



League of Women Voters Rochester Metro Area 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 persons who are at least 16 years of age.

Those under 16 can be associate members.

Inside this issue:

Announcing Our New Board	1
President's Corner	2
New Member News.	2
Annual Reports	3-7
Annual Meeting Photos	8
Immigration Update	9
Imbeciles: The Supreme Court	10
Interview: Henry Fitts	11
Celebrating 100th Anniversary NYS Womens Suffrage ..	12
Election Reform	13
We Oughta be in Pictures	14
Voter Services in May	14
Naturalization Ceremonies in May	15
Calendar	16
First Fridays	16
Leadership	17



Announcing!

Our New 2017-2018 Board of Directors

President Mary Hussong-Kallen (2016-2018)

1st Vice-President Sheila Abeling (2016-2018)

Treasurer Elaine Schmidt (2017-2019)

Recording Secretary Judy Sternberg (2016-2018)

Corresponding Secretary Marion O'Connor (2017-2019)

Director Gin Busack (2017-2019)

Director Barbara Kay (2017-2019)

Director Judy Weinstein (2017-2019)

Nominating Committee (2017-18)

Lois Winterkorn, Chair

Ida Holloran

(and 3 members to be appointed
by the Board of Directors)

President's Corner

In this issue of The Voter, we look back on a particularly productive program year and move seamlessly into a new one. Please take time to read the year-end reports – the accomplishments and energy are so impressive!

And as a League, we're already planning exciting new activities – lots of voter registration events and festivals celebrating women's suffrage throughout the summer, followed by a new (but long overdue) community conversation on the complex and controversial elements of election reform, beginning in the fall. We'll be taking a fresh look at the immigration issues in our region, beginning with a Go-See Tour, also in the fall. And of course we'll be sponsoring various candidate forums and debates.

Our Fair Election Practices Campaign is underway, naturalization ceremonies continue to grow in number and we're always looking for partners in Making Democracy Work here in the Rochester metro area.

Part of our transition includes changes on our board of directors. Treasurer (and Jill of Many Trades) Ida Holloran leaves the board to become our liaison to the Hispanic community. She leaves big shoes to fill, but we're grateful to Elaine Schmidt for taking over. We know we won't miss a beat. And Ernest DuBois, our beloved Parliamentarian, is leaving the board. We'll miss his knowledge, his wit and his indomitable spirit. We're not as confident that he'll be replaced.

We welcome Marion O'Connor as our new Corresponding Secretary to the board, as well as Barbara Kay who will also be serving as Membership chair. And, thankfully, Gin Busack and Judy Weinstein have agreed to serve new terms.

Lois Winterkorn will be reprising her role as Nominating Committee chair – assuring us that we'll have another smooth transition at the end of this year.

In other news, the board will continue to host the First Friday gatherings throughout the summer – by popular demand. And we'll be looking into more orientation-type gatherings for new and new-ish members who are not available in the daytime.

To our 25 new members, please know that your ideas and energies are very welcome. Every committee and study group is looking for new members, so you'll be warmly greeted if you call or attend a meeting! If you need information, please contact me.

Finally, a reminder: although we're geographically rather distant, we are an affiliate of both the state and national Leagues. Please visit both websites regularly (www.lwvny.org and www.lwv.org) – you'll

find a wealth of information on League positions on many issues, our standard processes, League activities around the state and nation, and news on many topics of interest to Leaguers.

Thank you for your tireless commitment to keep democracy strong here in Rochester!

Mary Hussong-Kallen
president@lwv-rma.org

New Member News

We're very pleased to announce that our newest member, Kim Byers, will now be helping us to better organize ourselves! She brings experience as a volunteer coordinator for activities at her church – so it was easy to find her niche with the League. She'll begin by helping Gin Busack schedule the flurry of Voter Services activities this summer. We will be introducing you to a new volunteer sign-up tool called "**Sign-Up Genius**". It is an on-line tool that will give all members real time access to the status of activities that need volunteer support and it offers a 'click of the button' opportunity for members to volunteer. When you receive an email from Kim under the **email user-ID "lwv.roc.volunteer"**, it will include an invitation to "sign up for a voter registration event". Just click on the link in the email and you will be directed to Sign-Up Genius and the volunteer roster. Your prompt reply would be very much appreciated as we try to staff the various Voter Services events that run throughout the summer! Any questions about the new process can be directed to Kim at lwv.roc.volunteer@gmail.com.

