

# TheVOTER



## Educational Forum:

## Protecting Our



Vote  
Tabulations  
Poll  
Workers  
Voter  
Registration  
Systems  
Voting  
Machines  
Polling  
Sites



**August 4, 2025  
7:00 PM – 8:30 P.M.  
Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word  
597 East Avenue, Rochester, NY**

**Our own Tom Ferrarese, former Elections Commissioner, will lead a discussion of prerequisites to a fair election. Bring your questions.**

See page 3 for registration link.



At the LWNYS Convention, LWV-RMA received the Harriet D. Goldberg Membership Award for our 2023 – 2025 increase in membership, and the “Lighting the Way” Award in recognition of outstanding accomplishments in membership and leadership.

Seen accepting the awards from Erica Smitka, Executive Director of LWNYS, are President Barbara Grosh, VP Julie Burns and Board Member Pat Willis.

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## President's Letter

### News and Views from the State Convention

I love attending the state convention. There are so many great moments to connect with other Leagues, to get new ideas, to meet impressive people, to make friends from across the state with whom you can plan to work, and to see that people like us can chisel away at a problem and have an effect.

I loved LWVUS President Dianna Wynn's time with us. She talked about the Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative designed to combat the ongoing Constitutional crisis, building on Erica Chenoweth's research. Ms. Chenoweth looked at uprisings against repressive regimes and found that such uprisings never fail when 3.5% of the population gives active and sustained participation. We can do this. We can defeat the forces of darkness that are currently working (alarmingly fast) at undoing our democratic institutions.

Dianna said more that inspired me, including the fact that no one is coming to rescue us. We have to rescue ourselves. The League is supremely well-prepared for this work. We have deep knowledge of how our political process should work and we can understand that what we're seeing as the guardrails are being ripped away. We have vast experience in working as grass-roots activists, and we have built a national organization to support and coordinate our work. We are ready for this moment.

I really didn't see it coming, but our League won the award for the greatest growth among large Leagues in New York. Since the last convention, our membership has grown 52% and we have new members stepping up all, leading committees, stepping into our ongoing work, and joining the board. It makes me so happy, sometimes I feel all swoony.

One of the happiest things I rediscovered while listening to Dianna talk about the ongoing work is that if we can't fail with 3.5% of us involved, we don't have to do some of the things that scare me the most. We don't have to convert members of the Proud Boys or other scary groups. We don't even have to convince our own relatives that the President can't invalidate the Constitution by issuing executive orders. We just need to keep showing up and demanding accountability, and help guide like-minded people to do more and do it more consistently.

The LWVUS will be issuing quarterly plans with suggested actions to take. There will be lots of familiar stuff, like mounting Vote411 for each election, getting candidates to debate, and helping voters become informed and cast their vote. There will be other items that will change in response to events as they unfold. Stay tuned to be responsive, but meanwhile dig in. There's plenty to do.

Barbara Grosh

[president@lwg-rma.org](mailto:president@lwg-rma.org)



## Juneteenth 5K

Mary Beth Mackenzie is pictured at the Juneteenth 5K, her very first voter registration event for the League. If you look closely, you'll see a couple of runners behind her.

Mary Beth and Barb Murphy answered a lot of questions and passed out Vote411 cards. They registered one brand-new voter and helped another person fill out a registration form to register with a party, so she can vote in primaries.

## LWVUS President Dianna Wynn Visits Rochester

While Dianna Wynn, President of LWVUS, was in the Rochester area for personal reasons, she took time to join a group from LWV-RMA for dinner. Pictured at the event are Marla Miller, President Wynn, Julie Burns, Kim Byers, Barbara Grosh, Stephanie Watson, Pat Willis, Donna Gardner, Tom Ferrarese, and Cole Burns.



