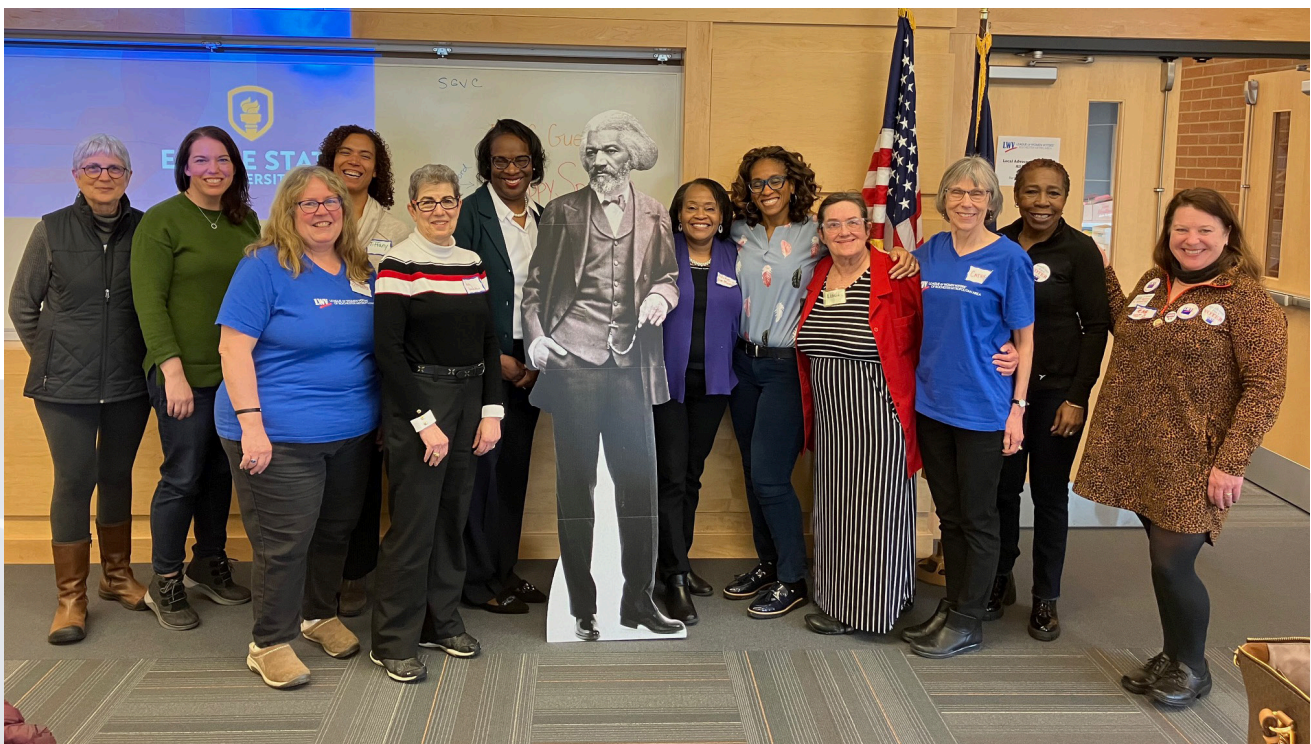
In Session 1 (April 17, 7PM-8:30PM), they will teach us about slavery in New York. Yes, we had it! It provided the basis for many of the biggest and most profitable corporations, many of which are still around today. And New York is full of places named after enslavers, just as we hear about in the South.

In Session 2 (April 24, 7PM-8:30PM) they will teach us about racist policies in the 20th century and the persistent legacy of segregation that continues to trap Black and Brown communities in poverty.

Prepare to be surprised by what you learn. And while much of it is disturbing, it is presented in a gentle manner that will draw you in rather than shut you down. Kesha and Shane are experts in social and emotional learning and their curriculum is delivered in a way which makes difficult subjects accessible and relevant to all.

Don't leave learning about our past to the kids, join us. Please spread the word throughout your social networks. There is important work to do and we need to be educated to do it.

Register at: <https://bit.ly/DEI-LWV-RMA>



Frederick Douglass helps celebrate a successful LWV-RMA membership drive – See page 9 for more information.

Legislative Interviews



Some of LWV-RMA Government Committee members who met with the lawmakers and/or their aides in March.



Pictured during those sessions are NYS Senator Samra Brouk as well as Assembly Members Marjorie Byrnes, Stephen Hawley, Josh Jensen, Jen Lunsford, Brian Manktelow, and Demond Meeks. The committee also met with staff members of Senators Samra Brouk, Jeremy Cooney, and Robert Ortt, as well as of Assembly Members Harry Bronson, Sarah Clark, Jennifer Lunsford and Demond Meeks.

LWV-RMA members met with 11 of the 12 legislators who represent Monroe County or their staff members to discuss the budget priorities of the LWVNY. We also asked what their priorities are for this legislative session. Thanks to Zoom, we were able to conduct all these meetings in less than three weeks, often with two, and in one case three meetings, in the same day. We were also able to meet with them on days that they were in Albany.