Kris Rogers and Judy Hartmann are stepping into Sheila Abeling's Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC) shoes and coordinating the campaign this fall – though much of the work takes place this summer, so they're already very busy. We're delighted that they bring great organization and communication skills to this important and high-visibility work.

Mary Garfield is joining our Membership Committee – much to new Chairperson Barbara Kay's delight! Mary's spreadsheet capabilities are most welcome on this committee which is so important to all members. She'll help with requesting and recording annual dues, and make sure we have up-to-date contact information for all members. With 25 new members this last year, we are so grateful she answered "yes!"

Several new members are already exploring committee work, including our new Election/Voting Reform project (more on that later), as well as welcoming new citizens at monthly naturalization ceremonies.

Thanks to all members, new and "long term," for all that you do to Make Democracy Work for All!



2016-2017 Annual Reports

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At our board meeting in July, 2016 we adopted 4 goals:

1. **Advocacy** – To increase and enhance our efforts to advocate for positions supported by LWV-RMA, LWVNY and LWVUS, by incorporating an advocacy component to League activities wherever possible.
2. **Voter Registration** – To increase and enhance our efforts to register new voters, especially in low-enrollment areas, and to encourage all registered voters to vote in all elections through the use of creative reminders and continued contact.
3. **Visibility** – To continue the League's commitment to increasing our visibility in the community, especially through our community collaborations, committee activities, forums and individual initiative (including "Making the Ask") – and promotion of all these.
4. **Making Democracy Work for All**

We're proud to report that we've made great progress in each of these areas.

In addition, we've found success in several other areas:

- LWV-RMA welcomed 30 new members during 2016-2017, 25 of them since our last Annual Meeting! Several of our new Leaguers have already found a niche, and others are getting to know the many opportunities we offer for engagement in Making Democracy Work. Toward that end, the board has opted to sponsor Orientation Gatherings on a quarterly basis – for new members, and for the fun of getting together and sharing updates on all things LWV-RMA!
- We have created and distributed a Member Handbook to all League members. It's filled with information and contacts which we believe will be useful in getting to know our local League.
- We are continuing to record our excellent monthly forums and post them on our own YouTube channel, thanks to Elaine Schmidt's artistry.
- Our online presence is growing. We have established wide-reaching notice via our very informative and attractive member-maintained (by Barbara Grosh and Judy Weinstein) website, as well as on Facebook and Twitter.
- We've updated our Board handbook as well as our policies, thanks to Judy Weinstein, Ida Holloran, Katherine Smith and Mary Hussong-Kallen's dedicated work. Our next project: formalizing board procedures and completing "job descriptions" for all leadership positions.
- We continually encourage every committee and study group to keep the board informed by submitting monthly reports or committee meeting minutes. The board is very interested in every group's activity and is very grateful to have first-hand, current information on the great work being done in so many areas of interest to us all.
- Our 5th annual candidate debate co-sponsored with WROC-TV Channel 8 was another great success (Louise Slaughter and Mark Assini) and we're planning to continue with another debate in the fall of 2017.
- We network with regional League presidents by conference calls regularly, sharing ideas and information on various activities.



2016-2017 Annual Reports

- First Fridays – an informal gathering on the first Friday of each month during the program year, between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM at I-Square in Irondequoit – continues to be a favorite League activity. Members and prospective members gather for coffee or lunch, and discuss League business – or more likely, their stories. We’re getting to know one another better, and finding that we not only work well together, we like each other!
- We continue to seek opportunities to network with the Wayne County League, as well as community groups such as Susan B. Anthony Museum and House, Susan B. Anthony Center at UofR, The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester, the American Association of University Women, Monroe County Board of Elections, the many member groups in the Voter Alliance and a growing list of partners (as seen in Gin Busack’s impressive report).
- Once again, we arranged for 2 high school students to attend the Students Inside Albany program (thanks to generosity of Gretchen Shafer and Jean Shafer).

Energized collaboration has been a hallmark of this board. From Judy Weinstein’s continually volunteering to take on new challenges like consensus intricacies and tech issues, to Gin Busack’s creative approaches to every invitation that comes our way, to Ida Holloran’s fastidious tracking of our growing finances as well as taking on SIA again, to Sheila Abeling’s handily juggling the rapidly growing number of naturalizations while mentoring new members Kris Rogers and Judy Hartmann to take over FEPC – and everything we accomplish is made doable by the thorough, accurate, amazingly detailed meeting notes of our Secretary, Judy Sternberg.

