



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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Join Us for an EVENING March League Program!

Women in Elected Office— The Unfinished Business

Thursday, March 5, 2009

5:30 pm Buffet Dinner

Evening League Program

Northfield Food and Drink

(formerly the Spring House)

3001 Monroe Ave.

To commemorate International Women's Day, a stimulating program has been planned featuring the following speakers: Lois Geiss, retired President of Rochester City Council, Catherine McCabe, Henrietta Town Board member, Lovely Warren, City Council member, and Joann van Zandt, retired member of Monroe County Legislature.

Nora Bredes, Director of the Anthony Center for Women's Leadership at the University of Rochester will moderate.

The program will begin at 6:30pm.

DEADLINE for dinner reservations is February 26th

Please send check payable to LWV/RMA for \$30 to League office, 45 Exchange Blvd #508, Rochester 14614.

League programs are open to the public.

Board Changes

On January 22, 2009 the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters/Rochester Metro Area accepted with regret the resignation of Nancy Kleintop as President and voted Katherine Smith to act as President until the Annual Meeting on June 4th. The Board also, regretfully, accepted the resignation of Patricia Thompson as Director of Development. At its February 22 meeting the Board will examine duties of our present Directors, consider possible appointments to the Board until June and reassignment of present areas of responsibilities.

As reported in this issue, plans have been finalized for the winter/spring League Days in 2009 and the consensus sessions. The Directors have planned very exciting events with outstanding speakers, and they hope many members and guests will participate.

At the Annual Meeting, June 4th, all members will have time to discuss the make-up of our new Board and their areas of responsibilities.

These responsibilities for the 2009-2010 year will then be discussed and assigned at the annual summer Board Retreat.

Katherine Smith, *Acting President*

Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence

In a quest to learn more about ways to increase protection for victims of domestic violence, the Social Policy Committee invited Captain Lorri Strem and Pat Huntington-Sigel from the Rochester Police Department to discuss the RPD's response to Domestic Violence calls.

Captain Strem heads up the RPD's Internal Committee on Domestic Violence, and Ms. Huntington-Sigel is part of the Family Victim Services Section of the RPD. Domestic Incidence Reports (DIR) have been developed to reflect the kinds of calls police patrols make, the results of their intervention and the tracking of arrests. Ms. Huntington-Sigel receives these DIRs and contacts the victims. Her staff of 20 informs the victims of their rights, choices, what to expect in court, how to get other services as needed, etc. She says that her department stays with each victim from first contact until the victim no longer needs them, sometimes as long as one year. The Federal Violence Against Women Act and the Victims of Crime Act support many of these programs.

Both guests stated that state and national legislation is critically needed to strengthen and fund the assistance to and protection of victims of domestic violence. For example, victims of domestic violence need housing and employment that is safe and secure so that they may be able to leave the violent situation and stay economically stable. Currently, in many states, a woman can be fired from her job if her abuser causes trouble at her place of employment, or she can be evicted from her homes if

her abuser harasses her there.

There will be more about this legislation in the next Voter. League Day on this issue will be May 7th.

Joan Rosenthal, *Social Policy Committee*

National Popular Vote (NPV)

The crux of the NPV Compact proposal is an interstate compact in which states would commit to cast their votes for the winner of the national popular vote for President and Vice President. Presently, the winner take-all rule is used in 48 states although it is not required by the US Constitution. The Compact would become effective at a time when states representing 270 electoral votes (majority) agree to this procedure for national elections. As few as 11 states could determine a presidential election.

Primary authority for the Compact is found in the Constitution, Article II, section 1, clause 2. Political compacts are permitted between states but may require congressional approval if it is argued successfully that the change creates a shift in political power. The current Court might decide to hear a case on the NPV Compact.

The League of Women Voters of the United States already has a position in favor of abolition of the Electoral College and adoption of the "direct popular vote" method. The NPV Compact proposes a way to accomplish this goal, but it may come no closer than the current system to electing a nationwide majority winner, as it still allows a candidate with only the plurality of the vote to be elected President.

