

Rochester/Metro League of Women Voters

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.

Voter education is one of the League's most important functions, and the League encourages all citizens to register and to cast an informed vote.

The League does not support political parties or candidates, but does take stands on important issues after careful study and research.

Membership in the League is open to all citizens of voting age.

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The Grand Jury System: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How?

Exploring the Grand Jury in its historical context and present-day usage in order to better understand proposed legislation.

Our distinguished moderator:

Rev. Lawrence Hargrave, Pastor for Outreach Ministries at
Asbury First United Methodist Church

Our Expert Panel:

Sandra Doorley, Monroe County District Attorney

Roger Brazill, First Assistant Public Defender,
Monroe County Public Defenders Office

Monday, March 23, 2015

7:00-8:30 PM

Asbury First United Methodist Church

1050 East Avenue, Rochester NY

Handicapped Accessible/Parking in Rear

Pre-registration is appreciated: 585-262-3730 or

www.lwv-rma.org



President's Corner

What hardy souls we Leaguers are! Niagara Falls and Lake Ontario are nearly frozen solid, but we are not even slowing down!

Were you able to attend our excellent forum "School to Prison: Alternatives to Incarceration" on February 23? Our impressive panel enlightened and challenged us. Kudos to the Education Study Group, the Program Committee and, of course, Gin Busack! (Our panelists were interviewed on *WXXI's Connections with Evan Dawson* – listen here: <http://wxxinews.org/post/connections-alternatives-jail-kids>.)

Our March 23rd forum will be just as riveting. We'll be looking at the Grand Jury system here in NYS. We're fortunate to have Monroe County District Attorney Sandra Doorley and First Assistant Public Defender Roger Brazill presenting an in-depth look at a system that's very much in the news these days (see the article on this page).

On April 27th League member Sarah Liebschutz and an excellent panel will help us understand how the Affordable Care Act is functioning. Don't miss it!

Attendance is growing at our First Fridays! It's great fun to learn more about each other and our projects. Some of us have joined new committees and others are forming new friendships – and a good time is always had by all!

March is Women's History Month. Be sure to celebrate our rich local (and national) heritage!

Finally, save the date for the **Annual Meeting**. It's **Wednesday, May 27, at 4:00 PM at Locust Hill Country Club**. The agenda includes election of board members, review and adoption of next year's budget, and review and adoption of revisions to our bylaws. And much more!

This is your opportunity to ask questions about the budget, the bylaws, and whatever else you want to know. And we'll celebrate all the wonderful League members who have accomplished so much this year. Early feedback favored a late afternoon meeting and hors d'oeuvres instead of a meal.

We're always interested in feedback on any topic! Our emails are below, or leave us a voicemail message at 585-262-3730, and we'll phone you back.

In League,

Gloria Read (gloell@rochester.rr.com)

Mary Hussong-Kallen (mmhk@rochester.rr.com)

March Forum

Grand juries have been in the spotlight of late, locally and nationally, resulting in confusion on just how grand juries operate.

Governor Cuomo has said that he will appoint a "special monitor" to review cases in which grand juries choose not to indict police officers. In response, NYS Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has asked the Governor to grant his office the authority to investigate and prosecute cases involving police action resulting in the death of unarmed citizens. Most recently, Jonathan Lippman, Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals, has announced that he will be submitting a bill to the State Legislature requiring that judges preside over grand jury proceedings in "cases involving allegations of homicide or felony assault against police officers" and that transcripts of the proceedings be released in cases of "significant public interest" whether or not the proceedings result in an indictment.

The concept of grand juries had its origin in England 800 years ago (1215) in the Magna Carta. However, according to Wikipedia, the United States is "virtually the only common law jurisdiction in the world that continues to use the grand jury to screen criminal indictments." There are provisions in all 50 states for grand juries, however only 22, including New York State, require their use. The grand jury is documented both in the United States Constitution (5a [Fifth] Amendment: "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury") and in our New York State Constitution (Article 1, Section 6: "No person shall be held to answer for a capital or otherwise infamous crime...unless on indictment of a grand jury.").

In concept, the Grand Jury serves to indict those for whom there is probable cause that a crime has been committed; however, it also serves to protect the innocent from unwarranted prosecution.

Let's join together on Monday, March 23rd, Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Avenue, Rochester NY at 7:00 PM to get a better understanding of how our system has evolved and the reforms under consideration.

Virginia Busack,
Program Committee Chair

Capitol Beat Blog

Check in every Thursday for updates and musings from League Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti!

Please visit:

<http://www.lwvny-capitolbeat.blogspot.com/>

for this week's post!

