

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 Our Annual Get Out the Vote Luncheon!

October 22, 2009

Locust Hill Country Club
2000 Jefferson Road
11:30am - 2:00pm

Senator Joseph Robach, Speaker
Initiative and Referendum
Let the People Have A Louder Voice
Ways to Open Up Albany

Senator Joseph Robach is the New York State Senate representative for the 56th Senatorial District which encompasses the Towns of Greece, Brighton, Parma and most of the City of Rochester. Before his election to the Senate, Robach served as an Assemblyman for 11 years filling the seat vacated by the passing of his father, Roger Robach. In 2000 he was elected to the Senate.

In the Senate, he serves as the Ranking Member of the Labor Committee and also as a member of the standing committees on Civil Service & Pensions; Commerce, Economic Development & Small Business; Consumer Protection; Higher Education; and Transportation.

Luncheon choices include: Smoked Tomato Buerre Blanc Chicken or Cobb Salad. Desert: Peach Cobbler

Reservation deadline: October 14

Send checks for \$50.00 with luncheon selection to:

LWVRMA, 45 Exchange Blvd., Rochester 14614



Since Last Summer

Letter from Co-President, Katherine Smith, urging citizens to attend public meetings held by elected officials appeared in the D&C August 12th.

On the afternoon of Sept. 15th Jane Schmitt, Bertha Simpkins and Sheila Abeling opened absentee ballots.

The LWV will attend and register voters at the Gates-Chili Healthy Family Festival on Saturday, Oct. 3. The Gates Police Department, the Gates-Chili Central School District and the Towns of Gates and Chili will host the event from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm at the Gates-Chili High School Fieldhouse.

Naturalizations: October 8th: League members will greet new citizens at 2 ceremonies; Ellie Newell at the morning ceremony and Mimi Wilson at the afternoon ceremony at the Monroe County Office Building.

Thank you everyone who participate in the above events.

Shiela Abeling, *VP Voters Service*.

Wetlands demonstrations:

August 4th-- Chris Fredette demonstrated the wetlands model at High Acres Tour Day in Perinton; food and other activities including tours of the landfill were also available.

August 15 - Jane Schmitt demonstrated the model at Summer Field Day in Tinker Park, Henrietta; many children visited the park that day. Her 2 grandchildren assisted her and became ardent environmentalist in the process.

August 19 Chris Fredette was a guest speaker on one day of a 3-day course offered by the Perinton Recreation and Parks Dept. to children 5-12 on "Nature in Perinton." The event took place in the White Brook Wetland Nature Preserve lodge; after the demonstration of the model Chris took the group on a walk in the wetland and reinforced the knowledge of functions and values of wetlands: "these birds and frogs and plants that you're seeing live here; it floods here but the floodwaters stay here in the wetland, not up into the yards uphill". It delighted Chris to have one child ask if she would come again the next day. Thank you for dedicating your time, Chris.

New Members:

Lois B. Winterkorn
40 Weaver Rd.
Webster, NY 14580

Mr & Mrs. Charles Erdmann
(National Level)
PO Box 1068
Pittsford, NY 14534

In Memoriam

Betty Altier, long time member of the League, passed away August 21, 2009.

Goldie Hect-Meyer, a League member, also passed away recently.

Everyone to Count!

The League of Women Voters is a national partner in the 2010 U.S. Census, which will take place on April 1, 2010. "The 2010 Census is an enormously important government effort that sets out to count all Americans," said Mary G Wilson, national President of the League of Women Voters. "The League is joining this effort as a national partner to enable our local, grassroots members to help achieve this goal."

The Rochester Area LWV has joined many other local Leagues as partners of the Census Bureau. As Mary Wilson said, "we have been fighting to protect the rights of underrepresented communities in many arenas including voting and elections, and immigration and health care reforms. The Census influences so many public policy decisions, we all must do our part to see that it is as accurate and inclusive as it can be."

There are three goals of this partnership: to have the highest possible mail-back response; to decrease the undercount differential; and to encourage cooperation with the census takers.

If you can reach those most at risk of being undercounted – immigrants, the unemployed, lower income, racial and language minorities, and those who have recently moved, live in temporary or multi-unit dwellings – contact Judy Weinstein, our Census coordinator, at j.weinstein.roc@gmail.com or 442-9815 so that she can provide you with materials to distribute.

The LWV approach to the Census is similar to that of voting - We want everyone to count!

Census Facts

The federal government uses census data to determine the number of seats each state has in the House of Representatives and to distribute over \$300 billion dollars in a number of areas including Head Start programs; Title I grants; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food grants; public transportation; road rehabilitation and construction; programs for the elderly, emergency food and shelter; and Empowerment Zones.