While the US is a Republic and not a direct democracy, the LWVUS supports direct election of the President and Vice-President, one person-one vote, for each seat. This is why the LWVUS supports abolishing the Electoral College. However, any question of abolishing the Electoral College must, by necessity, consider the replacement. LWV Consensus sessions will look at the pros and cons of the NPV. They can be found at LWVUS web site. Dr. Liebschutz will lead our local discussions as announced elsewhere in this issue.

Summary of LWVUS articles, Katherine Smith, *Acting President*

See page 4 for consensus questions.

National SUNSHINE WEEK: March 15-21.

Sunshine Week is a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include print, broadcast and online news media, civic groups, libraries, non-profits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know.

What can YOU do to encourage openness in government?

Post-Election 2008 Wrap-Up

For most of the last six months our attention has been focused on providing information to voters on the voting process so that they could exercise this precious right. This has been an intense period for Leaguers while we provided essential information to the general voting population, new voters and persons with disabilities. The complicated process of voting in New York State has become more complicated, not less, because of New York's partial implementation of the HAVA (Help America Vote Act) requirements for new voting machines and the now fully implemented NYSVoter (statewide voter registration database).

Many of you have documented your personal voting experiences with the Ballot Marking Devices (BMD) and sent those to me. That information will be invaluable to election administrators as they and we work to improve the election process for 2009. There is much work still to be done in educating election inspectors and the public on the BMDs. They were not widely utilized primarily due to inadequate training of polling place officials and the short timeline of their introduction. Evaluation of the election process is incomplete at this point but will be available early in 2009 in order to make corrections before the September, 2009 Primary.

On November 7 Governor Paterson directed New York's Secretary of State (SOS), Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, to submit a report to him within 60 days with suggestions on how to modernize the State's voting practices and remove barriers to participation. He specifically referred to analyzing the November 4 election and voter participation and how boards of elections managed the turnout. He also mentioned in the press release that the SOS should look at the potential benefits and disadvantages of moving toward an early voting system and easing the absentee ballot process.

The NYS League was contacted by the SOS for our comments which we provided in support of

- 1) less restrictive absentee ballot application,
- 2) more creative solutions for recruiting election inspectors (split shifts, using 17 yr. olds or college students, etc.),
- 3) increased mandatory training for election inspectors.

In addition we, as members of the NYS Citizens Coalition for Voter Participation and Fair Elections (new name for the HAVA Coalition), have signed on to a letter encompassing many additional voting process concerns which should be addressed through legislation or policy changes.

The SOS report will be delivered to Governor Paterson on January 6, and we will look forward to his response and recommendations for legislative action during the 2009 session.

2008 New York State Voter Turnout Slightly Less Than 2004!

Election results provided by the New York State Board of Elections show a 2% decrease in voter turnout compared to the 2004 presidential election! Here are the statistics for you to ponder:

Year	Total NYS Voters	Total Turnout	Turnout Percent
2004	11,245,218	7,448,266	66%
2008	12,031,312	7,674,784	64%.

From the January 2009 State Board Report by Aimee Allaud, Off Board Specialist in Elections/Government, LWVNYS.



County Commissioners, Thomas Ferrarese (D) and Peter Quinn (R) speaking at January League Day about the new voting machines and how they functioned.

National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Questions

Following are the NPV Compact consensus questions for discussion meetings. The electronic response form will contain these same NPV Compact consensus questions and will be available in January.

Amending the Constitution

1. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
 - b Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
 - c The group could not reach consensus.
2. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
 - b Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal.
 - c The group could not reach consensus.

Congressional Consent

3. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
 - b The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
 - c The group could not reach consensus.

Enforcement

4. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.
 - b Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway.
 - c Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.

- d The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.
- e The group could not reach consensus.

Uniformity

5. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
 - b The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.
 - c The group could not reach consensus.