## Educational Forum: Protecting Our Vote

**When:** Monday August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 7:00P.M.-8:30P.M.

**Where:** Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word

**597 East Avenue, Rochester, NY**

Our own Tom Ferrarese will lead a discussion of prerequisites to a fair election. Participants will raise their own questions, but here are some topics we're likely to discuss:

- Secure and fair registration systems
- Accessible polling sites
- Accurate, dependable, and transparent voting machines
- Well-trained poll workers
- Precise, timely, and clear tabulations

Register Here: [Protecting Our Vote](#)

## **LWVNYS New Positions Announced**

The League of Women Voters of New York announced the passage of the following new position as approved by delegates at our State Convention -

### **Health Care**

The League believes that healthcare, like other programs that provide and protect basic human needs, should be considered a public good. The League favors a system where fiduciary responsibility (for such programs) is to patients and the public.

Because private for-profit corporations have a fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders rather than to patients or public health, the League believes the for-profit business model for healthcare is inappropriate for the common good or to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable members of society. In sum, the League opposes further privatization of needed healthcare. Where private entities fail to deliver programs that provide and protect basic human needs, the League supports de-privatizing them.

*Based on the results of League studies, the following statements were adopted as new League positions in a board meeting on June 20, 2025.*

### **Rank Choice Voting**

- The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the use of rank choice voting (a.k.a., instant runoff voting) in primary, general and/or special elections to elect federal, state, and/or local officials.
- With the adoption of any electoral system, the League believes that education of the voting public is important, and funding for start-up and voter education should be allocated.

### **Primary Systems**

- The League of Women Voters of New York State supports changing from a closed partisan primary system to a primary system, including a nonpartisan primary system, that allows all registered voters to participate, regardless of party affiliation or lack thereof.
- We support the use of nonpartisan primaries to elect federal, state, and local officials.

### **Voting Systems Approval Process**

- The League of Women Voters of New York State believes that a more transparent and open voting systems approval process would improve voter understanding of, and confidence in, our elections.
- The League supports greater transparency and public input in the approval process, including increased demonstrations open to the public, followed by comment periods.
- The League recommends that public demonstrations be scheduled to provide public input earlier in the certification process.

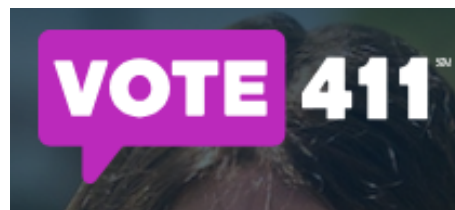


## Needed: New Team Members for Vote411

Many of our newer members first heard about the League when they discovered how helpful Vote411 is when preparing to vote. There's been turnover on our volunteer teams, and we're looking for some new blood to take on this important League function and give it the TLC it deserves to help voters become informed.

Here are some of the tasks involved:

- Get the list of candidates from the Board of Elections when it becomes available.
- See what races will be on the ballot and prepare appropriate questions for the candidates.
- Learn to use the Vote411 software provided by the LWVUS, which is semi user-friendly but comes with support. You'll need to set up the relevant races and questions and candidates in advance.
- Track down email addresses and/or phone numbers for candidates so you can invite them to participate.
- Use Vote411 to invite candidates and help candidates as needed for them to enter their information.
- Remind candidates to participate.
- Publish it so that voters can find out who and what will be on their ballot.



The information gathered by the Vote411 team can also be used in organizing candidate debates, which we try to do for as many races as possible. Both in creating Vote411 and in organizing candidate debates, we must be especially careful of our nonpartisan reputation. Members who are running for office or helping to manage campaigns for other candidates will not be suitable for these volunteer positions.

If you are interested in joining the Vote411 team please contact me.

Barbara Grosh

[president@lwv-rma.org](mailto:president@lwv-rma.org)



## A New Member's Reflections on the LWV NYS Convention

Hello New Members!

I am probably similar to you. I joined the League recently. I cope with stress by doing. Something. Anything. When my son was little and often sick, I'd always have a project to work on while he was recovering. It kept me from worrying while he slept and my mind was unoccupied. At this moment, my heaviest worry is the sustainability of our democracy and the ability of all citizens to vote and to have those votes matter. So, I thought I'd make myself useful and reached out to the League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metro Area.

