

TheVOTER

LWV
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
ROCHESTER METRO AREA

Mini Retreat

Saturday, February 10, 2024
10:00 AM - 2:30 PM
3rd Presbyterian Church,
4 Meigs Street, Rochester 14607

- OPEN HOUSE**
Learn about our activities.
- LUNCH & SMOOZE**
- LEAGUE IN ACTION**
LWVUS tool
- PROGRAM PLANNING**
For 2024

See page 3 or the LWV-RMA website to learn more

Inside this issue:

Mini Retreat.....	1	NYS Election Integrity.....	6
President’s Corner: Independent or Blank	2	Voter Services Update.....	7
Mini Retreat.....	3	LWVNY Regional Training Workshop.....	7
Meet Your Ballot	4	LWV-RMA Book Club.....	8
LWV-RMA Board Investigating Change to 501(c)(3).....	4	Calendar.....	9
Election Integrity Education	5	First Friday	9
Naturalization Report.....	5	Leadership.....	10

To Vote in Primaries You Must Register as a Republican or Democrat by February 14

President's Corner

Independent or Blank?

There are lots of voters who don't identify with a party. In Monroe County, 31% of registered voters choose not to choose a party. That's a lot. If you're sitting in church, at a concert, at a Bills game, between you and the people on either side of you, it's likely one of you is not in a party. People of no party are all around you. In the suburbs, the percentage is slightly higher. If you're looking at a crowd that's under 35, it's 38%.

If you talk to these people, they are likely to tell you proudly that they are "Independent," a word that carries positive clout. It's the opposite of dependent, a word that's just depressing. However, if you look in the voter registration records supplied by the Board of Elections, those people are not labeled as Independent, they're Blank. Merriam-Webster dictionary's first definition for Blank is "appearing or causing to appear dazed, confounded, or nonplussed," while Dictionary.com gives "a place where something is lacking; an empty space."

What makes Blank people sad in voting is that they can't vote in primaries. Think of it: there are about 250 million Americans of voting age, so perhaps as many as 200 million could be eligible to be president. Who decides which 2-4 people out of 200 million will be on our ballots in November? Primary voters, that's who. In some states that includes Blanks, but not in New York. Here Blanks are people who sit out the main decision point in our elections, the place where the funnel is most restrictive, the point where we rule out almost everyone from governing us.

This year there are a lot of primaries, potentially. The presidential primary is April 2. In June, we may have primaries for Congress, for the US Senate, for the NY Assembly, and for the NY Senate. Primary voters will choose who appears on the November ballot, where all those proud Independent voters can ratify the results of the choices that party voters made. If you're lucky, you'll get to choose between candidates from two parties, though at least half the time you'll find only one name on the ballot.

If you want real choice, choose a party. The deadline to do so is February 14. And maybe take a few moments to share this message with those among us who proudly carry the label Independent. If you want help spreading the word, consider sharing some of the resources the LWV-RMA has made available for social media:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1wQWbeAMVw>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1491456934735093/>

Barbara Grosh

President LWV-RMA



Mini-Retreat for Members and Non-Members

FEBRUARY 10, 2024 10:00 AM-2:30 PM THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MORNING OPEN HOUSE

Starting at 10:00 AM, you'll be able to stroll among tables and learn about all the things we're up to and need help with.

- Voter registration (at neighborhood groups, festivals, etc)
- Voter registration (at high schools, colleges, etc)
- Souls to the Polls and other Get Out the Vote activities
- Voter registration at naturalization ceremonies and our new "Meet Your Ballot" program
- Putting together Vote411 and planning candidate forums
- Planning educational forums and other leadership roles
- Lobbying our representatives in Albany
- Working to increase voting among those who are or were incarcerated
- Building connections between the League and neighborhood groups
- Working toward a proposal for nonpartisan redistricting in Monroe County

This will be a great opportunity for members to catch up on all the League's doings, for current and prospective members to learn about us, and for all to find their best niche(s). **Come and bring a friend or invite someone you know who would make a great League member.** If you have an idea for someone who would make a good League member but would rather the invitation come from the League, please email your suggestion to president@lwv-rma.org.

