



## 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.

### Inside this issue:

Is Sunshine Working? . . . . .	1
Save the Date! Redistricting . . . . .	1
From the President . . . . .	2
In Memoriam . . . . .	2
Increasing Voter Registration. . . . .	2
What is LATFOR? . . . . .	3
Have You Visited Facebook? . . . . .	3
Observations on Redistricting Hearing. . . . .	3
Observer Corps . . . . .	4
About Sunshine Week. . . . .	4
New Member . . . . .	4
League Happenings . . . . .	5
MOVE Act. . . . .	5
LWVUS Privatization Study . . . . .	5
Membership Report. . . . .	5
Calendar . . . . .	6
NYS Redistricting Update. . . . .	7
Signature to FEC . . . . .	7
Officers . . . . .	8

## Join Us for Our March Forum! Sunshine - Is it Working?

Thursday, March 1, 2012  
7:00 pm at Brighton Town Hall

Reporters Brett Davidsen and Sean Carroll will share their experiences of investigations using the Sunshine Laws.

LWV/RMA Observer Corps will present a program featuring Brett Davidsen of WHEC 10 and Sean Carroll of 13 WHAM. These notable investigative reporters will share their experiences and the impact of the "Sunshine Laws" on their work. The "Sunshine Laws" guarantee the right of the public to obtain government-held information and the right of the public to attend government meetings. It promises to be an interesting evening!

## Save the Date! What is Going on with Redistricting?

Thursday, April 5, 2012  
7 - 8:30 pm  
Brighton Town Hall

Remember LWV/RMA forums on Redistricting and Reapportionment in 2010 and 2011?

Remember LATFOR hearings in Rochester in Aug 2011 and Feb 2012?

Are you familiar with the current NYS senate and assembly districts in Monroe County?

Have you seen the proposed new districts?

What will the changes mean for your representation in Albany?

Who will finally draw the new lines?

Join LWV/RMA for a presentation and Q and A on this topic.

**SAVE THE DATE!!!**

## From our President: Voting

It's the spring of a presidential election year and the League of Women Voters is focusing on voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives. We have been working with several coalition groups for these activities.

Locally, we are promoting a community discussion of the League's briefing paper, "Increasing Voter Participation".

Our January forum conducted by Katherine Smith and Barbara Grosh about this issue was a huge success. In the audience were citizens actively engaged in registering more voters.

YNN broadcast a part of the forum several times Jan. 12 and the following morning.

Plans are being made for "Get Out the Vote" drives on Election Day, November 6, 2012 as well as on the possible three primary dates - April 24, June 26 and September 11. Further conversation with Bob Smith on 1370 Connection (WXXI) was held at the end of the month. Sheila Abeling and Katherine Smith spent an hour answering Bob Smith's questions on new possible registration procedures for NYS. The LWVNY is supporting same day registration and paperless registration. We continue to study whether these methods have increased voter turnout in other states where they are already used, and how NYS should proceed to implement new ways of encouraging citizens to register and vote. LWVNY and the NY Board of Elections have met to review these items.

Redistricting has been the most important agenda item of the LWVNY Legislative Program since the 2011 year began. With LATFOR maps released January 26, the second round of hearings have begun across NYS and our State Legislative Director and VP for Voter Services have been busy guiding locals on press responses to the preliminary, proposed NY senate and assembly redistricting lines for the next decade. LWVNY testimony can be found on our website [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org). LWV/RMA continues to work with The Center for Governmental Research to study the proposed maps for Monroe County.

LWV/RMA has worked very diligently all last year to maintain our membership numbers, so we can continue the very important civic work we do in this community. We have several new members who have already volunteered to be active in voter services. Thanks to over 20% of our members contributing to our Annual Appeal, we have additional financial support for events. We look forward to 2012 being one of our most successful years with our active members' support.

Katherine Smith, *President LWV/RMA*

## In Memoriam

Jean Hagen Smith, a 50 year member of the League, passed away on December 20, 2011.