Advocacy: Increasing Voter Participation

League members Barbara Grosh, Carole Hoffman and Katherine Smith recently met with Senator Rich Funke, new chair of the NYS Senate Election Committee, to present LWNYS positions on changes in election regulations and laws in our state which may increase voter turnout.

THE LWNYS ADVOCATES:

- same-day voter registration,
- early voting (32 states currently allow some form of this practice),
- no-excuse absentee voting (would require a constitution amendment),
- paperless forms of voter registration (NYS has a limited system in conjunction with the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles),
- pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds,

The LWVUS and LWNYS strongly oppose ID requirements for voting.

LWVNY ALSO SUPPORTS BETTER BALLOT DESIGN:

- clear delineation between offices
- larger font
- redesign of fill-in-circles (replacing the current light gray color)

Senator Funke asked for more detailed LWV studies on these points, and that information has been provided. LWV-RMA looks forward to working with the NYS Senate Election Committee this session.

Katherine Smith

1st Vice-President, Advocacy Chair

Women's History Month

As Black History Month ends and Women's History Month begins, we wonder, "How much do you know about African-American women and their role in the suffrage movement?" We have some very interesting answers! Please visit the National Women's History Museum website:

<https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/rightsfor-women/AfricanAmericanwomen.html>

LWVNY recommends a video titled "This Won't Hurt a Bit" available online at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syMjY0-cT9E>

Advocacy: Education

LWVNY strongly urges members to oppose the "Education Investment Incentives" Act which is included in the Governor's Executive Budget (Article VII-12572-01-5) and in Senate bill S.1976.

The Legislature's ongoing failure to fully abide by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision, which orders that state educational funds go primarily toward students attending public schools in high-needs districts, ensures that decision's impact will be eroded. This Senate bill and the Governor's budget provision would skew monies toward wealthier districts and private foundations since they provide for tax credits, not charitable deductions. Also, there is limited disclosure with this method, and citizens cannot know until 18 months after where these monies have gone (e.g., scholarships to private schools). In addition to this lack of transparency, this system would create even more accountability issues because the impact of these credits would be disregarded for purposes of calculating state aid.

Please call your Assembly Member and NYS Senator today to express your opposition.

Senators:

Ranzenhofer	716-631-8695
Nozzolio	315-568-9816
Robach	585-223-1800
Gallivan	716-634-4321
Ortt	716-434-0680
Funke	585-223-1800

Assembly:

Nojay	585-346-0002
Lawrence	585-225-4190
Johns	585-223-9130
Morelle	585-467-0410
Gantt	585-454-3670
Bronson	585-244-5255
Hawley	585-589-5780

For more information, please read this statement from LWVNY Education Finance Issues Specialist Marion Bott (February 3, 2015):

http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/education/2015/Testimony-on-joint-hearing-financial-ed_020315.pdf

Katherine Smith

1st Vice-President, Advocacy Chair

Looking Back at the Suffrage Movement

In celebration of Women's History Month, please take a few moments to look over this wonderful timeline:

<http://www.suffragist.com/timeline.htm>

We think you'll discover a heroine or an event you didn't know about!

LWV-RMA Committee on Poverty and Homelessness: Report

We are all feeling the effects of this long stretch of cold and snow and are grateful for the shelter we have. We also know there are many who do not have this basic human right. (Carole Hoffman's article on page 5 shares what is happening to our local "garage" people who became "tent" people as Rochester is responding to this emergency.)

Stepping back and seeing the broader picture, our committee has been gathering facts from local agencies on homelessness and how Rochester is responding to it for the long run. Below is a short list of general information you may or may not already know.

TEN FACTS ABOUT BEING HOMELESS IN USA

by Bill Quigley, Law Professor at Loyola University in New Orleans, LA

- Over one-half million people are homeless.
- One quarter of homeless people are children.
- Tens of thousands of veterans are homeless – in fact, over 57,000 vets are estimated to be homeless each night (60% in shelters; the rest, unsheltered). Of these homeless veterans, 5,000 are female.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in women.
- Many people are homeless because they cannot afford rent. (According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, HUD's budget has been slashed by over 50% in recent decades with loss of 10,000 units of subsidized low income housing each and every year.)
- There are fewer places for poor people to rent than before. (One-eighth of the nation's supply of low income housing has been permanently lost since 2001. As a result millions of families spend more than half their monthly income on rent.)
- Since 2008 over 5 million homes have been foreclosed, or 1 out of every 10 homes with a mortgage.
- The government does not help as much as one would think. (Public rental assistance is available to only 25% of those who are extremely low income households. The remainder are on multi-year waiting lists – usually over three years in Rochester.)
- One in 5 homeless people suffer from untreated severe mental illness versus 6% of the general population. (A University of Pennsylvania study

found that investing in comprehensive health support and treatment of physical and mental illnesses is less costly than incarceration, shelter and hospital services for untreated homeless.)

