

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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Save The Date!

Please join us for our March forum,
a collaboration between LWV-RMA
and LWV-Wayne County

Putting Food on Your Table: Linking Food, Farms & You

Each of us has a stake in making sure our food supply is adequate and its quality and safety are maintained.

Our Moderator:

Don Alhart, Associate News Director,
WHAM-TV Channel 13

Our Distinguished Panel:

Stanley (Lee) Telega, NYS Director,
US Department of Agriculture Rural Development

Robert King, PhD, Director/Sr. Agriculture Specialist,
Monroe Community College

Sarah Noble-Moag, representing Noblehurst Farms, a
7-generation, multi-family agribusiness in Linwood, NY

Representative of the NYS Agricultural
Experiment Station (NYSAES), Geneva, NY

March 31, 2014

7:00 – 8:30 PM

Brighton Town Hall • 2300 Elmwood Avenue • Rochester, NY 14618

(see the article on page 2 for further info)

Please register at 585.262.3730 or www.lwv-rma.org



President's Corner



Sometimes a casual comment heard at a committee meeting such as "I really think the best part of this meeting is the people" warms the heart of this president. Indeed, we come together to give of our time on a League project, but we receive so much more in return. I hope

everyone who has joined such a League group this year finds the same satisfaction as this person expressed. And if you have not yet had this pleasure of good company and interesting discussion, get in touch with a committee chair – your perspective and expertise will be most welcome.

Thank you to Carole Hoffman who answered my call for someone to go to Albany with me on February 3 (the only nice driving day that week!). We attended the LWVNY Advocacy Day workshop that explained in detail our Legislative agenda for this session at State government. See the report on page 7.

Thank you to Lory Ghertner and Alison Wilder who will be representing the League at a regional meeting of the New York Immigration Coalition on February 27 to discuss strategy.

Thank you to the Human Trafficking Committee which is working with the Rochester Coalition to implement its campaign to eliminate this scourge in our society.

Thank you to the Government Committee which is observing the Monroe County Charter Review process. See the report on page 7.

Thank you to the Voter Services Committee which is preparing the "Who Represents You" brochure for 2014, as well as contacting the city schools to register graduating seniors to vote.

Thank you to the Agriculture Committee which has spent several months reviewing materials and interviewing people to prepare for our forum on March 31 and our consensus meeting on April 7.

We tell the public we are a GRASSROOTS organization. Now we are about to demonstrate this principle by having a CONSENSUS on our Agriculture Position which was originally agreed to in 1988. (Read the full position at: <http://www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-policy>.) The word "CONSENSUS" means that after discussion of the pros and cons of a proposed position, the group comes to an agreement on whether

to support it or not. In this case, our local League agreement will be forwarded to National where the LWVUS board then will integrate all the submissions from all the Leagues into one final position.

Be sure to join us so we have the broadest input possible from our members.

Georgia DeGregorio
President

March Forum: Agriculture

Each of us has a stake in making sure our food supply is adequate and its quality maintained. Therefore, ALL LWV members (city and country folks alike) are encouraged to attend two meetings.

Monday, March 31 - a forum of expert speakers presenting the pros and cons of the policies to be decided.

Monday, April 7 - a membership meeting to arrive at CONSENSUS on the issues.

(We know that sometimes the ideal is not possible, so committee members will be reviewing the information given in March at the April meeting.)

Why are we focusing on agriculture? At the 2012 national League convention, delegates from across the country voted to update our LWVUS 1988 Agriculture position because so much has changed since that first consensus was taken. A national League committee then provided reading materials, as well as the questions to be discussed, to every local League.

Your local Agricultural Committee, comprised of members from both Wayne County and our own Rochester League, has read the material and interviewed a variety of area farmers and farm-oriented organizations to discuss the impact of these proposed policies on their operations.

Last month's Voter contained an article regarding the economic health of agriculture. Also, on page 6 of this issue, you'll find another article focusing on GMOs, and on page 3 there's information about our committee. Two weeks before the March 31 meeting we will be sending out by email the questions to be considered, as well as suggested links to articles that discuss the issues in more detail.

See you at this important forum!



Following Up On "Speaking in Public" Workshop

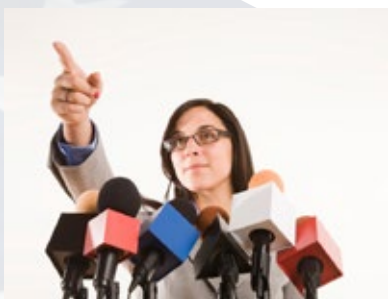
On February 20 nearly 20 League members gathered to learn a little more about each other – about how to speak in public, about ourselves, and about things we know and care about.

Diane Navarro and several members of the Monroe Community College Toastmasters Club brought insights and encouragement to the process of communicating. They discussed microphone use, the importance of collecting your thoughts and finding the tools that work best for you (e.g., brief notes, full written text, ad lib). They also reminded us that listening carefully and offering supportive and constructive feedback are important parts of communication.

Diane noted that the human brain seems to "like" 3s – and that can help in communicating. Using a beginning, a middle and an end gives structure to a talk. And repetition is not a bad thing. The advice we've all heard to "tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em, then tell 'em, and finally tell 'em what you told 'em" actually works!

Many of the Toastmasters members joined for professional reasons: to develop a comfort level and proficiency in communicating with others in the workplace. What they found was a boost in their confidence and an ability to more quickly collect their thoughts in both professional and personal impromptu situations. They pointed out that there is almost no situation where communicating well is not an asset.

As a result of this very positive experience, about 10 League members expressed interest in participating in a short follow-up program of five - six sessions in which we supportively work together to build our skills. In our League roles as educators and advocates, sharpening our communication skills can help to make us even more effective. The first meeting will be Monday, March 10, at 7:00 PM at Brighton Town Hall. If you're interested, please contact Mary Hussong-Kallen at 637-5183 or mmhk@rochester.rr.com.



Agriculture Committee

Members of the new collaborative Agriculture Committee of the Rochester and Wayne County Leagues met with local farmers in February to discuss policies the farmers believe will be most helpful in improving their businesses. This is part of a national study by the League to establish positions on issues important to agriculture in general and take into consideration local farming interests.

The meeting was held at KM Davies Company, Inc., a cold storage facility in Williamson. Attending the meeting were host Jim Verbridge, Gerry Verbridge, Doug Mason of Mason Farms, Chip Bailey of Bailey Farms and Luke Cino of Cino Farms and League members. The two-hour meeting covered a wide range of topics including crop insurance, disaster assistance programs, food safety auditing and integrated pest management.



Back row (left to right): Chip Bailey, Sandra Frankel, Diane Pearson, Ellie Drake, Gin Busack, Beverly Verbridge, Gerry Verbridge, Dan Mason, Jim Verbridge.
Seated: Dorothy Borgus, Lenore Youngman.



Book Club Report

Members of the League Book Club (Georgia DeGregorio, Barbara Grosh, Barbara Kay, Elaine Schmidt and Judy Weinstein) met on Saturday, February 1, at The Greenhouse Café to discuss the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America*, by Gilbert King.

The book is about four young black men (who became known as the Groveland Boys) falsely accused of raping Norma Lee Padgett, a 17 year-old white woman in Groveland, Florida in 1949. Thurgood Marshall, future Supreme Court Justice, was chief counsel of the NAACP in 1949. The violence in Groveland's Lake County following the accusation of rape – the burning of houses and activity of the Ku Klux Klan - brought Thurgood Marshall into the case and into that crisis.

Even before the trial, the Groveland Boys were victims of the brutal sheriff of Lake County. In a New York Times article (and book review) on April 24, 2013, King described Sheriff Willis McCall this way: *"He made Bull Connor look like Barney Fife. . . Connor used dogs and fire hoses. McCall actually killed people."*

Our discussion centered on the racial injustice at the time, but we pondered a few missing details of the case itself. King digresses at times with detailed descriptions of the people and events related to the Groveland case. These digressions seemed frustrating to some of us. We talked also about racial justice now in our country.

One interesting follow-up to our discussion: A question was raised at our meeting about a seemingly incorrect word which King used to describe Marshall's view of a situation involving an Attorney General from Oklahoma. We sent an email to the author asking for an explanation. King responded – and agreed that the word *"doesn't really work without further explanation."* He said this "will be amended in future printings."

The next meeting of the Book Club is Saturday, March 1, 2014, 10:00 AM, at The Greenhouse Café. We will discuss *Darwin and the Beagle*, by Alan Moorehead.

Barbara Kay
Member, Book Club and League Secretary

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Advocacy Update

LWVNY strongly supports the Governor's 2014-2015 Executive Budget proposal for public financing of elections. It consists of four parts, all of which the League has been advocating for many years:

Enforcement - This law would create an independent, nonpartisan and adequately funded enforcement entity.

Public Financing - This would implement a public financing system modeled after New York City.

Contribution Limits - All contribution limits would be reduced .

Independent Expenditure Disclosure – This component increases disclosure of independent political spending in New York.

Check www.lwvny.org for full details on this package of reforms. Please call your Assembly Member and State Senator today to express your strong support for all four items.

Katherine Smith
Director, Action/Advocacy



Naturalization

The Naturalization schedule for new citizens in Monroe County is located on the League website (www.lwv-rma.org). If you are interested in observing an oath ceremony, please contact Sheila Abeling at sheiler162004@yahoo.com or call 585-223-6819.

On February 13th at 10:00 AM Mimi Wilson welcomed new candidates for citizenship at the Monroe County Office Building. Also on that day, Sheila Abeling participated in the Naturalization process at the Federal Building in the afternoon.

Any League member who is interested in volunteering for the Naturalization Committee or in learning more about the Oath Ceremony process, please contact Sheila Abeling (info above). Volunteering for this project is very rewarding!

Sheila Abeling
Director, Naturalization and FEPC

Sunshine Corner

HENRIETTA TOWN BOARD 1/15/2014

Observed by Jane and John Schmitt

With the new supervisor, Jack Moore, acting as chair, the Town Board meeting was run in an open manner. The board voted to authorize the Supervisor or his designee to close accounts, consolidate funds and re-title accounts, thereby resolving an issue that was reported in the Democrat & Chronicle.

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

IRONDEQUOIT TOWN BOARD 1/16/2014

Observed by Gin Busack

The meeting was run in an open manner with more than 40 members of the public present. Supervisor Adam Bello presented an updated report on the Medley Centre revealing that the Town has written a letter to Congel stating the Town's position. Congel owed a pilot payment in February 2014, missed the first and second milestones and owed supplemental payments to East Irondequoit School District.

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

MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE 1/14/2014

Observed by Elaine Schmidt

New members of the Legislature were sworn in at a special 5:30 PM session. All expressed eagerness to start work in their new positions.

Cheryl Rossi retired from the County after many years of service. Jamie Slocum takes over as County Legislature Clerk.

Democrat Paul Haney objected to the authorizing of a contract with Loewke Brill Consulting Group, Inc. for Initial Decision Maker Services for Monroe County Construction Projects. He pointed out that this type of service has never been used before and questioned why the money was being spent. He also noted that their references were 6-8 years old and, that on previous projects for the County and the City of Rochester, there were problems with this vendor. The contract was authorized along party lines (19-8).

MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE 2/11/2014

Observed by Elaine Schmidt

A moment of silence was held to remember Tom Ferraro of Foodlink who died recently.

The meeting was run in an open manner with fewer than usual members of the public present.

Once again speakers deplored the removal of homeless people from public garages in the City.



During the public forum a speaker addressed the plan to privatize the assigned counsel and Conflict Defender Office (a part of the Public Defender's Office).

The meeting was a short one. Resolutions #7-47 were moved and passed unanimously in one vote. Resolution #48, designating the Daily Record and Rochester Business Record as the official newspapers for the County, was passed along party lines. This followed defeat along party lines of an amendment presented by Legislator Barouth to include the Democrat & Chronicle as a possible auxiliary newspaper to be used at the discretion of the County.

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

WEBSTER TOWN BOARD 2/6/2014

Observed by Lois Winterkorn

The meeting was held openly with fewer than five members of the public in attendance. No LWV issues were noted.

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

Elaine Schmidt

Director, Government

Naturalization Quiz

(Sample questions from actual Naturalization Exams.)

Questions

1. Name one branch or part of government.
2. What stops one branch from becoming too powerful?
3. Who is in charge of the executive branch?
4. Who makes federal laws?
5. What are the two parts of Congress?

For more questions, go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/y8o6thb>

(answers can be found on page 8)

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Genetically Modified Organisms

The term "*genetically modified organism*" (GMO) was originally used by the molecular biology scientific community to denote any living organism that had been genetically modified by inserting a gene from an unrelated species. This does not occur in nature through sexual reproduction and thus, various types of sophisticated technologies are used to accomplish this. These types of plants are generally called "transgenic." Transgenic plants have been engineered for scientific research to create new colors in plants (think blue roses) and to create different crops.

There are pros and cons for developing GMOs. An article at <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/genetically-modified-organisms-pros-and-con.html> identifies the pros as:

- production of human insulin
- use in gene therapy
- creation of neo-organs
- usage in agriculture.

And the cons are identified as:

- harmful effects on crops
- genetically modified animals
- unnatural methods being used
- risk of misuse
- disruption of natural genetic information
- the preliminary state of research.

The article makes the point that "it is important to note that FDA implies that they don't want these genetically modified organisms to become a part of the food chain."

Come to the forum on March 31 to learn much more!



Immigration Reform Update

As immigration reform takes a backseat to re-election politics, there is little chance for our federal government or President Obama to end the deportation siege on the thousands of farmworkers in Western NY. Fruits, vegetables and milk products that we feed our families are actually harvested by the farmworkers who cannot afford to purchase the foods we eat.

Our next step is to do the best for these families in New York State by giving them the opportunity to send their children to college by extending tuition assistance to undocumented students. It is estimated by the administrative staff at the City University of New York that this would cost a total of only \$17 million. We are already investing thousands for each of these children every year in the public school system. It is narrow-minded to cut off further education for these bright students and lose the investment we have already made in their education. Their best pathway out of poverty is education.

Also, until Congress reforms our immigration system, undocumented immigrants will remain here, and those immigrants who need to drive for work or to transport their children will do so. It is time to again allow undocumented drivers to have driver's licenses in New York. Denying driver's licenses to the undocumented population jeopardizes public safety and drives up insurance rates.

I will be taking a busload of children of farmworkers to Albany on March 5 to lobby for these smart solutions to pressing problems here in the Rochester region. I urge you to contact your state legislators to support tuition assistance for all our young adults, as well as driver's licenses for them and their families.

Lory Ghertner

Member, Immigration Committee



Observation of the Monroe County Charter Review Meeting

Several members of the League (Sarah Yaworski, Gin Busack, Lois Winterkorn and Elaine Schmidt), along with one or two other members of the public attended the January 30 meeting of the Monroe County Charter Review Committee. Our observations of the meeting follow.

Monroe County is a municipal corporation. Article 8 Section 7 of the County Charter (the governing law of the County) requires the County Legislature to appoint a temporary committee every five years to review the County Charter and the Administrative Code and to make recommendations to the County Legislature, based on its review, concerning the need for Charter or Code amendment and the creation of a Charter Commission.

On May 14, 2013, the Monroe County Legislature appointed the Temporary Committee to Review the County Charter and Administrative Code. The committee consisted of: John DiCaro (Chairman), Jeffrey Adair (Vice Chairman), Jared Lusk (Citizen Member), Frederick Holbrook (Citizen Member), John De Laus (County Administration), John Lightfoot (Legislature Minority) and Debbie Drawe (Legislature Majority). At the June 4 meeting of the Charter Review Committee, members of the committee were assigned portions of the Charter to review and make recommendations to the Legislature for a vote. The reports of the members were presented at the January 30 meeting.

John DiCaro recommended making the County Budget available on the County website.

John DeLaus recommended updating the section involving removal or suspension of officers and employees to conform to State law, increasing the financial limits of contracts that the County Executive may enter into without County Legislature approval from \$5,000.00 to \$20,000.00, reviewing the amount level of acceptance of gifts and changing election terms from 3 years to 4 years to conform to New York State law.

John Lightfoot recommended “wordsmithing” to update titles and duties and putting a copy of the Charter on the County website.

Jeff Adair recommended that language regarding electronic communications (email) be added to the Charter. He stated that some of his assigned areas are still under review.

Debbie Drawe recommended updating language in her section to reflect current departments and to

conform to NYS law. She also recommended rewriting the section on mental health.

Jared Lusk recommended updating language and changing the human resources model from the Civil Service Commission to a personnel office, resulting in decreased costs and increased efficiency.

There was one public speaker at the meeting, **Joanne Sassa**, who spoke about oversight of private vendors (specifically the county golf clubs) and recommended investigating COMIDA and abolishing it in its present form. She proposed decreasing the number county legislators from 29 to 5 with the geographic districts to be pie-shaped with each district sharing an equal portion of the worst economic areas of the City of Rochester.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 27 in the Legislative Chambers at the County Office Building at 5 PM in order to accommodate working members of the public. Meetings are open to the public.

Judy Weinstein

Member, Voter Services and Government Committees

Elaine Schmidt

Director, Government Committee



Election Reform – A Call to Action

One of the priority issues of the 2014 Legislative Agenda is Election Reform.

A significant part of this reform is moving the Primary to late June from the middle of September. This would help local and state officials by reducing their cost, since each primary costs approximately \$50,000. In addition, it lessens confusion for voters by having one – not up to three – primaries in a year, and it would be early enough so that the November ballot could be prepared for overseas absentee voters including military personnel.

Legislation to advance this recommendation has already been passed in the Assembly, to which we owe our gratitude! It is imperative that League members contact their Senators to urge them to pass this legislation (S.6204) to become effective for the 2015 political calendar.

Carole Hoffman

Member, Advocacy

Meet Hasana Dara Martin

Background

Hasana is a woman of big goals and many talents, having earned a degree in Liberal Arts, a B.A. in English Literature and a paralegal certificate – all while raising her three children. Her jobs have included nurse's aide, food service worker, teacher's aide and certified teacher, and she has worked in various positions with Rochester AmeriCorps and a litigation support firm. She names her children and grandchildren as her inspiration and credits the help of her parents and grandmother. As a result of personal and professional experiences and her strong faith, she is an ardent supporter of civil rights for all. She firmly believes that she cannot live a full and satisfactory life if she is not positively impacting others.

Why She Joined LWV-RMA

A late-in-life first-time voter herself, Hasana cast a ballot in 2008. By 2012 she wanted to help young people "get off the sidelines" and vote. She vowed to give them the invitation and information she never had and began working on several local campaigns, registering voters, canvassing and phonebanking. She met Carrie Remis and Barbara Grosh at a meeting at FIGHT Village and was impressed with their knowledge and enthusiasm. She attended several of our monthly forums and continued working on various campaigns, including Lovely Warren's recent mayoral run. She found the League very welcoming and sees it as a vehicle for socially conscious and socially aware women [and men] to come together to have their voices heard and be involved in policy making.

League Role/Activity

Besides her continuing activities in Voter Services, Hasana learned about our new Education Committee at January's annual membership meeting, "Picnic in the Park," and she is now a very active member in that group. Of course she continues to attend forums and other League activities.

Quote

"To thine own self be true" has been Hasana's guiding wisdom since she was in the 10th grade.

We – all of us – are the LWV-RMA.

The better we get to know one another, the more we can accomplish together!

News from LWVUS

League Calls on IRS to Stop Dark Money

LWVUS submitted comments to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on their Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for 501(c)(4) organizations. The League believes that the IRS proposal is a tremendous opportunity to rein in the secret "dark money" that has been polluting our elections since the Supreme Court's terrible decision in Citizens United. At the same time, the current proposal would significantly undermine the League's ability to conduct truly nonpartisan voter service activities across the country – and this must be changed. Read our press release on this topic.

<http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=AnERAtVovX9NWhGhNWGMcoS8MDPaVLha>

Stop Dark Money; Protect the League: Submit a Comment to the IRS

Contact the IRS and urge them to keep pushing to stop the dark money unleashed by Citizens United and to make sure that Leagues can continue our truly nonpartisan voter service work. Follow our instructions for submitting your own comment to the IRS.

<http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=zSYtIPtCmbMw6IZAAN8a3IS8MDPaVLha>

Naturalization Quiz Answers

Answers

1. Congress or Legislative
President or Executive
the Courts or Judicial
2. Checks and balances or separation of powers
3. The President
4. Congress or US (or national) Legislature
Senate and House of Representatives
5. Senate and House (of Representatives)



Coming Events!



March

- 1 Book Club
- 10 "Speaking in Public" Follow-Up Meeting
- 31 Agricultural Forum

April

- 5 LWVNY Training
- 7 Agriculture Position Update

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

League Members at the Susan B. Anthony Luncheon



Naturalization Ceremonies



Board meets monthly. Call Georgia DeGregorio at 787-9692 for details. Board meetings are open to all members.
Local Government Committee meets monthly at the Brighton Town Hall, Stage Room. For details, call Elaine Schmidt at 530-7414.
Membership Committee meets monthly at Brighton Town Hall, Stage Room. For details, call Ellen DeGregorio at 473-3502.
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

PO Box 10573
Rochester, NY 14610
p 585-262-3730
www.LWV-RMA.org

Rochester VOTER

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**APRIL VOTER
DEADLINE IS MARCH 15!**

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Goals of the League of Women Voters:

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

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MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual/Associate	\$.75
Household	\$105
Susan B. Anthony/Frederick Douglass	\$150
Carrie Chapman Catt	\$200
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Low income, call office	Sliding Scale