I went to the website. I filled out the interest form. And a few weeks later I was notified of an information session where I was able to talk with members of all the different committees and chose one where I thought I could be most useful. The members of the Advocacy committee are incredible people; thoughtful, knowledgeable and so welcoming. I finally felt like I was able to channel my worry into a project that helped. As a Social Worker, I know that change usually happens when we consistently make small choices every day toward the same goal. So, my contributions, no matter how small, connected to the contributions of the other members of the committee whose work contributed to the larger work of the NYS League. And the NYS League's work connects to the League of Women Voters of the United States. My small contribution was expanded. Many hands make light work. And there's a lot of work to be done now, so we need many hands. We need your hands. If you've been thinking about becoming active.... Please reach out. Now is the time.

When the opportunity to attend the LWVNYS Convention came up, I was absolutely IN. If other members across the state were as interesting and kind as the members of Rochester Metro League, it was an experience that I did not want to miss. It did not disappoint. For those who have never been to a League Convention, it's kind of like the marriage of a professional conference and a board or faculty meeting. There are spaces to learn the newest information and then the business of process and policy.

The most incredible part of the experience, from my perspective, was the accomplished, humble and determined people that I met. One woman was so passionate about her initiative that was to be voted on at the final day of the convention that she sat down at our table skipping the social pleasantries of introductions and began to tell us about her cause. As someone who has also skipped social protocols and barreled into my latest obsession, I was enamored with her dogged pursuit of getting the votes she needed. Another woman offered to sleep on a couch to be able to educate our League about the problem of plastics and current legislation. The Convention was a blur of new information and new friends that culminated in a final meeting that set the direction of the NYS League. While the details may have faded, the feeling remains strong. I felt a sense of belonging to a community of women that seemed fearless in their pursuit of their goals. I imagined the Conventions of the last century with women who embodied the same spirit of educating others, determination to meet their goals, and the humility to understand each small act connected to the small acts of others which, when organized, provided the momentum for larger changes.

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6.

When I think of this time we are living through I see thick heavy darkness but I imagine our work as tiny lights. When we are lit up by our own passions and beliefs, our lights get brighter. And when one light sees another light, we come closer, and our lights join and shine even brighter which attracts more lights who come closer, and we shine still brighter.... Until the darkness disappears and we are surrounded by the light of our community—of our belonging together. So, if you are a new member or a member wanting to become more active and are wondering what YOU can do, talk to a committee member; they have work for you to do. And we all need your light.

*Submitted by Julie Burns*

*Vice President, LWV-RMA*



## Voter Services Team Update, July 2025

Since our last update, we have provided voter services at five venues. The Westside Farmers Market Grand Opening and the Bridging Communities-A Riverside Celebration were new venues for us this year. The Bridging Communities event is co-sponsored by the Genesee Land Trust and the City of Rochester. It is held on Driving Park Bridge and at the Maplewood Park Rose Gardens with the purpose of connecting people and organizations with nature. We joined the Juneteenth celebration at the ROC 5K Run/Walk event. The second voter registration event this year was held at The House of Mercy and several people were registered.

As we look to August, the South Wedge Festival and the Jordan Health Front Porch Festival are on the calendar and other events will be added. Although it seems too soon, college students will be returning to school later in the month, and we will be tabling at welcome events on our local campuses.

The *Tips for Volunteers* guidance was revised (many thanks to Evelyn Jennings) and translated to Spanish. It can be found in the Voter Services section of the *Get Involved* page of our website:

[https://www.lwv-rma.org/voter\\_services.php](https://www.lwv-rma.org/voter_services.php).

The Voter Services team meets on the last Thursday of the month via Zoom. We invite anyone interested in hearing more about our work to contact Deb Gordon or Cathy Kane at [voterservices@lwv-rma.org](mailto:voterservices@lwv-rma.org).