Popular Election of the President

6. **Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**
 - a It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the electoral college.
 - b It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.
 - c The group could not reach consensus.

Achievability

7. **Which statements reflect the views of the group?**
 - a The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.

Agree	Disagree	No Consensus
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 - b A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.

Agree	Disagree	No Consensus
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Consensus
March 12 & April 16

See page 7

Join Our E-Unit

Stay in touch with the League between newsletters. Join our e-unit and be part of the notices and conversations that go on in cyberspace. About 40 of us on the e-unit are able to send messages to each other - giving notices of events, bringing items to our attention, announcing last minute meetings.

Anyone in the e-unit may send messages to the whole group. No forwarding is allowed, no attachments, just a very simple message center. Interested? Send your request to join the e-unit to me at shawmcn@aol.com. You will be asked to join, answer "yes" and you are in.

Suzanne McNamara, *e-unit Administrator*

Children & Workers Win in D.C.

The S-Chip Bill, H-R2, an amendment to the Social Security Law, was passed by both the US Senate and House of Representatives (290-135) the last week of January and signed into law February 4 by President Obama. This legislation, which LWVUS has lobbied for the past two years, reauthorizes and expands insurance for children. The \$31.5 billion over four and a half years will cover four million children, leaving five million still without coverage. Massa, Maffai, Lee and Slaughter in the House and Schumer and Gillibrand in the Senate voted *yes*. The National Voter (issue of February '09) has an excellent summary of the LWVUS position and action on pp. 18-19.

Also, passed in Washington the last week of January was the Job Discrimination Bill (66 *yeas*, 32 *nays* in the Senate) that will change the Supreme Court ruling that alters processes for claiming job discrimination. The President signed it into law on January 30th. Massa, Slaughter and Maffai voted *yes*. Lee voted *no*. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand voted *yes*.

Please write or call your congressional member and US Senators thanking them for their votes on these issues.

Eric Massa:

101 Grove St., Pittsford 14534, 585-218-0040

Chris Lee:

Box 15395, Rochester 14615, 716-632-2324

Dan Maffai:

Box 7306, 1340 Federal Building, Syracuse 13621, 315-423-5657.

Finally please let your federal elected representatives know LWVUS supports the D.C. Voting Rights Act. This bill will likely be voted on in February. The National Voter's latest issue has explanations of these bills and more.

Contacting your representatives makes the League look strong.

Katherine Smith, *Acting President*



Bee enjoying her guests

Since Last Month...

Naturalization Ceremonies - on behalf of the League, members participated in the following:

Feb. 12th: Marcia Eisenberg, noon time Naturalization Ceremony at the Federal Building.

February 19: Ellie Newell, 9am ceremony at the Monroe County Building.

On January 30 Board members and friends hosted an open house to celebrate the 100th birthday of Beatrice (Bee) Bibby, 50 year member and former President of LWV/RMA. Flowers were sent by LWVNY; cake and punch were provided by our League.

During the open house Bee related how both her parents were strong supporters of women's rights. As a child she remembers attending an evening event with her parents where Emma B. Sweet, assistant to Susan B. Anthony, pounded her cane on the church floor in order to be heard. Bee commented, "It was a church congregational meeting and in those days women were not in the habit of speaking up. My guess is that she was trying to be heard and was being ignored. As a disciple of Susan B. Anthony, she was not about to let that happen."

Known for her active role in the League, Bee has advocated for better management of local government, helped draw up the charter that defines the governmental powers of Monroe County and persuaded local legislators to revise the county budget in order that the public could more easily understand it. More recently she sponsored the undertaking of a study by the League, in conjunction with the Center Governmental Research, and the issuance of the report, *Local Development Corporations: Risks & Benefits*. Bee has also been active in the Local Government and Natural Resources Committees. Over the years her knowledge, dedication and sense of perspective have been invaluable to the League.



