

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 at Our April Forum!

Redistricting Monroe County

April 14, 2011

7:00 pm Brighton Town Hall

Presentation by:

Dr. Kent Gardner and Erika Rosenberg

from the

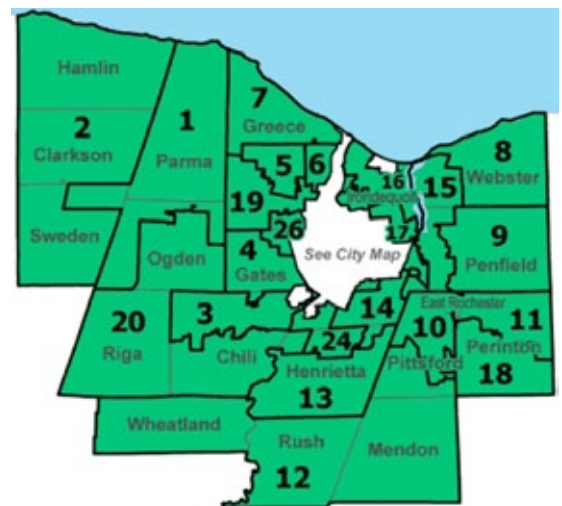
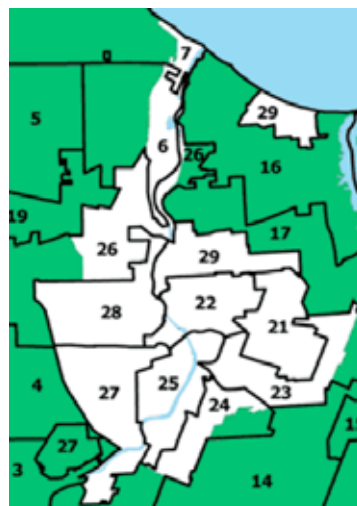
Center for Governmental Research

The speakers will present redistricting alternatives for the 29 legislative districts in Monroe County based on the latest census data. These alternatives were developed to educate voters and stimulate discussion about the redistricting process and the 2011 elections.

Attend this unique presentation and compare our maps with the current district maps. Observe Districts 1 and 15 in the county and 23, 24, 26, and 28 in the city.

This forum is made possible by the LWV/RMA Bee Bibby Endowment.

See p 3 for article on Redistricting and p 2 for LWVUS principles on redistricting.



Since Last Month

Members of the LWV/RMA have participated in the following Naturalization Ceremonies, welcomed new citizens and helped them register to vote.

10:00 am at the Monroe County Office Building

Jan 13, Sheila Abeling

Feb. 10, Mimi Wilson

March 10, Mimi Wilson

April 14, Sheila Abeling (Minerva Deland School, Fairport)

May 12 Mimi Wilson and Sue Dambrowski

1:00 pm at the Federal Building

Jan 13, Barb Hendry

Feb 10, Barb Hendry and Lois Winterkorn

March 10, Marcia Eisenberg

April 14, Marcia Eisenberg

Voter registration was conducted by Sheila Abeling on March 4 at the Wellness Fair, 9 am-1 pm, Brighton High School/Gym.

Students In Albany

Tyshawna Bice will be representing LWV/RMA at the LWVNY program *Students in Albany*, April 10-13. She will learn about government and, hopefully, shadow one of our state representatives. She is a senior at the School Without Walls. Tyshawna wants to attend college and has expressed an interest in law. Our League will be paying for her train transportation to and from Albany. We hope to hear about the experience upon her return.

Sheila Abeling, *Voter Service*

Statement of Essential Principles on Redistricting

From a statement issued July 2009 by LWVUS after the Pontcatico Redistricting Conference:

- 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.
- 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.

Go to LWV.org and PROJECTS to see full report of conference and list of supporting organizations.

Our Wetlands Program

Since 1997, the LWV/RMA has been involved in educating grade school age children about the importance of wetlands. With a grant from the LWVUS, our League purchased an interactive wetlands model where sponges are used as wetlands. Since this is an interactive model, the children get to make rain using sprinkle bottles filed with water, which they do with great enthusiasm. The model is used to demonstrate:

1. how wetlands help reduce flooding by absorbing rainwater
2. the ability of wetlands to remove pollutants, by utilizing excess fertilizers and breaking down other chemicals (herbicides and pesticides) into harmless components
3. how wetlands prevent erosion by trapping and storing soil, which, in some cases, can be retrieved.

The children catch onto these principles very quickly and have great fun making rain and watching the impact of chemicals (Kool Aid) on the wetlands and pond in the model.

