

TheVOTER

Building the Bridge Between Voting and Accountability

A Discussion of the Responsibilities of NYS, Monroe County, Town,
and City Elected Officials



Thursday, April 16, 2026 - 6:30 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.
Irondequoit Public Library - 1200 Titus Avenue, Rochester, NY 14617
See page 3 for Details



No Kings Rally at the Unitarian Church

In This Issue:

President's Letter	P. 2
Civic Education Forum	P. 3
Ranked Choice Voting in Rochester	P. 3
Advocacy Committee	P. 4
Calendar	P. 4
Naturalization	P. 5
Outreach to New Americans	P. 6
Voter Services	P. 7
First Fridays	P. 7
Dayle Bird Obituary	P. 8
New Members	P. 8
Civic Education Forum Committee	P. 9
Election Education Forum	P. 9

President's Letter

Helping to Prepare the Next Generation of Voters at the Girl Scouts

The LWV and the Girl Scouts signed a partnership a couple of years ago to encourage cooperation and cross-fertilization. Recently I was a part of that as I helped a troop of Senior Scouts work on their "Behind the Ballot" badge. The Girl Scouts think through their badge requirements carefully, so working with them is easy. You don't need to work out a whole plan for civic education, just show up and help follow the plan laid out by their leaders.

I was asked to concentrate on ballot design and clarity and how ballots are counted. I brought in the ballot from the November election in their district and we looked at it together. The girls were surprised that the same candidate appeared on multiple lines. We talked about what would constitute "over-voting" and cause your ballot to be partially or totally voided. We looked at how confusing a race with multiple seats can be, especially with multiple columns, and we learned how to read the instructions carefully. We looked at the ballot measure about the Adirondack Park and experienced the uncertainty that so often challenges voters with ballot measures. That measure's wording was more understandable than most, but there was no context. Why does it take a Constitutional amendment to do what was proposed? That led directly into a discussion of the importance of researching what will be on your ballot before you go to vote. We talked about Vote411 and local election debates organized by the League. The girls took their sample ballots home with the suggestion that they talk to their parents about whom they had voted for, and how they decided.



We conducted mock elections using Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). The girls had been fascinated earlier to learn that you can write in anyone, so most of them used the write-in line for their first choice. They quickly saw that unless you're part of a big movement for a write-in candidate, that's not very effective, but at least with RCV it does not waste your vote. In one of our sample elections, a plurality of votes went to fruit salad as the best desert, resulting in jeering from the girls. They saw the effects of splitting a voting block, as the majority of the votes were for rich, sweet deserts but they were split between two choices. Ranked choice voting saved the day, as reallocation of the votes for the desert with the fewest votes allowed the other rich desert to win. RCV finds the candidate with the broadest support.

The meeting ended with the girls designing a nonpartisan Get Out the Vote (GOTV) poster. It was a lot for one meeting, but it was fun and satisfying. We will probably get more requests from Scout troops this year. Contact membership@lwv-rma.org if you would like to be involved.

Barbara Grosh president@lwv-rma.org

**LWV-RMA Civic Education Forum:
*Building the Bridge between Voting and Accountability***

Thursday April 16, 2026 – 6:30 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

Irondequoit Public Library

1200 Titus Avenue, Rochester, NY 14617

[Register Here](#)

Ever wonder exactly what the people on your ballot are responsible for?

Join us for an informative session where representatives from New York State, Monroe County, Rochester, and nearby Towns will explain the duties of their offices. You will hear directly about the services they oversee, followed by ample time for your questions.

A separate forum will be held later in the year to review the NYS Court System and the responsibilities of the judges on our ballots.



Barbara Grosh and
Evelyn Jennings
during the
No Kings Rally
at
Genesee Gateway
Park

Change of Focus on Ranked Choice Voting in Rochester

When we held our annual Advocacy Planning Retreat on Saturday, January 31, we decided to move forward with trying to get a charter amendment proposal on the ballot which would bring ranked choice voting and open primaries to Rochester.

As we reviewed the process for getting a measure on the ballot, we could see that there was a narrow path. We needed to have our charter language firmly in place by mid-February.

That did not happen, hence **we will not be trying for a ballot measure this year**. Instead we will be building a coalition of individuals and organizations committed to working for it next year, or the following year. We'll need to think through the effects of the even-year election law to help determine which will be more propitious.