*Submitted by Deb Gordon*

## **LWVUS President's Comments at LWNYS Convention**

Dianna Wynn, LWVUS President, was a highlight of the League of Women Voters of New York State 61<sup>st</sup> Biennial Convention. She spoke at the Welcome Dinner on June 20. Dianna addressed two National League priority areas:

- protecting and defending democracy: LWVUS is committed to defending democracy in collaboration with other organizations, and
- empowering voters: LWVUS has joined a suit against the President of the United States to protect voters' rights.

LWVUS has also taken a position to abolish the Electoral College. This includes support for a Constitutional Amendment to abolish the EC. (New York State signed on to this effort in 2017.)

Additionally, the national League is committed to defending reproductive freedoms.

Dianna emphasized that while the League is a political organization, it is nonpartisan. She discussed the current "empty chair" policy that requires candidate forums to include aspirants of both/all parties. This creates a challenge when local Leagues coordinate forums to which only one party's candidate responds. Under current policy, the forum cannot proceed with participation of a single candidate.

The evening caucus followed with discussion by many members who identified "fear and anxiety" as prevailing emotions in the current political environment.

Dianna Wynn proposed League actions, including:

- lighting candles,
- gathering in public spaces and marching on federal buildings,
- phone banking,
- holding sit-ins and maintaining a consistent presence,
- collaborating with faith communities,
- using poetry and music such as songs and chanting to promote a sense of community.

In Dianna's remarks the following morning she addressed the current presidential administration's attacks on immigrants, people of color, the LGBTQ+ community and voting rights. The LWVUS has issued a declaration of national Constitutional crisis. Proposed action steps include mobilizing the "Unite and Rise – 8.5 Initiative" campaign. The number, 8.5 million people, represents a 3.5% non-violent activist participation rate needed to bring about change.

Above all, Dianna stated the importance of being in community.

*Submitted by Pat Willis*



## LWVNYS 61<sup>st</sup> Biennial Convention Workshop

“Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: DEI Is a Verb!”

Workshop panelists addressed issues, including:

Democracy during detention focuses attention on the loss of access to voting by people who are incarcerated and who legally have the right to vote. These include unconvicted detainees who are awaiting trial. In New York State, 42 of 62 counties have no jail voting program.

The Democracy During Detention Act is pending in the State legislature: S440 / A2121. This act would provide the civic infrastructure for jail voting. Suggested advocacy includes:

- contact legislators
- write op-eds to media
- provide testimony
- participate in rallies
- develop power mapping

LWVNYS advances principles, practices, and behaviors of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.

The LWVNYS DEI Committee 2025 developed “*Ten Ideas for Taking One Step at a Time*”:

- Learn more: research topics of social/justice
- Know more: develop a local League Action Plan, such as a book club
- Plan more: identify areas of concentration
- Teach more: develop workshops to identify and practice inclusive behaviors
- Inform more: message membership
- Realize equity more: find out if resources are equitably distributed
- Assess more: complete biannual DEI Self Assessment Survey for 2025
- Involve more: seek out local organizations that address social/racial/economic disparities
- Guide more: include DEI in new Board Member on-boarding process
- Seek out more: engage with youth groups and colleges; support lowering the voting age to 16

*Submitted by Pat Willis*

## New LWV-RMA DEIJ Committee Forming

Julie Burns, VP LWV-RMA, will chair a new committee focused on DEIJ. The J stands for Justice. The group will develop a new policy statement, DEIJ goals and an action plan to meet those goals. If you are interested in joining the effort, contact Julie at [vp@lwg-rma.org](mailto:vp@lwg-rma.org).



## June Naturalization Ceremonies

There were two naturalization ceremonies on June 17<sup>th</sup>. Anita Hawkins and Katherine Smith attended the morning ceremony and handed out First Vote and Vote411 brochures to the 32 new citizens. In the afternoon 30 new citizens were sworn in and 16 registered to vote. Margaret Supinski represented LWV-RMA and Judge Johnathan Feldman administered the Oath of Allegiance.