Over the years, league members have taken the model to individual schools, the zoo, Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC), scout troops, Tinker Park Field Day, and School Conservation Days in Ellison Park. The following pictures were taken at Brooks Hill School on March 7. Thanks to league members, Chris Fredette, Ann Jones, Jane Schmitt and friend of the League, Elizabeth Rabjohns, who gave 10 presentations to second grade classes.

Jane Schmitt, *VOTER Editor*



Fix New York State Now!

Steps To a New and Better State Government

LWVNY, with input from local leagues, decided to focus on these issues this year.

2011 Legislative Agenda:

Redistricting

Create an independent redistricting commission to draft the New York State legislative and Congressional district lines for the 2012 elections.

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. In particular, support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Ethics Reform

Put in place a new independent ethics oversight agency and tougher enforcement. Make the legislature more open and accountable through continued rules reform.

Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on Health Care, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, State Finances, and Social Policy (including Women's Issues) under which we can and do take action.

Write or call your elected officials!

For information on transparency in government go to:

Open Book NY - www.openbooknewyork.com (Office of the State Comptroller)

Project Sunlight - www.sunlightny.com (NYS Office of the Attorney General, A Public Integrity Initiative)

SeeThroughNY - www.seethroughny.net (Empire Center for NYS Policy, A Project of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research)

For information on the state legislature and pending legislation go to:

www.assembly.state.ny.us

www.nysenate.gov

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>

(Bill Text, Status, Summaries, Sponsor Memos, Floor Votes)

Redistricting

As we all know, redistricting takes place every ten years after the U.S. census count is released. You may not be aware that not only New York State (along with the other 49 states) has to draw new district lines for the U.S. House of Representatives and (in NY state) both houses of our state legislature but also Monroe County and every municipality that has council districts, such as the City of Rochester and Greece, has to redistrict as well.

Our League is following the redistricting in all these arenas, trying to ensure that independent redistricting occurs at all levels. On the state level, we are encouraging legislators to support Governor Cuomo's plan. While it does not meet all of the criteria of the League of Women Voters of New York, the League is in favor of the plan because each district will be required to comply within 1% of the average district size and the redistricting commission will be somewhat independent. Please contact your state senator and assembly member to urge their support of the Cuomo plan.

As reported in the March Voter, the Monroe County Legislature adopted the same procedures as in 2001: a Legislative District Revision Commission that is predominately Republican. The League has commissioned the Center for Governmental Research to use funds from the Bee Bibby Endowment to draw maps that meet the LWV criteria. Since then, we have asked Legislative leaders specific questions about the Commission, such as when it will meet and the criteria that will be used in drawing the district lines. Thus far, we have not received a response. The County redistricting process has to be completed by May 1, because all Legislature seats will be up for election this November.

In the City of Rochester, four district legislative seats will be up for election in November, as well. Those district lines must also be redrawn by May 1. The City Council apparently does not have a redistricting plan yet; we are monitoring its process and have asked them the same questions we are asking the County Legislature.

Judy Weinstein, *Redistricting Subcommittee Chair*

New Members

Cathryn DeGregorio
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Rochester, NY 14616
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Save the Date!

Annual Meeting, June 2, 2011

Finishing the Job

As President of LWVNYS, I wanted to reach out to all members and share some information about the role of the League in extending basic civil rights for all New Yorkers. Since 1993 the New York State League has supported equality of opportunity in employment, housing, and access to public accommodations for all people in New York regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability, based on the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position (LWVUS, Impact on Issues 2008-2010, p. 66). At the 2010 LWVUS Convention, delegates, led in part by Lori Dawson of Saratoga County, voted to amend the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position to include support for civil marriage equality, the ability of two people of the same sex to marry. As you know, with the failure of marriage equality to pass the state senate last year, New York is left without a civil marriage equality law.

Since adoption of its equality of opportunity position, the LWVNYS has lobbied for passage of the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA). It was successful in 2002, when discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation on the basis of sexual orientation became a prohibited activity under the New York State Human Rights Law. Although the positions of both the state and national Leagues interpret gender equality to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or expression, SONDA did not so define gender. Consequently, discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation (like restaurants and movies) based on gender identity or expression is still legal in New York State, except where prohibited under local law, as is the case in many jurisdictions.

Gender identity and expression refers to the way people self-identify and present their masculinity and/or femininity to the world. Often, but not always, this corresponds to the person's sex as assigned at birth, so that a person born biologically male or female often dresses, adopts a hair style, and uses a name and pronoun in ways that reflect the culturally accepted roles associated with their birth sex. Transgender is an umbrella term used to designate a community of people who regularly present in a gender different from the sex assigned to them at birth and who live a significant part of their lives in that gender. This includes people who have undergone medical procedures to change their sex and those who have not. Sexual orientation refers to one's romantic and sexual attraction. Gender variance is not in itself any indicator of sexual orientation. Just like everyone else, gender variant and transgender people may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual.