Barbara Grosh president@lwv-rma.org

Advocacy Committee Update as of March 20, 2026

Members: Barb Murphy and Scott Forsyth, co-chairs; Pam Breedlove; Donna Gardner; Elaine Schmidt; Katherine Smith

The committee met with state legislators in March via Zoom to advocate pre-budget for three issues:

- Maintaining Governor Hochul's funding for the State Board of Elections (BOE) and increase local BOE funding by placing \$35 million annually into a dedicated stream through Aid to Localities
- Supporting Democracy During Detention (\$440, Myrie / A2121, Walker) by creating an access plan for incarcerated individuals with \$500,000 in direct funding to local BOEs to implement absentee ballots, early vote-by-mail ballots, or having an on-site polling place.
- Supporting a revision of Part L, Article VII of the governor's budget to protect poll sites, especially from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Article VIII, Parts R and S that address the need to protect voters from media misinformation and disinformation. Both areas are important with the caveat that in Parts R and S, voters are not discouraged from participating (thus the need for revision)

The committee has also learned the legislators' priorities and has sent those along with a summary of our conversations to Erica Smitka at the LWVNYS. This gives her a good sense of the views of the entire state.

NOTE: The Senate one-house budget includes \$10 million for local BOEs. The Assembly calls for \$6 million. These are promising, but a far cry from our \$35 million ask. Better news is that the Assembly one-house includes \$500,000 for voting access for those eligible to vote in detention. Both Senators Brouk and Cooney are supporters of this funding. In addition, the Senate one-house budget removes Part S pending further discussion; the Assembly budget proposal removes Part S and R.

Our pre-budget meetings with legislators will continue through April 1. Post-budget meetings will begin sometime in May.

Overall, our legislators are open to hearing our views. Our observation is that they work very hard to serve the needs of their constituents, sometimes spanning three or more counties.

Feel free to address any questions to Barb Murphy or Scott Forsyth. Advocacy@LWV-RMA.org

Calendar

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, you can add it to your personal calendar, and you can register for an event. You can see future (or past) months' activities by easily using the < > buttons.

Access the Calendar [here](#).



March 2026 Naturalization Ceremonies

On March 10, 2026, fifty-seven candidates were naturalized in a ceremony at the beautiful Dryden Theater in the George Eastman House. Judge Paul Warren and Judge Mark Pedersen presided. We learned that Judge Warren, who has presided over the ceremony at this location for many, many years, is retiring on March 13, 2026. He thanked Allen Buell, the Senior Director of Special Events at the Museum, for arranging one more ceremony before his retirement. Judge Mark Pedersen will fill his very big shoes. Most new citizens traveled from the Buffalo area. Twelve citizens registered to vote, 2 from Monroe County.

Tamara Minter gave heartfelt remarks on our behalf. Katherine Smith and Sheila Abeling also represented LWV-RMA. Thank you, ladies!

On March 17, 2026, twenty-two new citizens were sworn in and we registered eighteen new voters at a ceremony held at the Federal Building. The Honorable Meredith Vacca presided and Barbara Reardon, Marla Miller, and Margaret Supinski represented the League.

Thank you to those who volunteered at the events.

Margret Roberts and Margaret Supinski.



The Outreach to New Americans Committee

The Outreach to New Americans Committee met on March 10 to plan some spring events. We are planning to table at four events put on by the Ibero-American Action League in International Plaza between May and November. We have reconnected with the SEIU folks at Strong Memorial Hospital and will table at their first Funds Day on April 9.

We tabled at an Iftar Dinner (breaking the Ramadan fast) with Mike Coniff and the folks at Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services on March 15. Pictured below is committee member Barbara Reardon at the event.

There were at least 200 people at the dinner, though most were not yet citizens so cannot vote. We did connect with the Reverend Abi John from the Church of the Ascension who is interested in partnering with us to reach members of his congregation who are eligible to vote, so we will follow up with him.

Evelyn Jennings NewAmericansOutreach@LWV-RMA.org



Voter Services Update

On March 28, we offered voter registration services at the No Kings Rally at the Genesee Gateway Park at 151 Mt Hope Ave. Our table was near the stage area and displayed the LWV logo. Thank you to the volunteers who worked at the table and those who stopped by to see us despite the cold and wind.

The events originally set for March at the Third Presbyterian Church have been postponed until April. Additional registration events are scheduled for the coming month and include the House of Mercy and the Dr. Deborah Ellerbe Health Fair at the Montgomery Center.



The Urban League has invited us to help with their bi-weekly canvassing in May & June. Door hangers with information about community services are distributed in vulnerable, low-income neighborhoods. We will provide 500 of our door hangers that summarize how to vote, voting dates and times, and early polling locations.