*Submitted by Anita Hawkins and Margaret Supinski*





## July Naturalization Ceremonies

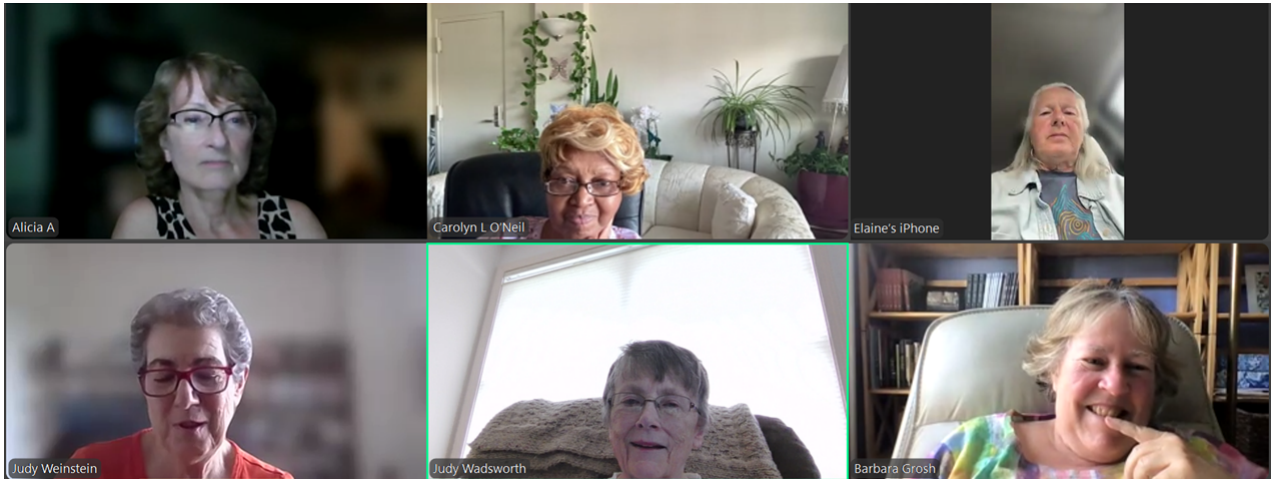
In July, USCIS conducted 2 naturalization ceremonies. The annual July 4 ceremony was again held at the Genesee Country Museum and 30 new citizens were naturalized. The Monroe County Board of Elections conducted the voter registrations. Thank you to Marilyn Rosen, Katharine Smith, Evelyn Jennings, and Laurie Pierce for representing the League.

The July 8 ceremony was held at the George Eastman House and approximately 55 citizens were naturalized and 27 registered to vote. Thank you to JoAnn Kane-DeMott, Beth Feldman, and David Newman for representing the League.

*Submitted by Margret Roberts*







### LWV-RMA Book Club

The LWV-RMA book club met via Zoom in July to discuss *Distorting Democracy* by Carolyn Renee Dupont, which analyzed the U.S. electoral college.

The group will meet next on August 21 at 4:30 P.M. to identify books to read during the 2025-2026 program year. All are welcome. To join the group for the first time and receive the Zoom link, contact Judy Weinstein at [bookclub@lwv-rma.org](mailto:bookclub@lwv-rma.org).



### LWV-RMA Board of Directors Planning Session

On July 20, the LWV-RMA Board of Directors held a planning session for the year ahead. All eleven officers and board members attended the session, which was held at I-Square. Some of the topics covered were:

- Board meetings will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 6:00 P.M. via Zoom
- Ideas for increasing engagement for new and current members

Donna Gardner, Julie Burns, Pat Willis, Barbara Grosh, Stephanie Watson, Marla Miller, Cathy Kane, Connie Flahive, and Tess McFarland-Porter. Also attending but not pictured were Karen Morris and Mary Micket.