Although the transgender community is small, it faces tremendous societal discrimination. The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), which passed the Assembly last year, would add gender identity and expression to other protected categories, such as race, religion, and sexual orientation, in New York's human rights laws.

GENDA would make it illegal across the state to fire someone from a job, evict them from an apartment, deny them a loan or refuse them service in a restaurant simply because they are transgender. It would also add gender identity and expression to the state's bias crime laws to help protect transgender people from violence.

State public opinion polls show the majority of New York's citizens support these issues. Based on strong member interest, LWVNYS plans to lobby actively for marriage equality and GENDA during 2011. If these issues are important to you, we could use your help in one or more of the following ways:

- On Tuesday, May 10, 2011 the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA) is holding its annual lobby day, Equality and Justice Day, in Albany. Registration is required.
- Our lobbying efforts will focus on Assembly members and Senators who have no stated positions or who are opposed to these bills. We are looking for League members who are willing to call, write, or visit one or both of their own elected officials.
- We are trying to establish a story bank about ways in which the failure to support marriage equality and prohibit transgender discrimination has hurt you or those you love. If you have a story you are willing to share, please send it to us.

If you have questions about our positions, would like more information or wish to volunteer, contact me at 518-426-3711 or Betsey@lwvny.org.

Senate Action Alert!! Keep Our Air Clean

The Senate is expected to consider legislation that will prevent enforcement of pollution standards or even defund the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) entirely. Similar language has already passed the House. For decades, the EPA has protected the health of children, seniors and all the rest of us from dangerous pollutants through the Clean Air Act. In just the last twenty years, carbon monoxide, which negatively affects those with heart and lung disease, has been cut by seventy percent.

Take action now to tell your senators to oppose any legislation that would block or prevent action to clean up our air and protect the most vulnerable Americans. Our health and environment are under attack by big polluters and their congressional supporters. We can't let them stop EPA's efforts to clean up life-threatening pollution like mercury, carbon dioxide, ozone and soot; efforts by EPA will save thousands of lives and improve the quality of life for millions more.

Go to LWV.org and click on TAKE ACTION for more information. A prepared letter and your Senator's address are available by entering your zip code.

From the President

With the LWV/RMA office closed, volunteer directors will be carrying out the administrative duties of the local league. Returned calls to your messages may be slightly delayed and responses to mail may not be as prompt as you were accustomed to, when a paid staffer handled such matters. However, they will be done. The Board of Directors knows there will be glitches; we apologize in advance. Your continued understanding and support will be appreciated during this transition period.

The Board has made very difficult decisions this year in order to keep our local league vibrant. There will be a detailed report on our cost saving measures at the June 2, 2011 Annual Meeting.

LWV/RMA has continued to deliver on our core mission. Moreover, our visibility in the local community has increased this year and we are continuing to recruit new members.

We are pleased to announce that volunteer, Barbara Grosh, who has been managing our website, has agreed to join the Board. Barbara has accepted an interim appointment beginning March 17 and will run for director for a two year term in June.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Katherine Smith, *President, LWV/RMA*



Invasive Species Forum

For those of you who were unable to attend the forum on "Invasive Species-What Should Be Done" held November 16, 2010, a resume of the forum is available on the website of the Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists. Go to www.fmce.org and click on REOURCES. The website lists the speakers, a resume of their presentations and a summary of what you can do to prevent invasive species from entering our area. LWV/RMA was a co-sponsor of this event.

Jane Schmitt, *VOTER Editor*

League of Women Voters, 1960's and 1970's

Last year, a series of articles about the history of the national LWV appeared in the VOTER as we celebrated our 90th birthday. We covered 1920-1950. This month the 1960's-1970's are included.

"The 1966 convention redefined program as "those governmental issues chosen for concerted study and action". Membership reached a high point in 1969 with almost 157,000 members.

In response to the growing civil rights crisis of the 1960's the League directed its energies to equality of opportunity and built a solid foundation of support for equal access to education, employment and housing. The League also added apportionment to its national program and supported presidential suffrage for the residents of Washington, DC. In 1969 the League was one of the first organizations calling for the United States to normalize relations with China. The League also hosted an exchange with women from the USSR, and the OEF (Over Seas Education Fund) Institutes for Latin American women were inaugurated.

In 1972, Inter-League Organizations (ILOs), created in many parts of the country to deal with regional issues, were added to the formal structure of the League. The 1974 convention also amended the bylaws to allow men to join the League as full voting members.