Judy Weinstein, *League Census Delegate*



Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The President's 2010 Budget provides \$475 million in EPA's budget for a new Environmental Protection Agency led, interagency Great Lakes restoration initiative, which will target the most significant problems in the region, including invasive aquatic species, non-point source pollution, and contaminated sediment.

This initiative will use outcome-oriented performance goals and measures to target the most significant problems and track progress in addressing them. EPA and its Federal partners will coordinate State, tribal, local, and industry actions to protect, maintain, and restore the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of the Great Lakes.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; for more information go to epa.gov/greatlakes/glri/index.html

About the National Popular Vote Consensus

Two criteria were established for a successful consensus study. The requirement for participation by 1/3 of local Leagues was met with participation by 390 of 766 Leagues (51%). While the second criterion, requiring 2/3 of participating Leagues to achieve consensus on the use of the National Popular Vote (NPV) was not achieved. The consensus elicited very strong support for the NPV Compact (about 50% of responding Leagues in favor). However the remaining 50% were split almost equally between not favoring the compact or not able to reach consensus.

Based on the analysis of the responses to the questions and the comments offered, the NPV Compact Committee and Program Planning Committee recommended that the LWVUS continue to examine opportunities to achieve the goal of direct election of the president in addition to the unlikely opportunity of abolishing the Electoral College by constitutional amendment. Options could include examination of other plans similar to the NPV compact, proposing a concurrence at Convention 2010 on the NPV.

For more information go to www.lwv.org under search enter NPV.



Fair Election Campaign Pledge signing

LWV Study: Consolidation/Shared Services

In its introduction, the report from the Lundine Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness, noted: "The vast majority of our municipalities were established and their boundaries set during the horse-and-buggy era. There are also outdated laws and offices for which no modern rationale exists. Over the years we have added to this outdated system, but rarely simplified, and today we have nearly 5,000 local government entities. While the constant review of what works and what does not is the hallmark of a well-run entity, New York State has major constitutional and legislative impediments that makes change difficult or impossible to implement."

Proposed LWVNY Study

A review of positions indicates the League has no comprehensive consolidation position that would enable it to lobby for or against recommendations contained in the Lundine report. Moreover, many local Leagues have studied or are currently studying various aspects of local consolidation, with the hope of arriving at local positions that would permit lobbying. We believe a statewide study is necessary for 2 reasons:

Consolidation is a catchword for rearrangement of a series of legal relationships between and among governmental units. The Lundine Commission proposed action at a statewide level with respect to some of those issues; it recommended further study at the local level with respect to others. While the League is an ideal organization to deal with the interplay of state and local issues, to do so effectively and efficiently, it must first reach some understanding of where different issues are best handled and what, if any, core principles should be employed in assessing the wisdom of various forms of consolidation.

Without an attempt to articulate a statewide position on consolidation, there is a danger that local Leagues will adopt conflicting positions and seek to lobby at cross purposes with each other. From LWVNY. For information on the Lundine report go to www.nyslocalgov.org



Wetlands model at Tinker Park

Natural Gas Production and NYS Water –

What Can We Learn from Pennsylvania?

The Monongahela River joins the Ohio and Allegheny rivers near Pittsburgh. Its basin intersects Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio – a region with active Marcellus shale gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing. The wastewater from hydraulic fracturing is a slurry of sediments and proprietary chemicals that must be treated as hazardous waste.

In the fall of 2008, U.S. Steel alerted the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) that total dissolved solids (TDS) in the Monongahela River were higher than allowed. State monitoring of the river had not discovered this. The PADEP investigated and discovered that the pollution originated from the natural gas drilling that used horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. The PADEP had allowed wastewater from the drilling to be treated at local sewage plants, and then released to the river. TDS are not always successfully removed from sewage plants; couple that with the seasonal low flow of the river, and dilution was NOT the solution for this pollution. A new treatment plant, costing \$500 million, has been proposed and needs to be online by 1/1/2011, or this type of drilling in Pennsylvania will come to an end.

In September, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is planning to release the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement that will regulate horizontal drilling and high-volume hydraulic fracturing. The NYSDEC has an excellent, dedicated staff, but the NYDEC also has half the staff it had 10 years ago! Even when regulations are followed and no drilling sites leak into our drinking aquifers, can our officials keep up with inspections and testing at thousands of drilling sites? Can our wastewater treatment facilities handle the burden?