On behalf of the board, please accept our thanks – for your support, for your enthusiasm, and for this opportunity to serve the League and the community!

~ **Mary Hussong-Kallen, President**





2016-2017 Annual Reports

This past year LWV-RMA members have:

- organized forums on 2016 election issues, voting in Monroe County, women's voting rights, services provided by the Attorney General's local office, history as an argument for voting, and local anti-poverty initiatives;
- worked with more than 10 community groups to register voters, assisted nearly 4,000 individuals with registration issues, and sponsored a candidate forum and co-sponsored our televised candidate debate with WROC;
- participated in the Naturalization ceremonies for 100s of new American citizens, registering them to vote and explaining the privilege and responsibility of voting;
- met to consider the pros and cons of a NYS Constitutional Convention and to develop consensus about NYS Legislature procedures;
- sponsored the Fair Election Practices Campaign in Fall 2016;
- attended the meetings of many local governmental bodies; and
- welcomed more than 25 new LWV-RMA members.

More about all these activities is presented here and on the next two pages.

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK! 

We know you'll "like" us!

www.facebook.com/lwvofrma

Naturalization:

In 2016-2017, Naturalization ceremonies and the number of new citizens have increased. Our League attended approximately three ceremonies per month with about 1700 naturalized citizens. The volunteers explain to our newest citizens what registering to vote means and we assist them in filling out voter registration forms. We have a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers: Lois Winterkorn, Mimi Wilson, Katherine Smith, Kay Saunders, Joan Rosenthal, Beth Feldman, Kathy Farrar, Marcia Eisenberg and Sheila Abeling.

Election Services:

The League has a contract with the Monroe County Board of Elections (MCBOE) to open absentee ballots for the Primary and General Elections. Our League members volunteer to do this project for each day that we are needed. We consider this project to be a fundraiser for the League. For each person who volunteers, the MCBOE gives us \$100. During 2016-2017, we raised \$3400.

Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC):

The League and The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester (TIAR) sponsor a yearly Fair Election Practices Campaign (FEPC) during election season. This campaign encourages all candidates for public office to run positive, issue-oriented campaigns. The Committee/Hearing Panel hears complaints regarding candidates who do not follow the Pledge of the FEPC. Members of the Hearing Panel for 2016 were: Jim Morris (Chairperson), Rob Brown, Ralph Esposito, Lois Giess, and Channing Philbrick.

Alternate Members were: Tom Frey, Peter Knapp, Susan Kramarsky, Jim Peters, and Sue Roberts.

Sheila Abeling



2016-2017 Annual Reports

Voter Registration

As always, the primary goal for Voter Services this year has been—through advocacy and education—to encourage voter registration and (possibly more importantly) participation. In keeping with our belief that when we work together as a community we have greater impact, we have endeavored this year to extend our reach by building partnerships with other community groups that share our philosophy. These included the Rochester Voter Alliance, the Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley, LaCumbre, Finger Lakes Donor Recovery, The American Red Cross, Roc/ACTS, FR=EE, the Rochester Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Faith Community Alliance of Rochester, Trillium Health and the Greater Rochester Association of Women Attorneys. At the same time, we have continued to focus our attention on the largely underrepresented center city population and our city youth.

We are only as good as our volunteers and they have excelled this year. With their efforts, we have:

- assisted nearly 4,000 individuals;
- distributed 3,500 *"Who Represents You"* brochures to various community organizations and are currently distributing 4,000 copies of the 2017 edition;
- co-sponsored a candidate forum with the Center for Disability Rights;
- served as Election Inspectors for AFSCME Local Union 1635;
- via speaking engagements involving Mary Hussong-Kallen, Barbara Grosh, Katherine Smith and Scott Forsyth, carried our message to the Rochester Federation of Women's Groups, the Mental Health Association, Lifetime Assistance, Monroe Developmental, Lifetime Assistance Self Advocacy Group, Lifespan, Rochester Monroe Recovery Network, the FR=EE Summit, Rochester Psychiatric Center, Rochester Rehab and Rochester Global Connections events;
- led by Gail Wilder and Georgia DeGregorio, expanded our activity on local college campuses by conducting voter registration drives and working with students at Monroe Community College, SUNY Brockport, the University of Rochester, SUNY Geneseo, and Rochester Institute of Technology;
- guided by Beth Feldman and enhanced by our Wayne County sisters, expanded our civics education/voter registration (Voter Education Team), initiative with presentations at The School Without Walls, School of the Arts, Edison Tech, East High, the World of Inquiry, Northeast Prep, Aquinas, and Integrated Arts & Technology High School; and
- conducted registration events at Project Homeless Connect, the Anthony Jordan Front Porch, Susan B. Anthony National Registration Day, Beechwood Neighborhood Association, PRIDE Fest, Clarissa Street Reunion, RCSD Youth Family Development Day at Frontier Field, Substance Overdose Awareness Services (SOARS) and St. John Baptist Church events.

The work of our Voter Registration volunteers is never complete. It will be a busy summer season continuing our registration services and encouraging voter participation. Among the scheduled events so far are health fairs with Jordan Health, the PRIDE Fest and National Unity & PRIDE Day with the Gay Alliance, the Clarissa Street Reunion, St. John Baptist Church festival and Project Homeless Connect.

Gin Busack

Director, Voter Services



2016-2017 Annual Reports

Forums

There were six forums offered by LWV Rochester Metro Area during the 2016-17 program year:

September 2016 Forum - The Upcoming Elections by Dr. Timothy Kneeland, Chair and Professor of History and Political Science, Nazareth College. The Forum was held at Nazareth College and the Event was co-sponsored by LWV-RMA and the National Council of Jewish Women.

October 2016 Forum - Voting In Monroe County 2016 Presentation by Monroe County Board of Elections Commissioners Thomas F. Ferrarese David Van Varick. The Forum was held at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester

November 2016 Forum - Our Local Attorney General's Office: What's In It For You? by Ted O'Brien, Assistant Attorney General-In-Charge (AAGIC), and Ben Bruce, Assistant Attorney General. The Forum was held at the Asbury United Methodist Church.

February 2017 Forum - History as an Argument for Voting by The Reverend Marvin McMickle, President and Professor at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, and members of the Rochester Sisters of Saint Joseph who saved U.S. Representative John Lewis's life on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965. The Forum was held at Asbury First United Methodist Church.

March 2017 Forum - Join Us for Election Day: Yesterday and Tomorrow A New York Suffrage Centennial Retrospective by Christine Ridarsky, Rochester City Historian and Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO of the National Susan B. Anthony Museum & House. The Forum was held at the Asbury First United Methodist Church

April/May 2017 Forum - Can Monroe County Reduce Poverty by 50% in 15 Years? presented by Tori Toliver-Powers, Rochester Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative at United Way; LaShunda Leslie-Smith, Connected Communities, Inc.; Henry Fitts, Mayor's Office of Innovation & Strategic Initiatives; and Vincent Esposito, Empire State Development, Finger Lakes Regional Office. This Forum was held at Asbury Methodist Church.

Many thanks to the behind-the scenes LWV-RMA members who help make the Forums happen. They plan, advertise, meet and greet the attendees and assume many more roles and responsibilities. Thank you to our venues, which are welcoming, and their staff members who are most accommodating.

Mary Myers, *Forum Organizer*

Government/Advocacy Committee

This was another busy year for us! The Government Committee has added advocacy to our League role. Katherine Smith graciously offered to mentor us in our new assignment. This year we:

- prepared the questions asked of candidates for Vote411;
- coordinated the Observer Corps;
- participated in the study committee for LWVNY's consensus on Legislative Procedures and presented it to our local league at a consensus meeting in December;
- presented information at the January membership meeting about the Constitutional Convention ballot question in 2017, then led a discussion to provide input to guide the LWVNY board in forming its decision about taking a position on the ballot question and, if so, whether to support or oppose it;
- met with all nine members (or staff representatives) of the Monroe County delegation to the New York State Senate and Assembly to discuss LWVNY priority issues – Election Law Reform, Clean Air and Water Act and Constitutional Convention Reform.

The members of the Government committee are Ann Carmody, Elaine Schmidt, and Judy Weinstein. We welcome you to join the Observer Corps or the Government Committee.