In the early 1970's, the League addressed the issue of income assistance and also began its efforts to achieve a national Equal Rights Amendment, an effort which ultimately failed. The League also adopted positions on Congress, the UN, Campaign Finance and direct popular election of the President.

And, in 1976, the League sponsored the first televised presidential debates since 1960 and received an Emmy award.

The League's deep interest in the environment was dramatically evident in the 1970's and it has since built a sequence of broad national positions on water, as well as air, waste management, land use and energy."

From *The League of Women Voters Through the Decades!* compiled by Kay J. Maxwell.

2011 Who Represents You is Now Out!

Many thanks to Barb Hendry for all of her help with the publication. You should receive your copy with the Voter. If not, or you need a copy, please contact me.

Sheila Abeling, *Voter Service*, 585-223-6819

Coming Events!



April

- 1** Membership Committee 1 pm
- 4** Voter deadline
- 7** Local Government 10 am
- 14** April Forum 7 pm
- 14** Naturalization Ceremony 10 am* and 1 pm
- 21** Board Meeting 2 pm

**This ceremony to be held at Minerva DeLand School in Fairport, NY.*

May

- 2** Voter deadline
- 5** Local Government 10 am
- 5** Go-See Tour 10 am
- 6** Membership Committee 1 pm
- 12** Naturalization Ceremony 10 am
- 19** Board Meeting 2 pm



March Forum on Sunshine in Government, Speakers Blair Horner & Dick Moss plus moderator Elaine Schmidt



*Board meets at 2:00 pm on the third Thursday of each month at Brighton Town Hall, Stage Conference Room, unless otherwise noted.
Local Government meets at the Brighton Town Hall, Stage Conference Room. For details, call Beth Keigher 271-6694.
Membership Committee meets at Brighton Town Hall - Stage Room at 1:00 pm, first Friday of each month. For details, call Gin Busack 467-6131*

10:00 am Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Monroe County Office Building, 39 W. Main St;
1:00 pm Naturalization Ceremonies are held at Federal Court House at 100 State Street.

Forums 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 262-3730
or e-mail us at LWV/RMA@frontiernet.net

Public Financing

A letter to Members of the U.S. Senate from Elizabeth Mac-Namara, President LWVUS regarding Opposing Repeal of the Presidential Public Financing System.

The League of Women Voters urges you to oppose S. 194 and any other moves to eliminate the public financing system for presidential elections. While the system is clearly in need of repair, abolishing it under the guise of reducing federal spending or the debt, and without one minute of hearings or a single committee meeting, would not be responsible.

Presidential public financing for both primary and general election campaigns has served America well since 1976. It has not only allowed candidates to raise the funds needed to wage competitive campaigns, it has substantially reduced corruption and the appearance of corruption in the executive branch over that time period. It has given average citizens and small donors a critically important role to play in funding presidential campaigns and provided more meaningful choices to voters. And it has done so at remarkably small cost; certainly the elimination of the system cannot be seen as a meaningful reduction in federal spending or the debt.

The presidential public financing system needs to be repaired, not repealed, in order to continue serving the interests of the American people and protecting against corruption. The system only began to decline when campaign costs outstripped the public financing provided to participating candidates and frontloading changes in the presidential nominating process occurred. A modernized system would provide presidential candidates with a viable alternative way to finance their campaigns focused on average citizens and small donors, as opposed to being dependent on big donors, bundlers, lobbyists, and corporate and other outside spenders.

The issues surrounding the funding of presidential campaigns deserve careful consideration. They should be the subject of hearings and thoughtful deliberation. A rush to the floor under the guise of spending cuts would be deeply disturbing. The American people deserve better than this.

The League of Women Voters strongly urges you to oppose the repeal of the presidential public financing system. The health and integrity of our democracy demand more responsible action. February 17, 2011

Source: LWV.org.

About the Education Foundation

The League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation was established in 1950 as the Foundation for Citizen Education to support the educational activities of the League of Women Voters of New York. It is the educational and fund-raising arm of the LWVNY which derives its strength from the energy and commitment of the women and men in about 60 local leagues through out the state. It is strictly nonpartisan, and works primarily on projects that enlighten the electorate i.e. to empower through education, without advocating for any particular cause or policy, party or candidate. It is incorporated under Not-for-Profit Corporation Law of New York and is classified as a public educational charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The foundation is dedicated exclusively to the support and promotion of the educational programs of the League of Women Voters in New York State.

See LWVNY.org for more details.

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
 PO Box 10573
 Rochester, NY 14610

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



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Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1419
Rochester, NY



Rochester **VOTER**

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

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**May VOTER
Deadline is April 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

“April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.”
- William Shakespeare