Citizens of New York also need to consider:

Where will the millions of gallons of water for each hydraulic fracturing come from? Clearly, our lakes, rivers and aquifers will be the source. Since upwards of 70% of “fracking” fluids will remain in the well and are not recoverable; this represents the loss of billions of gallons of fresh water that will never be replaced in the watershed.

Will the regulations for drilling and wastewater treatment adequately protect our wetlands, waterways and drinking water supplies? Who will pay millions of dollars to build additional wastewater treatment facilities – your municipality or the gas prospecting companies?

Who will pay to rebuild the rural roads damaged by thousands of trips by 80-ton trucks filled with wastewater and drilling rig equipment? Will the royalty profits make up for the potential 24-7 noise, 30-day gas burn-off fumes, rutted and impassible roads, or contaminated drinking wells of

the local inhabitants?

How will this drilling affect our local businesses, the wineries, agriculture and tourism? They depend on fresh water and beautiful scenery. Will we be risking these businesses for a few decades of natural gas production?

How can we assess conflicting news reports? Where are the best sources for accurate information at the state and federal levels? How is information slanted by competing stakeholders?

If you'd like to delve into these issues and more, come to the October 19th Forum. Find out the pros and cons of drilling for natural gas in New York State and what we can do to protect our environment. Be prepared with questions to ask our experts.

Chris Pryor, Chair Natural Resources & Sally Howard, Facilitator FMCE

For additional information go to <http://gasleasing.cce.cornell.edu/>

Join Us for Our October Public Forum: Natural Gas Production – At What Cost to NYS?

How will Hydraulic Fracturing in the Marcellus Shale impact our Water, Environment and Economy?

Monday, October 19, 2009 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM (Free) in the Brighton Town Hall Downstairs Meeting Room located at 2300 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618

Wes Gillingham - Program Director of Catskill Mountain Keeper will give an orientation to the issues followed by a Q&A with our Expert Panel including: **Dr. Diane Hope** - William A. Kern Professor in Communication Rochester Institute of Technology and **Ashur Terwilliger** - Chemung County Farm Bureau President

This event is Co-sponsored by: Federation of Monroe County Environmentalist, League of Women Voters-Rochester Metro Area, Sierra Club, Genesee Valley Chapter, Adirondack Mountain Club, Genesee Valley Audubon Society and the Center for Sustainable Living.

For more information visit the website at www.fmce.org or call (585) 392-4918.

Pre-register via email to info@fmce.org to receive pre-forum reference materials.

See page 4 for background information.



Supreme Court Considers Overturning Protections for Democracy

Washington, DC –Tomorrow, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in *Citizens United v. the Federal Election Commission (FEC)*, a case of enormous importance for one of the basic pillars of modern American democracy – the prohibition on unlimited corporate and union spending in candidate elections. The League of Women Voters of the United States and the Constitutional Accountability Center submitted a “friend of the court” brief in this case to help put the case in historical context and to call attention to the pernicious and corrupting effects on American democracy if the Court were to overturn existing federal and state limits on corporate expenditures in candidate elections.

“The Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* has the potential to be more important than *Bush v. Gore* to American democracy,” according to national League President Mary G. Wilson. “This case will decide whether corporate wealth will be allowed to dominate our elections in years to come,” she said.

“Voters are supposed to be at the center of our political process,” Wilson said. “Over time, we have constructed a solid foundation for modern American democracy through constitutional amendments, the Voting Rights Act, the principle of ‘one-person, one vote,’ and protections against campaign finance corruption. By knocking out important prohibitions on corporate influence in the election process, the Supreme Court could threaten that foundation and radically alter our democracy,” she said. “This case could allow corporations to use their wealth to overwhelm our elections,” she said.

“For more than two centuries, American democracy has been moving in the direction of broader enfranchisement and more meaningful political participation of individual citizens,” Wilson said. “Legal arguments seeking political rights for corporations similar to those of individual voters run contrary to constitutional text and history and could reverse our centuries-long march of progress toward a more expansive, inclusive, citizen-based democracy,” Wilson said.

“This case and the resulting decision are not merely another set of run-of-the-mill technical, campaign finance regulations,” she said. “Basic principles that protect our democracy are at stake,” Wilson concluded.

Press release from LWVUS, Sept 8 2009. Case was heard Sept 14, 2009.

League of Women Voters is Under Attack!

Intentional lies. Disorderly conduct. Threatening and confusing actions. These are the desperate tactics of those who oppose health care reform.

And now the League of Women Voters is under direct attack by the very same people who mislead, confuse, and sow fear in an attempt to stop much needed reform.