LUNCH WITH A PURPOSE

Lunch will be served at noon. Connect with people you met at the open house in the morning or reconnect with members you haven't seen for a while.

At 12:30 PM, we'll introduce League in Action, a phone app that LWVUS provides to us. The deadline for voters to choose a party and be able to vote in primaries in 2024 will be a few days away (February 14). There will be lots of primaries this year: presidential, congressional, Assembly and Senate! We'll use the League in Action app to send texts from our phones to people in our own contact lists to remind them to pick (or change) a party and give them info on what that means and how to do it. In a few moments, you can reach a lot of people.

PROGRAM PLANNING

At 1:00 PM, we'll turn to program planning. In League terms, choosing our priorities for educational and lobbying work is called program planning. The LWV is a grass-roots organization where work at every level is driven by the local Leagues. This meeting is the chance for our members to give our feedback to the national board as they make plans for the coming biennial (2024-2026). What issues are close to your heart?

NEED A RIDE?

We're holding our mini-retreat at Third Presbyterian Church, which is on a bus line. If you'd like a ride to the event, please send an email to president@lwv-rma.org and we'll have a member pick you up.

Register Here:

<https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/evr/regmenu.php?orgcode=LWVR>

Meet Your Ballot

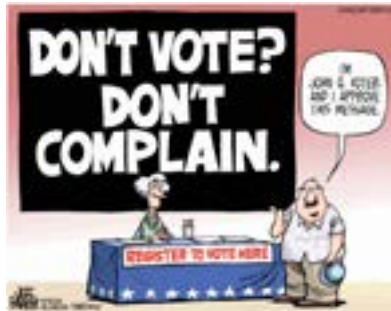
Each year, the League registers hundreds or thousands of voters (the latter in presidential years). Sadly, we've discovered that many of the people we register don't go on to vote, largely because they feel unprepared and intimidated by the process. This year we have a new process to help people prepare to vote.

Each month at a branch library, we'll offer a program called "Meet Your Ballot." We'll come prepared with sample ballots from the election cycle 4 years previously, so that they will resemble what voters will see when they vote this year. In 2024, we'll have a presidential primary ballot, a June primary ballot, and a general election ballot.

We did this program once before, and we know that there's a lot to digest about the ballot, including offices voters may not be familiar with. In addition to the sample ballots, the Board of Elections will also be present with a ballot scanner and a poll pad. It should give us a chance to help people understand the whole process, including the measures that ensure the privacy of their ballot and what to do if they have a question or make a mistake.

We'll need plenty of volunteers to make this work, including people willing to sit quietly beside folks and answer questions one-on-one. So, plan to come to one or more of these chances to Make Democracy Work.

We'll be producing flyers about these programs and will distribute them to all newly registered voters, including at naturalization ceremonies. The library system will help us publicize them too. If you have ideas for locations where we can put up posters or hand out flyers, let us know!



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

In January the LWV-RMA Board agreed to begin a detailed investigation of the process to convert from a 501(c)(4) organization to a 501(c)(3) organization. The 501 designations refer to the type of tax exempt organization LWV-RMA is considered under federal and state tax laws. Historically most state, national and local Leagues were formed under 501(c)(4), but many have since converted. LWV-Port Washington/Manhasset (also in NY) converted in 2023 and is advising us on the process.

Benefits of being 501(c)(3) versus 501(c)(4)

- Members can treat dues and contributions as charitable contributions for tax purposes
- Members can also treat certain unreimbursed expenses as charitable contributions
- Many foundations and companies will not donate to organizations that are not 501(c)(3)
- Conversion eliminates the need for utilizing the LWVNYS Education fund
- Some vendors offer discounts to 501(c)(3) organizations

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

If the steps to change status are determined to be reasonable, members will be asked to approve LWV-RMA applying for a change in status at the 2024 Annual Meeting in the spring. Look for further communications on this project in the coming months.

Submitted by Mary Micket

Election Integrity Education

Faith in the fairness and accuracy of the election process is key to getting people to vote. As rhetoric about stolen elections has increased nationwide more people are questioning how the process is administered. They want, and should expect, reassurances that their vote is counted and reflected accurately in the results and that only eligible voters are participating.