- Ideas for topics for educational forums, including developing a "civics curriculum"
- Opportunities for additional community partnerships
- A month-by-month plan for focus activities
- Establishment of a new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Committee

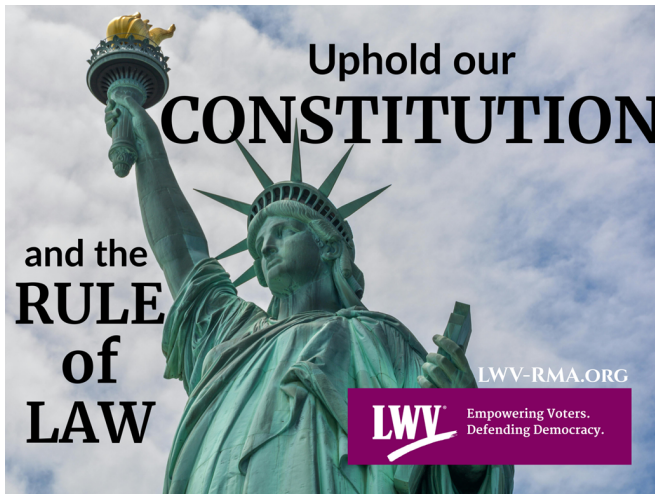
More information on these and other initiatives will be forthcoming. However, if you want to get more involved with any activity for the League, reach out to any of the board members or committee chairs listed on the last page of The Voter.



**Join First Friday** for social time at I-Square in Irondequoit at 11:30 A.M. each month.

We gather in the space behind the partition (look for our sign), for lunch and discussion. Come when you can, leave when you must. We share ideas for how the League can make democracy work and discuss the news to parse what it all means. It's always comforting to be surrounded by League friends who are committed to empowering voters and protecting democracy. Join the fun!

## Spreading the Message



A member sent Barbara Grosh a note sharing a sign developed by the League of Women Voters of Manatee County in Florida. Barbara took the idea and ran with it. Members of LWV-RMA approved our own sign at the Annual Meeting in May. Since then, over 100 signs have been purchased by members and non-members.

These signs lead to conversations which are another way to help educate voters about the current political situation, which LWVUS has declared a Constitutional Crisis. The signs can

lead to non-confrontational conversations between neighbors and families where the concepts behind the Constitution and due process can be discussed. They can also stimulate conversations when displayed at various events and rallies.

If you do not have a sign yet, please consider ordering one. It will be delivered to you by one of our volunteers. Order yours here for \$8. [Pay online](#)

## Calendar of LWV-RMA Upcoming Activities

The best way to be informed about various League events is to use the online calendar. You do not need to sign in to access the calendar.

The calendar is updated frequently; it is more current than a monthly newsletter can be.

On the calendar, you can click on an event to obtain information, add it to your personal calendar, and register for an event.

You can see future (or past) months' activities by easily using the < > buttons.

Access the calendar [here](#).

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The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV-RMA Editor, Mary Micket; Graphic Editor, Judy Wadsworth; Layout/Design, David Newman  
If you have comments, article suggestions or pictures to share please send them to [micketeditor@gmail.com](mailto:micketeditor@gmail.com)

## 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.**

### Board of Directors:

President	Barbara Grosh (25-26)
Vice President	Julie Burns (25-26)
Treasurer	Constance Flahive (25-27)
Secretary	Marla Miller (25-27)
Director	Cathy Kane (24-26)
Director	Tess McFarland-Porter (25-27)
Director	Mary Micket (25-27)
Director	Pat Willis (25-26)
Director	Donna Gardner (25-26)
Director	Stephanie Watson (25-27)
Director	Karen Morris (24-26)

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## Join the League Today!

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please send this form and your check payable to the LWVUS to:

LWV-RMA,  
PO Box 10573  
Rochester, NY 14610

[Or join the LWV online by clicking here.](#)

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Dues are payable to LWVUS. The link on LWV-RMA will direct you to the LWVUS site. A portion of your dues will be distributed to LWV-RMA and LWVNYS.

Suggested dues are \$75, but you may choose any amount of \$20 or more.

Choosing more than \$75 allows LWV-RMA to fund programs while subsidizing membership for those who cannot afford the full \$75.