MARCH 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 April VOTER Deadline	3	4	5 Evening League Program 5:30pm	6	7
8	9	10	11 Natural Resources 2:00PM	12 NPV Consensus 12:00pm Naturalization Ceremonies Executive Com. Local Govt. 10 am	13	14
15	16 Social Policy 1:30	17 	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Board Meeting	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2 League Day	3	4
5	6 May VOTER Deadline	7	8 Natural Resources 2:00PM	9 Executive Com Naturalization Ceremony AM & PM	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 NPV Consensus 12:00 pm	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 Board Mtg	24	25
26	27	29	29	30		

*Board meets at 2:00 PM on the fourth Thursday of each month. For a location, please call the office.
Executive Committee meets at the Town & Country Restaurant, 3205 Chili Avenue, at 9:00 AM on the 2nd Thursday of each month.
League Days are normally held at 1570 East Avenue at 12:00 pm on the first Thursday of the month.
Parking is at the rear of the building.*

*Natural Resources meets at the home of Ann Jones, 244-9337. For Natural Resources details, call Chris Pryor 392-4918
Social Policy meets at the home of Joan Rosenthal, 244-6255. For Social Policy details, call Georgia DiGregorio at 787-9692
For Local Government details, call Beth Keigher 271-6694*

11:00 AM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Monroe County Office Building, 39 W. Main St;

2:00 PM Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Federal Court House at 100 State Street.

League Days are open to the public. Calendar information subject to change.

Board meetings of the LWV/RMA are open to membership.

For more complete information consult our website at www.lwv-rma.org, call the office at 262-3730 or e-mail us at lwvrma@frontiernet.net

Time for Consensus: National Popular Vote

March 12 and April 16
1570 East Ave.
12:00 – 1:30PM

DISCUSSION LEADER: Sara Liebschutz, Adjunct Professor of Political Science, University of Rochester and Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at SUNY Brockport.

There will be discussion of the pros and cons of a national popular vote followed by consensus on the questions provided by the LWVUS. These will decide, based upon the results of the consensus of all leagues, whether to support the National Popular Vote Compact.

League's existing position:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election.

Consensus questions on whether to alter the current voting process are on page 4 of this VOTER; articles are on pages 2 & 7. Articles on the NPV have also appeared in the January and February Rochester League VOTERS.

What is the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact?

Under the U.S. Constitution the states have exclusive and plenary (complete) power to allocate their electoral votes, and may change their state laws concerning the awarding of their electoral votes at any time. The bill would take effect only when enacted, in identical form, by enough states to garner a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President (270 of 538).

States join the compact by adopting it as a state law. The compact law requires that:

- The member state shall hold presidential elections by statewide popular vote.
- After the election the state's chief election official (usually the state Secretary of State) shall certify the number of popular votes cast in the state for each candidate and report those results to the other states by a specific deadline.
- The chief election official shall then determine “national popular vote totals” for each candidate by adding up the vote totals reported by every state and the District of Columbia. (Each state is required to make official reports of vote totals to the federal government in the form of Certificates of Ascertainment.)
- The state's electoral votes shall be awarded to the candidate with the greatest “national popular vote total.”

Under the National Popular Vote bill, all of the states' electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, even if no candidate has a majority; or if the winner of the national popular vote is different from the candidate who wins within a state. So far 4 states have signed the compact into law for a total of 50 electoral votes.

Join the League Today!



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Check Amount: _____

Level of Membership: _____

Yes! I would like to get The VOTER in my E-Mail!

Please send this form and your check payable to
League of Women Voters/RMA to:
LWV/RMA, Times Square Building,
45 Exchange Street, Suite 508,
Rochester, New York 14614

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate	\$70
Household\$100
Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass\$150
Carrie Chapman Catt\$200
Student (full-time/under 25)	\$25
Low income, call office.\$sliding \$cale



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Rochester **VOTER**

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**April VOTER
Deadline is March 2!**

Goals of the League of Women Voters:

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

Ideas are great arrows, but there has to be a bow. And politics is the bow of idealism.

Bill Moyers in TIME.