Most of the laws regarding elections are state laws, so some requirements vary by state. In NY, and many other states, counties develop the detailed processes for the election. Therefore, there are more variations, leading to more questions.

During this year League members are more likely than ever before to be asked by voters or potential voters how they can be sure their vote will be counted fairly. The LWV-RMA board will be using various means to help our members answer these questions. For example:

- Cathy Kane, co-chair of the Voter Services team, has reached out to the Monroe County Board of Elections (MCBOE) asking them for guidance on a handout that can be given at events with specific Monroe County process details that ensure the integrity of the vote.
- The LWV-RMA Facebook and Web pages will have related information posted throughout the year
- This newsletter will provide detailed information related to the various process steps in NYS and Monroe County (see page 6 for the first installment in the series).

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

Submitted by Mary Micket

Naturalization Report

December 2023 ended with two ceremonies on December 12. An 11:00 AM oath ceremony had 26 candidates at the Monroe County Office Building. Judge Taylor officiated at the ceremony. Beth Feldman and Tamara Minter represented the League and helped the candidates register to vote.

At the Federal Building at a 2:00 PM oath ceremony, 25 candidates were in attendance. Margaret Supinski talked about the importance of voting and helped the candidates register to vote. Judge Warren officiated.



Morning Ceremony on Dec 12

In 2024, the League hopes to register many voters at naturalization ceremonies. We are always in need of League volunteers to be at Naturalizations. If you are interested in volunteering to help and learn about Naturalizations, please let Sheila Abeling know at sheiler162007@gmail.com.

Submitted by Sheila Abeling



Afternoon Ceremony on Dec 12

New York State Election Integrity

During December, the NYS Board of Elections posted the following ten election controls on their Facebook page. While every county in the state may have different processes for completing these requirements, these general controls are in place throughout the state. Over the next few months, the processes used in Monroe County to implement these controls will be researched and shared through this newsletter and our social media pages.

1. **Voter Lists are Routinely Maintained.** Bipartisan teams from each County Board of Elections perform routine maintenance on their voter registration list to ensure that voters who have died, moved or who are otherwise ineligible are removed from the voter rolls.
2. **Voting Equipment is Certified.** Voting Equipment must undergo rigorous testing to meet both federal and state testing standards. Only systems which have been examined by a federally-certified testing laboratory and independent technical experts and which have shown compliance with all necessary requirements, can be considered for use in New York.
3. **Voting Equipment Is Securely Stored.** Voting machines, electronic pollbooks and other election data systems are stored in climate controlled, secure locations with protections against unauthorized access.
4. **Election Task Oversight is Transparent and Bipartisan.** From machine programming to poll workers, counting of ballots to certification of results, all major election tasks are conducted and overseen by representatives from the two major parties. In addition, candidates and their representatives are invited to observe many of these tasks to ensure fairness and transparency.
5. **Voting Machines Undergo Pre-Election Testing.** Before voting begins, voting machines go through logic and accuracy testing to ensure the certified software is installed and that the machines are configured properly to accurately count ballots.
6. **Voting Systems are Not Connected to the Internet.** By law, ballot scanning machines to be used in New York are prohibited from connecting to the internet, nor are they able to transmit or receive information wirelessly.
7. **All Votes are cast on paper ballots.** All voters mark their choices on paper ballots, either by hand or through the use of a ballot marking device. These ballots are kept secure with very limited access and only by a bipartisan team.
8. **Voter Signatures are Checked to Confirm Identity.** Whether checking in at a poll site to vote in-person or voting by absentee ballot, each voter's signature is compared to the signature on file to confirm their identity.
9. **When Problems Arise, Election Officials Have A Plan.** If something does happen on or near the voting period, such as a weather event, power outage, or other unexpected occurrence which could impact an election, County Boards of Elections have back-up plans in place to make sure the voting process can continue.
10. **A Post-Election Audit is Performed to Confirm the Results.** After the election, each county will manually review the ballots from at least 3% of the voting machines used in an election to confirm the machine-tabulated results.

There are additional controls on both the machines and ballots within the Monroe County process. These will be detailed in future articles. If you have, or are asked, questions on election integrity in NY please send them to micketeditor@gmail.com so that we may obtain answers to share with all.