- Cities are increasingly making homelessness a crime. (A 2014 survey of 187 US cities by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty found: 24% make it a city-wide crime to beg in public; 33% make it illegal to stand around or loiter any place in the city; 18% make it a crime to sleep anywhere in public; 43% make it illegal to sleep in your car; and 53% make it illegal to sit or lie down in particular public places.)

If you would like to comment or work with our committee, please send me an email at georgiatd1@gmail.com.

Georgia DeGregorio,

Poverty and Homelessness Committee Chair

The Numbers Are In – We Are a Growing Organization!

We are officially 145 strong as of the cut-off date for submitting names to LWVUS. Thank you to all our members who share with friends and acquaintances how great we are and what interesting and challenging work we do. Your enthusiasm is what makes us shine. Your willingness to step out of your comfort zone and make "The Ask" is outstanding.

And thank you to our new members who have joined us this year. We hope you have found your niche in our League and are finding your participation rewarding. If you are still looking for your opportunity, please contact us. There are so many "little things" to do that make a big difference in the long run.

Welcome to New Members:

Akandsha Arya
Rebecca Comisar
Sandra Drummond
Stephanie Kutzke
Constance Mitchell
Beverly Pringle
Linda Shevlin
Samantha Smith
Anthony Wagman

Ann Carmody
Barbara Deming
Patrina Freeman
Hasana Martin
Steven Penta
Lisa Reagan
Jackie Smith
Virginia Sykes
Gail Wilder

Welcome back:

Carly Wise-Levick

Your Membership Committee: Georgia DeGregorio, chair; Hasana Martin, Patrina Freeman, Michael Barbato, Lois Winterkorn, Ellen DeGregorio, Phyllis Walker, Carly Wise-Levick

A Story of Grassroots in Action: Sanctuary Village

Last month a building called Sanctuary Village became a refuge for many who had become marginalized, living under the Susan B. Anthony Bridge in one of the coldest winters in the history of the city of Rochester NY.

The story of the new Sanctuary Village began when city government ordered the dismantling of the encampment known as "Tent City" - home to a large group of Rochester's homeless. With the destruction of these 'homes' came publicity and a new spotlight on the problem of homelessness. This was soon followed by an outpouring of donations of money and goods to help find a solution.

Local activist Sister Grace Miller (RSM) and her House of Mercy, a local shelter already filled to capacity, combined with the generosity of the Buckingham Properties (owned by the Glazer family), quickly established a temporary shelter in a warehouse, with no running water, which became 'home' for about 50 people.

A social worker from the House of Mercy was immediately named director of this facility. Volunteers have been on hand to offer rides to various places around the city where breakfast is served; where hot showers are available; where assistance with filling out forms for public services is offered. In the evening volunteers bring an evening meal. Mounds of donated clothing and supplies have arrived but the need continues as the present residents get relocated to a setting more appropriate to their illness/needs. More come in to fill the vacancy. There is a constant turnover.

The causes of homelessness are many and varied: mental disorders, chemical dependency and lack of financial resources are most common. (Please read Georgia DeGregorio's article on page 4.) LWV-RMA is participating in a study currently being conducted in our city.

In the meantime Sanctuary Village is continually seeking volunteers and specific items and will soon be looking to establish a new, permanent facility to better meet the basic needs of some of Rochester's homeless. If you wish to help or donate items or money in a grassroots response to help, call 585-328-6857 or email sanctuaryvillage@frontier.com.

Carole Hoffman

Government Committee Member

LWV-RMA On Campus at MCC

On February 4 Monroe Community College once again opened its doors to the League of Women Voters. Members from the League were invited to canvass MCC students and ask their opinions about local daycare costs and subsidy availability. Georgia DeGregorio, Lois Winterkorn, Patrina Freeman, Michael Barbato, Barbara Grosh and Hasana Martin spent approximately 90 minutes asking survey questions, registering voters, and taking pictures!

League members Georgia DeGregorio, Barbara Grosh and Jeffrey Wagman have now laid the groundwork for an exciting partnership with MCC. At a meeting with MCC staff persons Betty Stewart and Matt Lawson, we agreed to conduct a monthly registration drive on campus including recruitment for a civic engagement and participation venture for MCC students.

Time spent at MCC is always well-utilized. On this particular day there was music, socializing and voter outreach along with recruitment for a new venture.