A newly formed organization calling itself the “*League of American Voters*” is conducting an advertising campaign against health care reform that seeks to undermine public support by sowing fear and mistrust. We sent a letter calling them to task for using a name clearly designed to be confused with the League of Women Voters in order to disseminate misleading information and block health care reform. We asked them to reveal the major sources of funding for the advertising campaign.

Their response? A blast email to their followers condemning the League of Women Voters.

We have begun to get disruptive and downright rude phone calls and emails from “supporters” of the so-called League of American Voters. We are arranging for greater security due to a variety of threats that have been made. And we’ve begun exploring what legal options are available to help us protect our name in the face of those who are misusing it.

Is this what it has come to?

This is just one example of the fight we face in standing up for Americans in the battle for real health care reform. This is an opportunity both to educate people and to always act with civility when championing our causes.

As you know, our democracy depends on honest and open debate among real people. We must be vigilant against attack campaigns funded from unknown sources that mislead, confuse and scare Americans.

Make no mistake: The League of Women Voters believes quality, affordable health care should be available to all Americans. As a 90-year-old membership organization that is one of the most trusted nonpartisan voices in the United States, we know that health care reform must protect coverage for those who have it, provide coverage for those who desperately need it, and protect us all against skyrocketing costs.

Sincerely,

Mary G. Wilson
President, LWVUS

From an email dated September 14, 2009 from the LWVUS

OCTOBER 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5 VOTER deadline	6	7	8 Naturalization ceremonies 10am & 1pm	9	10
11	12	13	14 Natural Resources Committee Deadline for luncheon	15 Board Meeting 3pm	16	17
18	19 Natural Gas Drilling Forum	20	21	22 Get Out the Vote Luncheon	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 

NOVEMBER 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2 VOTER deadline	3 Election Day Assist Counting Absentee Ballots	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Board Meeting 3pm	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 					

Board meets at 3:00 PM on the fourth Thursday of each month at Brighton Town Hall, Stage Conference Room.
 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 Judy Dresnak 637-4753
 For Local Government details, call Beth Keigher 271-6694

10:00 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

Redistricting Principles

“Historically, transparency has been absent in the process used by officials to design and carry out redistricting in the states,” Mary Wilson, President of the LWVUS, noted. “Too often those in charge have simply gathered in back rooms, away from public view, to carryout this extremely important process in our democracy. Members of the public must be able to see and participate in this process. Redistricting should foster the democratic principle of allowing voters to choose their elected officials rather than be a process in which we allow our elected officials to choose their constituents.’ The announcement of four essential principles demonstrates the commitment of our groups to assuring representative government to all,” said Wilson.

The principles are:

- An accurate and complete count in Census 2010 is an essential building block for all redistricting efforts;
- The process used for redistricting must be transparent to the public;
- The redistricting process, at all levels of government, must provide data, tools and opportunities for the public to have direct input into the specific plans under consideration by the redistricting body; and
- In order to achieve representative democracy, redistricting plans must be drawn in a manner that allows elected bodies to reflect the diversity of the populace, especially racial and ethnic diversity.

From LWVUSA.

The above principles were included in a statement issued in July by the LWVUS, after a meeting of diverse groups was convened by the League at the Pocantico Redistricting Conference, to discuss ways that the public can best participate in the redistricting process in 2011 and beyond. For more details, go to www.lwv.org.

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

The League of Women Voters Through the Decades.

In 2007 Kay Maxwell from LWVUS compiled a series of articles about the history of the League. Previous editions of the VOTER have featured its founding and development in the 1920's. This edition of the VOTER presents

THE 1930s Organization:

The depression of the 1930s and the onset of World War II brought far-reaching change to the League. Membership fell from 100,000 in 1924 to 44,000 in 1934. The National League's budget was cut in half, necessitating a major reduction in staff and services to Leagues. Perhaps the most important change was that because of gas rationing, League members started meeting in small groups in their neighborhoods to discuss fundamental issues. These issues included the threat to democracy itself and the importance of the informed individual to the success of democracy. Grassroots activity thus was firmly institutionalized as a way of assessing concerns, studying and strategizing.

Issues:

League members worked successfully for enactment of the Social Security and Food and Drug Acts, as well as the TVA. In 1934, when federal and state government agencies were hiring thousands of employees to administer the new social and economic laws, the League launched a nationwide campaign in support of the merit system for selecting government personnel. In those years the League was the only national organization acting consistently for the merit system. And due, at least in part, to League efforts, legislation passed in 1938 and 1940 removed hundreds of federal jobs from the spoils system and placed them under Civil Service.

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	\$liding \$cale



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**November VOTER
Deadline is October 5!**

Goals of the League of Women Voters:

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

“We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing.”
R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience*