

## In Rochester, many unheard voices in elections

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Sister Tavaya L. Hall, right, goes door to door Friday, educating Rochester residents about the importance of registering to vote. Andrea Dawson, left, 15, of Rochester signs her name to be involved with youth programs. / MARIE DE JESUS//STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

### To vote

Voters must apply for registration by Aug. 16 in order to be eligible to vote in party contests. Primary elections will be held in Rochester and across the state on Sept. 10. The general election is Nov. 5. In order to vote in a primary, voters must be enrolled in a political party. New York does not have open primaries; only those registered with a party are allowed to vote in that organization's primary. For absentee voters, the last day to apply for a primary ballot in person is Sept. 9, while applications by mail have to be postmarked by Sept. 3. The actual absentee ballot must be sent in

by Sept. 9, or delivered in person to the county board of elections Sept. 10. To apply to register to vote, go to [my.dmv.ny.gov/crm](http://my.dmv.ny.gov/crm) or contact your county's board of elections.— Gannett News Service

### By the numbers

There were 102,710 enrolled voters in the city as of Aug. 1, according to data from the Monroe County Board of Elections. Party enrollment breaks down as follows: ...66,021 Democrat...11,906 unaffiliated...11,824 Republican...3,511 Independent...894 Conservative...638 Working Families...382 Green Party. Only enrolled Democrats can vote in the mayoral, City Council and school board primaries.

He took a seat by the voter registration table in the lobby of Jordan Health Center and started talking. He was 62 and a skeptic.

"All the politicians are the same," Pablo Valli told the volunteer working the table. "Do I want to vote? No. ... Who's going to hear me out of 10 million people in this state?"

Those of voting age are something more than that, but you get the point. Earlier, another city resident had registered for the first time. She was 52, but said she never voted because she didn't know how to go about it. She thought she needed to be asked.

More than 60 percent of adults are not registered to vote across much of inner-city Rochester, a swath of neighborhoods with generally higher transiency, poverty and minority populations. [That is almost double the citywide average, and three times that of some suburbs.](#) Factor in low turnout among those who are registered — turnout is worst in non-presidential elections — and one is left wondering how representative the electorate is in a city where 63 percent of the population is non-white, and 31 percent live in poverty.

"It's really clear that people who are not voting in Monroe County, on average, are poor and minority, and so that means that voice isn't heard," said Barbara Grosh, voter services director with the League of

## Women Voters of Metropolitan Rochester.

Democrats head to the polls on Sept. 10, with primary elections for mayor, City Council and school board. The Democratic nominee is historically the favorite heading into November's general election. In Rochester, enrolled Democrats outnumber all other voters 3-to-2.

The League is wrapping up a weeklong voter registration effort that is unique in its intensity and city focus.

As much as registering voters, they are batting down misconceptions. One of the bigger issues the League confronts is people thinking they can no longer vote because of a past felony conviction, Grosh said, not realizing voting rights are restored when a sentence is completed, including parole. Literacy is another issue. Knowledge of the process, attention to local politics and issues are others. If people move, they must update their information or fill out an affidavit at their current polling place.