Voter Services Update

We provided voter registration information at St. Michael's Church on December 23rd during the Project Hope food pantry and community meal event. Mollie Traub provided Spanish language assistance and registered four people.

We will be participating in the RIT Community Service Fair on January 26.

The team is working on the following off-season projects. Please contact voterservices@lwv-rma.org if you are interested in assisting in any of these projects:

- Meet Your Ballot presentations
- Developing materials for identifying misinformation and disinformation to share along with Voter Registration and GOTV materials
- Developing presentations for Cameron Ministries summer school
- Supporting RIT's Voter Advocacy Network
- Connecting with Lyell-Otis Neighborhood Association for Voter Registration
- Developing strategies to keep our members and volunteers safe at public events

Monthly Voter Services meetings will be scheduled again in the spring.

Submitted by Cathy Kane and Deborah Gordon



Deb Gordon and Cathy Kane at the Project Hope food cupboard on Dec. 28, 2023

LWVNYS Regional Training Workshop

The League of Women Voters of NYS invites all members to come to training workshops being held throughout the state. All members are invited to attend any or all of the workshops. Lunch will be provided and will allow for informal networking among the attendees. The workshop will be offered in Rochester on Saturday March 2 from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM at The Perkins Mansion, 494 East Avenue, Rochester.

THE SCHEDULE:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 9:30-10:00 | Coffee and Welcome |
| 10:00-11:00 | The Wild Ride: Get Ready for the 2024 Election Season! |
| 11:15-12:15 | First Workshops:
The Story of Us: Evaluating and Tracking League Programs
Bridge to Excellence-Strengthening Local Leagues Through DEI Mastery |
| 12:15-1:15 | Lunch (networking) |
| 1:15-2:15 | Second Workshops:
How and Why Not to Do it All: Leading a Local League
Making your Voice Heard: Citizens and Local Leagues |
| 2:30-3:30 | Third Workshops:
Engaging College Students in Their Communities and Beyond
Fact vs. Fiction: Training the Public on Determining Mis and Dis-Information |

There is a charge of \$25 and the registration deadline is February 23.

Register here: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/SIA3TII6ip5xLYgOmMxzwA

LWV-RMA Book Club

The topic of discussion at the January 18 LWV-RMA book club session pictured below was Anne Braden, a Euro-American journalist, and her involvement in the racial justice movement in the American South. Rather than include a book, the resources were several articles about Ms. Braden and the Southern Conference Educational Fund which she led for many years.

Book Club members meet on Zoom at 4:30 on the third Thursday of the months shown below. If you would like to participate in the discussion of one of our books or join the Book Club, send an email to Judy Weinstein at vote411@lwv-rma.org to be sent the Zoom link. Participation is not limited to League members.

Books remaining for this program year include –

March 21 *Poverty by America* by Mathew Desmond;

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

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





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.

February

- 2 **(Fri) LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 AM–1:30 PM) I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 3 (Sat) LWVNYS – 2024 Legislative Hot Topics (10:00 AM - 11:00 AM via Zoom)
- 5 (Mon) LWVUS Member Rights and Responsibilities Webinar (3:00 PM - 4:00 PM via Zoom)
- 10 **(Sat) LWV-RMA Planning and Program Mini Retreat** (details on page 3) Register Here: <https://members.lwv-rma.org/members/evr/regmenu.php?orgcode=LWVR>
- 14 **(Wed) LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:00 PM–7:30 PM)
- 14 (Wed) Last Day for party registration for primary elections

March

- 1 **(Fri) LWV-RMA First Friday** (11:30 AM–1:30 PM) I-Square, 400 Bakers Square (off Titus Ave), Irondequoit
- 2 (Sat) LWVNYS – Regional Training Workshop (9:30 AM to 4:00 PM) The Perkins Mansion, 494 East Avenue, Rochester
- 13 **(Wed) LWV-RMA Board Meeting** (6:00 PM–7:30 PM via Zoom)
- 21 **(Thur) LWV-RMA Book Club: Poverty by America**, by Matthew Desmond (4:30 PM - 5:30 PM 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!

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

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

February 2
 March 1
 April 5
 May 3
 June 7



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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League of Women Voters/Rochester Metropolitan Area

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**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.

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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Rochester, NY 14610
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		