The election-related issues that we discussed included:

- Increased funding for county Boards of Election,
- Passage and funding of the Companion Database Bill for the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York, and
- Providing the Public Campaign Finance Board (PCFB) with the funds that it requested to provide matching funds for candidates who participate in the program to reduce the role of big donors.

We also spoke about the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, which would increase the deposit amount from 5 cents per bottle to 10 cents and expand the types of bottles that would require deposits, and the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act.

The League supports the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act but because it is a complex issue that requires thorough discussion, the League recommended that it be removed from the budget process and be considered as a standalone bill after the budget is passed.

The final issue that we brought up was Digital Equity, providing affordable, high-speed internet access in both urban and rural communities.

After the budget is passed, LWVNY will determine its post-budget priorities and we will meet with legislators again. If you would like to join the team of Tonia Canty-McKinney, Scott Forsyth, Barbara Murphy, Elaine Schmidt, Katherine Smith, Judy Wadsworth and Judy Weinstein, please contact me at vote411@lwv-rma.org. Don't feel intimidated by the number of meetings we conduct; members attend as many or as few as they are able. New members of the group observe and don't present until they feel ready to do so.

Judy Weinstein

vote411@lwv-rma.org

LWV-RMA Mission Statement and Goals

It is a good idea to occasionally step back from the rush of activities to remember the mission and goals of any group. They are shown below for our organization. These are also found in our Handbook, which is in the members section of the web page under resources. <https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/>

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political 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; utilizing member feedback for continuous improvement of member experience; and expanding general membership meetings to at least four per year (June Annual Business Meeting, January Membership & Program Planning Meeting, plus a Fall Member Meeting and a Spring Member Meeting).

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 we 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.

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

Vote411.org

LWV-RMA is expanding our Vote411 election coverage to include ALL school board races in Monroe County! We are teaming with parent activists to cover all twenty May school board elections. They will provide questions that we will vet and the names of the candidates and the email addresses for each, and will publicize Vote411 in each school district. We have set up the races in Vote411 and will enter the questions and names of candidates, email the invitations to the candidates, and publish Vote411 before the election. League member Isobel Gillen is taking the lead role for these races in Vote411.

We will soon be preparing for the June primary elections in Vote411. This will be a busy year with the County Executive, District Attorney, County Legislature, Rochester City Council district members, Rochester City School District Commissioners, town offices and several judges all on the ballot. If you would like to get involved, please contact me at vote411@lwv-rma.org. We can always use more people on the team and you can work whenever it is convenient for you.

Judy Weinstein

vote411@lwv-rma.org

The League Participated in the March 8 Naturalization Ceremony at the George Eastman Museum



Judges Paul R. Warren and Mark W. Pedersen welcome new citizens.



There were 94 candidates for citizenship at an 11:00 A.M. ceremony. Margret Roberts, Lois Winterkorn and Sheila Abeling volunteered for the ceremony. Judges Paul R. Warren and Mark W. Pedersen officiated. The candidates came from 47 countries.

If you have never attended a naturalization ceremony, you should consider doing so. It is very rewarding.

Also, if you would like to consider volunteering for naturalization oath ceremonies, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162007@gmail.com. Our main task at the naturalization ceremony is to inform the candidates about voting and to help them register to vote.

Welcome New Board Member Amy Hahn

Amy Hahn was born and raised in Rochester and is a trademark attorney with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. She graduated from Northeastern University School of Law in 2020. Prior to attending law school, she completed a year of AmeriCorps VISTA service and graduated with a B.S. in public relations (with a minor in music performance) from Syracuse University. She graduated from Gates-Chili High School.

She has been involved with the League since 2020, assisting in various social media projects. She is excited to get more involved with the League and support its mission of encouraging active, informed participation in government. In particular, she hopes to increase engagement with the League and local government through her role as the Director of Communications.

Outside of work and volunteering, Amy enjoys trying local food and drink (especially vegetarian or vegan options), participating in a community band, staying active through racket sports and golf, and spending time with her family, friends, and cat.



Sunshine Reports Can be Found Here:

https://www.lwv-rma.org/be_informed.php

Redistricting Team Update

THIS IS WHERE REDISTRICTING STOOD ON MARCH 15TH:

Monroe County

Monroe County legislative districts are drawn, and candidates are preparing their campaigns.

However, a lawsuit was filed in March to challenge the new districts. The lawsuit claims that the new districts were drawn with a political bias – to favor incumbent Democrats in the city and maintain Republican dominance in the suburbs.

The suit asks the court to draw new lines before the June primary. It could be the first court test of the redistricting law passed by the state legislature in late 2021.

The plaintiff is an associate of Legislator Rachel Barnhart, who was a central figure in the year-long redistricting debate.

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 finished its scheduled hearings in March. As of March 15th, they had not yet announced if revisions would be made to the proposed map.

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

Save the Date!!

May 17 Annual Meeting
Locust Hill Country Club
5 P.M. to 7 P.M.