If you haven't yet had the opportunity to become part of a League activity, please consider reaching out to either Georgia or Barbara for more information. You will find that your talents and skills will be very much appreciated as you encourage and engage motivated youth in our community.

Hasana Martin

Membership Committee Member

Facing Race=Embracing Equity

FR=EE Education Action and Change Work Group Invites Concerned Citizens to a Community Forum:

- parents and children sharing experiences in Rochester City Schools
- community and elected officials discussing solutions to address racism in education

Please join us!

Frederick Douglas Resource Center, 36 King Street

Saturday, March 14, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 PM

Do You Tweet?

If you use Twitter, consider following LWVNY. You'll find great information on many topics. Look for <https://twitter.com/LWVNY> next time you're online!





Sunshine Corner

IRONDEQUOIT TOWN BOARD 2/19/2015 OBSERVED BY ELAINE SCHMIDT ON ICAT VIMEO SITE.

Meeting was run in an open manner. No LWV issues were observed.

A public hearing will be held at the March Town Board meeting regarding pawnbrokers, jewelry and coin exchange dealers and second-hand dealers. They are allowed to operate only in manufacturing districts.

Another public hearing will be held on the R-1 residential code.

Irondequoit Police Department was congratulated by Supervisor Bello on the good review received from the NYS Comptrollers office. Irondequoit's Police Department was 1 of only 2 police departments who received a good rating on the Comptroller's review of property and procedures.

A public hearing on neglected and abandoned properties in Irondequoit took place at this Town Board meeting. Residents are urged to contact the town or call Irondequoit Police with any concerns.

A special Town Board meeting will be held on March 5 at 5:00 PM.

(To view the full minutes from this and other meetings, please click here: <http://www.irondequoit.org/>)

MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE 2/10/2015 OBSERVED BY ELAINE SCHMIDT

Public speakers Sister Grace and Sister Rita reminded the Legislature again about the ongoing burial issues for indigent people and the need for a permanent shelter for the local homeless.

Another speaker, Kathy Martin, President of the Monroe County Farm Bureau, spoke on the need for additional funds.

The meeting of the Legislature this session was moved along by a single vote on most of the resolutions on the agenda. As he did last year, Legislator Bauroth proposed an amendment to the Designation of Newspapers which would allow the Democrat and Chronicle to be used for Legislature notices IF the Legislature decided to use it, in addition to The Daily Record and Rochester Business Journal. The amendment was defeated along party lines.

Of note: the County authorized implementation of an agreement to use local labor to construct Monroe Community College Downtown Campus.

(To view the full minutes from this and other meetings, please click here: <http://www2.monroecounty.gov>)

WEBSTER WORKSHOP 1/22/2015 OBSERVED BY LOIS WINTERKORN

The town is in the process of updating the Town Code. This process is expected to take about 18 months.

The Board spoke with the Webster Community Coalition for Economic Development. They discussed business retention and growth and the feasibility of forming a chilled water district in Webster.

(To view the full minutes from these and other meetings, please click here: <http://www.ci.webster.ny.us>)

Elaine Schmidt

Government Committee Member

Naturalization

Attending a Naturalization ceremony is an enjoyable experience. Why? You will come away feeling very good. Not only have you supported new citizens at the oath ceremony, but you've seen a sparkle of love of Americanism. Often candidates will wear their birth country's garb, which brings their culture to the ceremony. At the February 12th ceremony, a gentleman wore a tux and smiled from the minute he entered the courtroom. When he was called to receive his final certificate as a new citizen, he was filled with so much emotion that the courtroom became silent. There wasn't a dry eye in the room.

On January 8th at 10:00 AM, in the Monroe County Office Building, Mimi Wilson welcomed new citizens to a Naturalization ceremony. Also on that date, at 1:00 PM, Lois Winterkorn, greeted candidates for Naturalization at the Federal Building. Our 2015 calendar continued on February 12th at 10:00 AM in the Monroe County Office Building with Sheila Abeling representing the League. We welcomed 44 new citizens. At 1:00 PM on the 12th, Kathy Farrar met 55 new candidates for Naturalization at the Federal Building. A special thank you to all League volunteers!

February Naturalizations brought Sheila Abeling to the Monroe County Office Building at 10:00 AM on the 12th. Sheila welcomed 44 candidates. In the afternoon of the 12th at 1:00 PM, Kathy Farrar met 51 new citizens at the Federal Building. The enthusiasm of the newest citizens is so wonderful!

I visited the League in Portland, Oregon. The members there were very welcoming. (My experience is in the February Voter.)