## Increasing Voter Registration

New York State has often been recognized as one of the most progressive states in the country. However, one area in which New York has not been a leader is election reform. While other states have been experimenting for the last three decades with ways to increase opportunities to vote, New York's policies and laws have remained largely unchanged and the state's voter turnout rates have likely suffered as a result.

Over the last three federal elections, New York had the 47th lowest voter participation rate of the 50 states and Washington, D.C. This low ranking can partially be explained by New York's paper-based registration system, early registration deadline and other outdated registration policies, including the state's long waiting period for changing party affiliation. Even in comparison to other inflexible states, New York has some of the most rigid voter registration policies in the country. In addition, it is one of only fifteen states that does not allow any form of early in-person voting and requires an excuse for absentee ballots. New York has a number of out-dated requirements for ballot design that may contribute to voter confusion and errors.

There are many possible opportunities to increase rates of voter participation in New York State through common sense solutions that have been implemented to varying degrees of success, in other states beginning in the 1980's. These fall into 3 general categories:

### Voter Registration Modernization

- paperless or automated forms of voter registration have decreased costs and increased accuracy of the voter rolls in a number of other states
- registering (new voters) on-line and voting on the same day
- no-excuse absentee ballot

### Early Voting

- many voters across the country now cast their votes before the traditional "Election Day"
- it has become popular for its convenience as voters chose to vote on their own schedule
- also VBM (vote by mail) is used entirely in 2 states and certain elections in other states.

### Better Ballot Design, Poll Worker Training and Voter Education

- improving the often confusing design of New York's ballots
- improving and standardizing the training of poll workers

Providing such basic voter education as online ballots could improve the voting experience of New Yorkers.

*Excerpted from paper written by Sally Robinson, Issues & Advocacy VP, LWVNY*

## What is LATFOR?

LATFOR is the group that does reapportionment for NYS.

The Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) was established by Chapter 45 of the New York State Laws of 1978 to research and study the techniques and methodologies to be used by the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of the Census in carrying out the decennial federal census. The task force aids the legislature by providing technical plans for meeting the requirements of legislative timetables for the reapportionment of senate, assembly and congressional districts. It also conducts research projects relating to the collection and use of census data and other statistical information.

The Task Force consists of six members, including four legislators and two non-legislators. The Temporary President of the Senate appoints one legislator, Michael F. Nozzolio (R-Co-Chair), and one non-legislator, Welquis R. Lopez. The Speaker of the Assembly also appoints one legislator, Assemblyman John J. McEneny (D-Co-Chair), and one non-legislator, Roman Hedges. The Minority Leaders of the Assembly and the Senate each appoint one legislator: Assemblyman Robert Oaks (R) and Senator Martin Malavé Dilan (D). The Co-Executive Directors are Debra A. Levine and Lewis M. Hoppe.

For more information go to [www.latfor.state.ny.us](http://www.latfor.state.ny.us)

J. Schmitt, VOTER Editor

## Observations on Redistricting Hearing

The Legislative Task Force for Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) met in Rochester on February 15, 2012 to gather input on the redistricting maps released on January 26, 2012. Below are some observations on the hearing:

Assemblyman David Gantt and Mayor Tom Richards spoke first. After they spoke, almost all of the news camera people left.

The Monroe County Legislative Chambers, where the meeting was held, were not crowded.

Kent Gardner of the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) spoke. He mentioned that the League of Women Voters worked with CGR to develop sample redistricting maps. CGR also worked with Common Cause to create maps. He said that the Common Cause maps achieved better districts reflecting communities of interest.

Two local representatives from Common Cause spoke persuasively and vigorously about the problems the LATFOR maps would cause for the Rochester community. They also pointed out the advantages of the Common Cause maps. Many speakers who followed said they were in favor of the Common Cause maps.

Assemblyman John McEneny (Democratic Co-Chair of the task force) said that the Common Cause maps would pit many incumbents against each other. Someone asked why that would be a problem. He said that it takes 8-10 years to gain a position such as a committee chairmanship and thus be able to have a lot of influence in the Assembly; therefore it would be better for a district not to have a freshman assemblyperson.

No one from the University of Rochester or the Rochester Institute of Technology spoke even though the new maps will have their state senators based in the Buffalo area.

Maggie Brooks did not testify.

The minority representative from the state senate on the task force, Senator Martin Dilan (D), stated he had no say at all in the maps drawn by the task force; the senate maps were totally drawn by the Republicans.

From Barbara Hendry, Member LWV/RMA Voter Services Committee

## Have You Visited LWV/RMA Facebook?

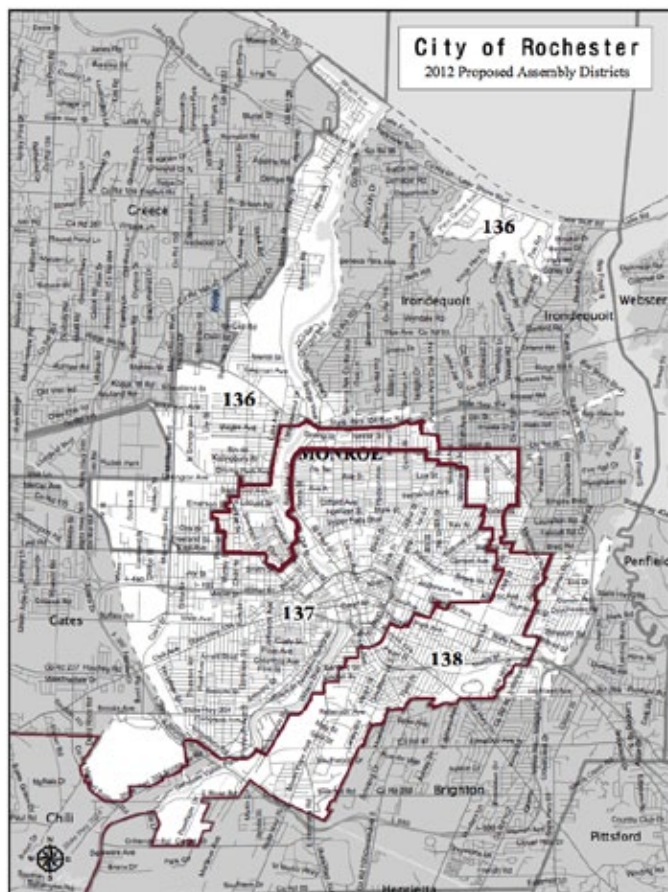
To call Facebook a phenomenon is an understatement. Consider how long it took each of these different things to get to the 50 million user mark:

Radio - 38 years	Television - 13 years
The iPod - 3 years	Facebook - less than a 1 year

Today, Facebook is verging on one billion users, about 1/7th of the planet. A million users isn't cool. Know what's cool? A billion users! Something that gets that much bandwidth and that is growing that fast deserves your attention. Your organization has to remain in front of people; it needs to be where the eyeballs are. To set-up your personal page, go to: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

**Then - visit the League's Facebook page:** [www.facebook.com/lwvofrma](http://www.facebook.com/lwvofrma) and click 'Like'!

Brian Valenti, Director Public Relations



Proposed Assembly Districts for Rochester Area showing part of the "salamander" district



## Observer Corps

### ROCHESTER CITY COUNCIL 1/24/12

Special interest group, Occupy Rochester, was present.

Public comments showed concern for the effects of fracking: health issues, water contamination, pollution, and jobs taken by out of state individuals. A request was made for a moratorium on fracking.

### HENRIETTA TOWN BOARD 12/11/11

Henrietta passed a law amending the "definition of family". This law was a response to concerns over student housing issues on private property.

No issues regarding public participation/transparency.

### HENRIETTA TOWN BOARD 1/18/12

No LWV issues.

### MONROE COUNTY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE, 12/8/11

Many speakers during the public hearing were concerned over the cuts to the Lead Inspection Program. Many, many speakers pointed out that the lead inspection program run in partnership with the City of Rochester decreased the 1293 reported cases of lead poisoning of 1-2 year old children in 2000 to 295 reported cases by 2010. The program showed positive results. Question: Why would an obviously successful program be cut?

Sheriff O'Flynn was proposed to receive a substantial increase in salary, perhaps in part due to his work to achieve NYSSA (New York State Sheriffs' Association) accreditation for Monroe County's Sheriff Department.

No public participation/transparency issues.

### MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE 12/13/11

The county budget for 2012 was passed. Several management pay increases were allowed. Some services to youth and the lead program were cut. Childcare was increased due to expected money from the state. The Democratic minority made several proposals to amend the budget that rolled back management increases and restored cuts to services. The amendments were defeated by the Republican majority.

No public participation/transparency issues.

### MONROE COUNTY LEGISLATURE 1/10/12

Short agenda. No LWV issues.

### IRONDEQUOIT WORKSHOP 11/10/11

Short agenda. No LWV issues.

### IRONDEQUOIT TOWN BOARD 11/15/11

105 comments were presented in support of keeping the Legacy Senior Housing development and the Titus Ave. corridor residential.

No participation/transparency issues.

### IRONDEQUOIT WORKSHOP 1/18/12

No LWV issues.

### IRONDEQUOIT TOWN BOARD 1/24/12

Kudos to the town board for the respectful way they handled the public hearing on the abandonment of Union St. While the public hearing was specific to the Union St. issue, several speakers, including the I-Square developer, raised concerns that the planning board and town board were impeding the I-Square development. While the town board could have argued that the issues raised were not pertinent to the public hearing topic, all those who desired to have a voice were allowed to do so. Further, while explaining that the board did not direct the planning board's concerns (lack of engineering plans and environmental phase 1), an offer was made by a council person to meet separately with the town development personnel and the developer in an effort to assist.

Elaine Schmidt, *Observer Corps*

## About Sunshine Week

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

Though created by journalists, Sunshine Week is about the public's right to know what its government is doing, and why.

Sunshine Week seeks to enlighten and empower people to play an active role in their government at all levels, and to give them access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger. Individuals and public officials who embody the spirit of government transparency and fight for it in their communities are recognized each year with Local Hero Awards.

Participants include news media, government officials at all levels, schools and universities, libraries and archives, individuals, non-profit and civic organizations, historians and anyone with an interest in open government.

Sunshine Week is a national initiative spearheaded by the American Society of News Editors to educate the public about the importance of open government and the dangers of excessive and unnecessary secrecy.

Sunshine Week occurs each year in mid-March, coinciding with James Madison's birthday and National Freedom of Information Day on the 16th.

*From ASNE website, American Society of News Editors*

## New Member

Kathy Farrar 12 Chelmsford Rd  
Rochester, NY 14618  
e-mail: kathyfarrar@gmail.com

Kathy is already involved in Voter Services projects.

## League Happenings

Work has begun on *Who Represents You 2012*. We hope to have it printed before the end of February. This year there will be a lot of changes due to the recent election.

### Students Inside Albany 2012

The LWVNY will again sponsor the Students Inside Albany conference where high school students from around the state come and observe the workings of state government.

The conference takes place this year from March 25 - 28. Working with Jack Hurley at the School Without Walls, our League chose Teresa Leone from that school to attend. Our League is responsible for the cost of her train trip to Albany.

It's a wonderful opportunity for a student to learn about our state government and to actually shadow a local legislator during the conference.

The Naturalization Schedule is out for 2012. Those volunteers who work at the oath ceremonies will meet with me this month to select dates for the year. We are very lucky to have so many wonderful people meeting the new candidates each month. There are twenty six scheduled ceremonies as of now.

Sheila Abeling, *VP Voter Services*

## MOVE Act

Federal Judge Gary Sharpe issued a decision on Friday, Jan. 27 setting June 26, 2012, as the date for the congressional primary. This is a victory for both the Election Commissioners' Association and good government groups. The League has a position on a June primary dating back to 1957. The federal court was asked to change the NY primary date to satisfy the 2009 federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE Act), requiring states to get ballots to overseas military voters at least 45 days before the federal election. If the legislature remains recalcitrant in leaving the state primary election in September, this could set up a three primary election season that would be expensive for local municipalities who administer the elections. It is estimated that it could cost up to \$50 million more statewide.

The state League recently sent out an Action Alert asking members to contact their state legislators and urge them to change the state primary date to June also.

*State News, LWVNY, January 2012*

## LWV/RMA Membership - How Are We Doing?

Members are the League's most valuable asset. They give the League clout, visibility and credibility.

Total members 135 as of 2/1/12:

Individuals: 98	1 member household: 13
2 member household: 13	Honorary: 10
Students: 1	

The organization's strong grassroots system distinguishes the League from other organizations; the League is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Gin Busack, *Membership Chair*

## LWVUS-Privatization Study

The LWVUS began a privatization study in the fall of 2011. This consensus study is to conclude in May, 2012.

The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.

Here is some information from a seminar on privatization held by the Illinois LWV.

Glenview Village Manager Todd Hileman gave a presentation titled, "Beyond Business as Usual: Public Private Partnerships", discussing Glenview's role in privatizing services. In 2004 when he was hired as village manager, costs were escalating out of control, pensions and health care were increasing roughly 10% per year, and the gap between expenses and revenues was growing. He and his village board saw that expertise was wanting in several village departments, especially IT and Finance. After offering early retirements to existing eligible employees, the village set out to streamline operations and transfer some services to the private sector but has not sold any public assets. Services that have been privatized are: the finance operation, portions of street sweeping and snowplowing, janitorial services, the police social worker program, building/fire inspection services, and GIS operations. The village now has a hybrid mixture of private and government services that Hileman feels has sparked competition and allowed a 2011 operating budget that is less than 2007.

Celeste Meiffren is Illinois PIRG's (Public Interest Research Group's) Field Director. She spoke on "Privatization and the Public Interest" discussing privatizing public assets. She cited Chicago's selling of the Chicago Skyway toll road, four downtown parking garages, and the city's system of 36,000 parking meters for 75 years as not being in the public interest and outlined a list of principles for protecting citizens from future privatization transfers.

Questions to consider about privatization are:

1. What criteria should be followed for making decisions to privatize?
2. When is privatization not appropriate?
3. Should privatization be regulated?
4. What should be included in the regulatory process?

For more information go to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and type privatization in upper right corner.





## Coming Events!



### March

- 1** Sunshine Forum, 7:00 pm
- 1** Local Government Committee, 1:00 am
- 2** Membership Committee, 1:00 pm
- 8** International Women's Day
- 15** Board Meeting, 2:00 pm
- 16** National Sunshine Day

### April

- 2** Local Government Committee, 10:00 am
- 2** Membership Committee, 1:00 pm
- 2** May/June Voter Deadline
- 5** Save the Date! Redistricting Forum
- 19** Board Meeting, 2:00 pm
- 22** Earth Day
- 24** Presidential Primary Election



Katherine Smith, Increasing Voter Participation Forum



Audience, Increasing Voter Participation Forum



Program Planning Meeting

Board meets at 2:00 pm on the third Thursday of each month.

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](http://www.LWV-RMA.org), call 262-3730 or e-mail us at [LWV/RMA@frontiernet.net](mailto:LWV/RMA@frontiernet.net)



## New York State Redistricting Update

The New York State Legislature released on January 26 the redistricting maps for the legislature drawn by the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR). The League of Women Voters of New York State released a statement stating that “the League is extremely disappointed that there has been no change in the legislatively-controlled LATFOR process that produced the proposed state legislative district lines.” The statement continued with a description of the analysis by Bill Mahoney at New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), who looked at a rising population inequality among all the districts and determined that the process has resulted in even more gerrymandered lines in the state senate than those produced through previous cycles of political gerrymandering. It went on to say “the governor has publicly stated that these lines are unacceptable and he will consider a veto. We agree.”

What happens next? Lawsuits challenging the new district lines have been filed and more are likely. Hearings are being held throughout the state and it has been said that the final lines (possibly revised from those released on January 26) will be passed by the legislature around March 1st. Most likely, the governor will veto the legislative redistricting plan shortly after and it will ultimately end up in the courts.

Meanwhile, U.S. District Judge Gary Sharpe of the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York ruled the New York congressional primary will take place on June 26. Since LATFOR member Assemblyman John McEneny has said the draft of new congressional lines probably won't be released to the public until early March, the election calendar will be extremely tight, even if the map is quickly approved and the governor does not veto it. The presidential primary will be held on April 24 and the primary for state and local offices on September 11. Thus, unless the legislature changes the date of the primary for state and local offices to coincide with the congressional primary, there will be three primaries in New York this year, with great expense to local and county governments.

To return to the League's statement: “The League will work with the governor and the legislature to realize lasting structural reform to this fundamentally flawed redistricting process.”

Judy Weinstein, *Member Local Government Committee*

Note 2/15/12: A U.S. District Court Judge called on a Federal Appeals Court to select a three judge panel to identify a “special master” to oversee a redistricting plan that complies with state and federal law.



## Signatures to FEC

With campaign spending spinning out of control, the League took the unusual step of joining a petition drive to replace members of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which is refusing to enforce the campaign laws that are supposed to protect our elections from special interests.

We expect candidates for federal office to follow our campaign finance laws, but the FEC – the agency charged with enforcing those laws – is completely dysfunctional. Three of the six commissioners staunchly refuse to enforce the law and five of the six are serving despite expired terms.

The League organized a petition to the White House urging the President to nominate new commissioners to the FEC prior to the 2012 elections. 20,000 signatures were required within 10 days to do this; 25,886 were received.

From Nancy Tate, *Executive Director* [advocacy@lww.org](mailto:advocacy@lww.org)

The FEC has exclusive jurisdiction over the civil enforcement of the federal campaign finance law. In exercising that authority, the commission uses a variety of methods to uncover possible election law violations:

- The agency's monitoring process may detect potential violations through a review of a committee's reports or through a commission audit.
- Potential violations may be brought to the commission's attention through the complaint process. This process enables anyone to file a sworn complaint alleging violations and explaining the basis for the allegations.
- The referral process enables other government agencies to refer possible violations to the FEC.
- Any person or entity who believes a violation has been committed may bring the matter sua sponte to the commission's attention.

For more information go to [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov)

You can still participate by contacting your senator and congressman and urge them all to follow up on this request.



*Our new event sign*



**Rochester/Metro  
League of Women Voters**

PO Box 10573  
Rochester, NY 14610  
p 585-262-3730  
[www.LWV-RMA.org](http://www.LWV-RMA.org)

# Rochester VOTER

*A Bi-Monthly Publication of the  
League of Women Voters/Rochester Metropolitan Area.*

**Officers:**

**Katherine Smith**  
*President*

**Sheila Abeling**  
*VP Voter Services*

**John Schmitt**  
*Treasurer*

**Board of Directors:**

**Beth Keigher**  
*Director, Local Government*

**Gin Busack**  
*Director, Membership*

**Gaynelle Wethers**  
*Director, Budget*

**Brian Valenti**  
*Director, Public Relations*

**Ernest DuBois**  
*Director, At-Large*

**Barbara Grosh**  
*Director, Action*

**Jane Schmitt**  
*VOTER Editor*

**Off-Board:**

**Chris Burleigh**  
*VOTER Layout & Production*

**May/June 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



**Join the League Today!**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Membership: \_\_\_\_\_

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