Ranked Choice Voting Webinar

Rank Choice Voting (RCV) is becoming more common. Over 20 cities, including New York City, and 2 states (Alaska and Maine) are using the process. Nevada voted in 2022 to use it in future elections. It is also not a new process. Australia and Ireland have used the process for over 100 years. Canada, Scotland and New Zealand also use RCV.

Fourteen state Leagues have positions that favor RCV. The New York City League adopted a position in support in 2009, and was instrumental in educating voters when the process was adopted in the City. The National League adopted a position in 2020 that favors alternatives to the current system of plurality voting. The LWV-RMA has requested that the State League adopt a position in favor of RCV for primary elections at the State Convention in June.

The main benefit of RCV is that the final winner of the election was a choice of over 50% of voters. In the current plurality system the winner only has the most votes, which could be only a small percentage of the total when several candidates are running.

The LWV-RMA sponsored a Webinar on March 20 with Joe Maissel, chair of the Elections Reform Committee at LWV of Port Washington/Manhasset that clearly explained the RCV process, described the benefits and potential issues, and answered member's questions.

The highly informative Webinar, which lasts approximately 60 minutes, can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkpTOJhmz94>.



What is Ranked Choice Voting?

- In addition to indicating your preferred candidate on the ballot as we currently do, you would also indicate your 2nd choice, 3rd choice and so on.
- When the votes are tabulated, the number of first choice votes for each candidate is counted.
- If one candidate has received a majority (more than 50%) of the votes, that candidate is the winner.
- If no one has a majority, the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated and that candidate's voters' ballots are redistributed to their second-choice pick.
- If this redistribution of ballots gives a candidate a majority of the votes, that candidate is the winner. If not, again the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated with that candidate's votes being redistributed.
- This continues until a candidate has a majority of the votes.

Membership Drive

On Saturday March 25 LWV-RMA members and potential members gathered to share what the League is up to in 2023 and discuss potential initiatives to promote a stronger community.



*TOP: LWV_RMA President Barbara Grosh welcoming participants; Board Member Tiffany Moore-Corteville providing an overview of the LWV; and Judy Weinstein discussing our initiative regarding the 2030 redistricting process.
CENTER: Board Member Tess McFarland sharing her League journey and encouraging participants to share their interests and concerns about preserving democracy; and presenters Cathy Kane (Voter Services) and Judy Sternberg (Criminal Justice Reform).
BOTTOM: Judy Sternberg discussing our criminal justice system with potential new members; and Tiffany Moore-Corteville, Carolyn Massey, and LWV-RMA Membership Chair Mira Washington.*



*TOP: Greeters at the registration table; and participants sharing their previous involvement in preserving democracy.
BOTTOM: Melissa T, Tiffany Moore-Corteville, and Barbara Grosh; and other participants sharing their previous involvement in preserving democracy.*

LWV-RMA Book Club Update

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

- 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
- June 15 *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels* by John Meacham - discussion led by Karen Funk



Book Club members meeting on March 16. During the LWV-RMA book club meeting on March 16, members discussed *Sensational: The Hidden History of America's Girl Stunt Reporters* by Kim Todd. "Girl stunt reporters" was the term used for women who were investigative reporters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These reporters exposed issues that led to societal change.

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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

- 7 **LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.)
I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave.),
Irondequoit
- 12 **The News Literacy Project: *What is quality journalism?*** (4:00 P.M.-4:45 P.M. via Zoom)
- 12 **LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.
via Zoom)
- 17 **Session 1 of Antiracist Series – Slavery in NYS** (7:00 P.M.-8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 19 **The News Literacy Project: *Understanding news media bias*** (4:00 P.M.-4:45 P.M. via Zoom)
- 20 **LWV-RMA Book Club** (4:30 P.M. via Zoom)
Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution by Elie Mystal
- 24 **Session 2 of Antiracist Series – 20th Century racist policies** (7:00 P.M.-8:30 P.M. via Zoom)
- 26 **The News Literacy Project: *How fact-checking works*** (4:00 P.M.-4:45 P.M. via Zoom)

May

- 5 **LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.)
I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave.),
Irondequoit
- 10 **LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:30 P.M.- 8:30 P.M.
via Zoom)
- 13 **Voter Registration Training**, (10:30 A.M.-
12:00 Noon Location TBD)
- 17 **ANNUAL MEETING!** 5:00-7:00 P.M., Locust Hill
Country Club
- 18 **LWV-RMA Book Club** (4:30 P.M. via Zoom) *The Avoidable War* by Kenneth Rudd

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



Note: For links to Zoom meetings, please visit our website: 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 In Person!

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!

April 7
May 5
June 2
July 7



February First Friday on a cold 6 degree day.

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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585-262-3730
www.LWV-RMA.org

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League of Women Voters/Rochester Metropolitan Area

**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.

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- Director** Tiffany Moore-Corteville (2021- 2023)
- Director** Mira Washington (2022-2024)
- Director** Amy Hahn (2023)

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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

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Join the League Today!



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Check Amount: _____

Level of Membership: _____

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or join us online at:

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
or send an email to: info@lwv-rma.org		