If you are interested in observing or becoming a part of the Naturalization project that the League is a part, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162004@yahoo.com or 585-223-6819.

Sheila Abeling

Naturalization Committee Chair

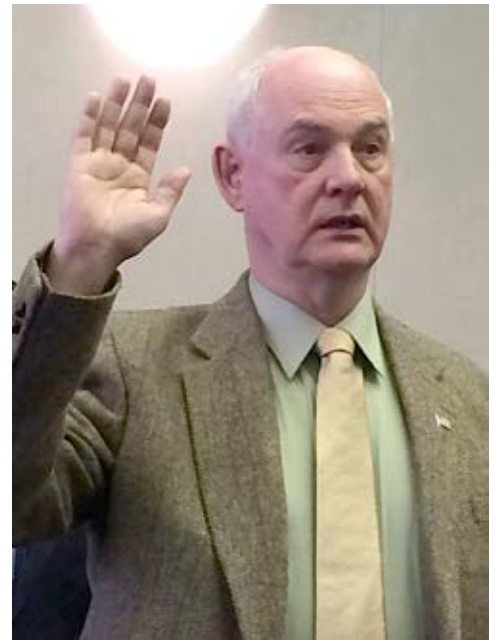
Susan B. Anthony Luncheon Photos



Voter Registration Photos at MCC



Naturalization Photos



Webster Grange #436 Quartet welcomes the new citizens with song!



Coming Events!



March

- 6** First Friday, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (1872 Café)
- 12** Naturalization Ceremonies 10:00 AM (Monroe County Office Building)
- 12** Naturalization Ceremonies 1:00 PM (Federal Building)
- 12** LWV-RMA Board Meeting (BTH)
- 12** Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs Luncheon 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
- 23** Forum: Grand Jury System 7:00 PM

April

- 9** Naturalization Ceremonies AM (Minerva Deland School in Fairport)
- 9** Naturalization Ceremonies 1:00 PM (Federal Building)
- 9** LWV-RMA Board Meeting (BTH)
- 9** Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs Luncheon 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
- 27** Forum: Affordable Care Act, 7:00 PM, First Unitarian Church on Winton Rd.

Be sure to check your email and our website for other events as they are scheduled!

First Fridays

Are you free for lunch or a mid-day coffee break? If so, we'd like to spend it with you!

When: First Friday of the month between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM

Where: 1872 Café at 431 West Main Street (free parking across the street)

What: Chatting with other League members – topics are up to you

If you've wanted to get to know more members, here's an opportunity – because we think the work we love to do is more fun when we get to know one another better.

See you on:

Friday, March 6

Friday, May 1

Watch and Listen to our Forums on YouTube!

The League is trying something new, something that has had success in other cities - we are now recording our forums and posting the videos on YouTube for your viewing pleasure. Can't make the forum? Not a problem. Catch a 'replay' on YouTube!

To access the League's YouTube videos, please click on this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAu1ojsSE64&feature=em-upload_owner#action=share

Enjoy!

Board meets monthly on the second Thursday of each month. Board meetings are open to all members.

Government Committee meets monthly. For details, call Elaine Schmidt at 530-7414.

Membership Committee meets monthly. For details, call Georgia DeGregorio at 787-9692.

10:00 AM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Monroe County Office Building at 39 W. Main Street.

1:00 PM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Federal Court House at 100 State Street.

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



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
ROCHESTER METROPOLITAN AREA

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www.LWV-RMA.org

Rochester VOTER

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

**APRIL VOTER
DEADLINE IS MARCH 15!**



SPEAK UP, BE HEARD,
IF YOU DON'T SAY A WORD, EVERYTHING WILL STAY THE SAME WAY

Join the League Today!



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Check Amount: _____

Level of Membership: _____

Please send this form and your check payable to
League of Women Voters/RMA to:
LWV/RMA
PO Box 10573
Rochester, NY 14610

or join us online at: www.lwv-rma.org/join.php

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Mary Hussong-Kallen
Co-President

Gloria S. Read
Co-President

Katherine Smith
First Vice-President

Sheila Abeling
Second Vice-President

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Director

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Director/Parliamentarian

Off-Board:

Georgia DeGregorio
Chair, Membership

Goals of the League of Women Voters:

- To encourage informed citizen participation in government and politics
- To influence public policy through education and advocacy

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV-RMA

Editor, Mary Hussong-Kallen

Layout/Design, Chris Burleigh

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We know you'll "like" us!

www.facebook.com/lwvofrma

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate	\$75
Household	\$105
Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass	\$150
Carrie Chapman Catt	\$200
Student (full-time/under 25)	\$25
Low income, call office	Sliding Scale