Cathy Kane identified a form to change your choice of absentee voting to in-person voting. The form entitled "Request to Cancel my Absentee Ballot Application" is available through the Monroe County Board of Elections (BOE) at 585-753-1550. There has been a change in voting law that prohibits the casting of a ballot on a voting machine if an absentee ballot has been sent for that election. The following guidance is taken from the BOE website:

"Voters who have already requested an absentee ballot can still vote in person using an affidavit ballot. The affidavit ballot will be kept separate until the election is completed. Election officials will verify whether the voter's absentee ballot has been received. If the voter's absentee ballot has been received, the affidavit ballot will not be counted. If the voter's absentee ballot has not been received, the affidavit ballot will be considered."

The Voter Services Team is a welcoming group of supportive members.

We invite anyone who might be interested in learning more about us to contact us at [Voter Services@LWV-RMA.org](mailto:VoterServices@LWV-RMA.org). Please come join us at our monthly meetings that are held via Zoom on the fourth Thursday of the month from 5:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.

Submitted by Cathy Kane and Deb Gordon

Join First Friday for social time at I Square in Irondequoit - 400 Bakers Park, Rochester, NY 14617 - at 11:30 A.M. on the first Friday of 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!

Dayle Bird

Dayle Bird, a member of LWV-RMA for 52 years, passed away on March 16.

Her obituary can be seen here: [Obituary](#).



Welcome Members Who Joined in February

During February the following 9 new members joined LWV-RMA:

Mark Barasz: I joined the League in Florida to help with voter registration. I don't work any longer, but I participate in a number of organizations, mostly revolving around politics and the environment. And walking outside on a brisk day, blue sky above, almost always makes me smile!

Ann Kubus: I am a retired scientist previously working for a medical device company. I had been considering joining LWV for a while and decided to do so after attending a recent seminar. My concern for our democracy and the peril it is currently facing is my motivation for this decision. Attending rallies with catchy posters is very uplifting and energizing but I feel I could do more for the cause in a more constructive role. Hoping to find that with LWV.

Sharon Stevens: I am active in a local Indivisible group and became more aware of LWV and the role they have in educating and supporting democracy. I have found purpose in this work and enjoy meeting like-minded people. The future of our democracy depends on us to carry forward the good work done before us and I want to help. I retired from RIT where I worked and assisted so many people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs. I want my grandchildren to have the freedoms we worked hard for, and to ensure that our young people thrive and succeed.

Gordon Toleman: I have joined the League of Women Voters for several reasons including:

- A. I'm gravely concerned about the unwarranted attacks on voting rights,
- B. My mother was a member of the LWV back in the 1970's and I was impressed by how much she learned and did and
- C. Patty Nugent nagged me incessantly 😊.

I'm a civil engineer who loves wine, traveling with my wife, deer hunting, and gardening. I built a log cabin deep in the Adirondack Mountains when I was 20. Little children make me smile, especially my grandchildren. 😊

Mary Gerlach, Christine Steerman, Jane Kress, Kerry Lewis, and Cynthia Toleman also joined during February. Welcome to all of you!

Civic Education Forum Committee Update

The Civic Education Forum (CEF) committee has been working to establish a list of forums to educate voters prior to the midterm elections. See page 3 for the forum scheduled in April. Dates and details are being finalized for the following events in May:

- During the first 2 weeks of May, Adam Shenxiong, a PhD student at University of Rochester, will provide a seminar on how to best respond to misinformation on social media.
- During the last week in May, Professor Sarah Burns of RIT will discuss via Zoom how to recognize misinformation and disinformation in publications and materials provided by candidates for elected office.

The committee is prioritizing topics based on their impact on educating voters prior to the midterm elections. Among the topics being considered are:

- The NY court system and the roles of judges we elect
- How the Board of Elections (BOE) secures elections in Monroe County
(The BOE Commissioners have agreed to speak about this at a forum in August.)
- Voting rights
- The Monroe County budget: where the money goes and how you can influence it
- The responsibilities of the three branches of government

If you have suggestions for topics, feel free to send them to micketeditor@gmail.com.

Mary Micket



Election Education Forum

Thursday April 23, 2026
 5:00 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.
 Third Presbyterian Church
 4 Meigs Street
 Rochester, NY 14607

Knowledge and Action Rochester (KAR), together with LWV-RMA, Indivisible Westside, and Indivisible Outreach, is sponsoring an Election Education Forum for Rochester. This will be a non partisan event to provide information about voter registration, voting processes, primaries, judicial elections, working as an election inspector, and how to get involved in campaigns.

The speakers and other details will be finalized in early April. The event will be added to the LWV-RMA calendar and website with a registration link when the details are finalized.

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www.LWV-RMA.org

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If you have comments, article suggestions or pictures to share please send them to 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, justice, 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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Please send this form and your check payable to the LWVUS to:

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MEMBERSHIP DUES:

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.