Judy Weinstein

Annual Meeting Photos



Ida Holloran, Camille Clayton, Shirley Eberly and Anna Bundschuh



Sheila Abeling presenting Making Democracy Work Award to The Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle



Neil Jascik accepting You Make Us Proud Award



Katie Condello accepting Carrie Chapman Catt Award for Congresswoman Louise Slaughter



Treasurer Ida Holloran presenting budget for approval



Barbara Kay



Elaine Schmidt



Gloria Read reporting



Gin Busack Reporting on Voter Registration Initiatives



Georgia DeGregorio, Sheila Abeling

Immigration Update

FROM LWVUS:

The United States is a nation of immigrants, and the League of Women Voters has a long history of encouraging their participation in American society. Immigrants have helped weave the fabric and identity of our nation, and we believe that it is critical for the U.S. to encourage their participation in our democracy. Our work around comprehensive immigration reform largely falls into the following categories:

Working for a path to citizenship— Rooted in the belief that our democracy is enhanced by a diversity of voices, the League believes that a path to citizenship, or provisions for unauthorized immigrants already living in the U.S. to earn legal status, will strengthen our nation and society. We believe that in order to become citizens, immigrants must learn about our system of government, understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and swear allegiance to the United States of America. These are basic steps to integration in American society, and it is in the interests of current citizens, immigrants and future generations that we build one nation. We have lobbied both the House and Senate for a path to citizenship, and we have lobbied in support of the **DREAM** Act, critical legislation that would enable immigrant youth to become fully productive members of American society.

Helping immigrants become active participants in our democracy

— Voter education and voter registration are the foundation of the League's work. We believe that the strongest democracy is one in which the voices of all participants are heard. As such, the League is committed to helping new citizens become active in American political life. We do this by providing civic education and registering tens of thousands of new voters at naturalization ceremonies in communities across the country.

LOCALLY:

In the fall, LWV-RMA members Lory Ghertner and Barbara Deming are planning a Go-See Tour which will take us to a Wayne County farm employing migrant farmworkers — we'll have dinner with the workers after the tour and have an opportunity to discuss our impressions and their realities. Details will follow soon.

In the meantime, Lory and Barbara offer this resource list. We feel certain that whether or not you join us on the tour, you'll find the suggested readings and DVDs most informative.

- Miller, Todd (2014) *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security* - What does it mean to live within 100 miles of an international border, as is true for most of us living in NY? Western NY and Wayne County are among the highlighted areas, drawing on information gleaned from local interviews. Todd Miller provides us with shocking insight to the growth in size and influence of the U.S. Border Patrol since 9/11. Plus, there is the promise of constructing a wall between Mexico and the U.S. We all need to understand the powers possessed by the Border Patrol and the impact of this reality.
- Nazario, Sonia (2006) *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with his Mother* - Enrique's Journey recounts the unimaginable peril faced by a 16-year-old Honduran boy traveling from Honduras to find his mother who was forced to leave her starving family to find work in the U.S. eleven years earlier. His journey includes traveling on top of freight trains, through a world of hostile communities, bandits and corrupt law enforcement agents. Kindness of strangers, supportive communities and his steadfast hope are also a part of his story, sustaining him as he moves towards his mother. This beautifully told story, based on a newspaper series that won two Pulitzer Prizes, is accompanied by some unforgettable photographs.
- Regan, Margaret (2010) *The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona Borderlands* - Margaret Regan employs her journalistic skills, creating a captivating chronicle of migrants coming from northern Mexico into the desert area around Tucson, known as Arizona's "killing field". The author focuses on the story of Josseline Hernandez, a 14-year-old who crossed the border with her brother in hopes of joining her mother. Josseline was left to die by her coyote (guide) after falling ill from exposure to the journey's harshness. Regan shares her interviews of a number of people, Border Patrol, vigilantes, members of the human rights group No More Deaths and members of the native American tribe on whose land many bodies have been found. Insight into the more than 6,000 deaths since 1990's is not easy to process, but knowing the dangerous realities migrants face in border crossings is essential to our understanding, if we are to effectively change our badly broken immigration system.
- Grande, Reyna (2013) *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir* - Award-winning author Reyna Grande gives us an inspiring memoir, sharing her early years in Mexico as she and her brother and sister lived in brutal poverty with their grandmother after both parents left for the U.S. in search of work. Eight years later Reyna's father brought his children to Los Angeles, a world very different from what she had envisioned. Understanding the realities faced by all immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, is not complete without grasping the impact not only on individuals but the whole structure of family. This is a compelling story of dreams, perseverance, family, and the impact of separations and anguish.
- Ghertner, Nancy (2013) *"After I Pick the Fruit"* (LWV will host a fall 2017 showing w/discussion on this film) — Award-winning videographer Nancy Ghertner created this marvelous film depicting "the lives of five immigrant farmworker women over a ten-year period, as they labor in the apple orchards and fields of rural western New York, migrate seasonally to Florida, raise their families, and try to hide from the Bush-era immigration raids that were conducted in response to 9/11. Filmed in New York, Florida, and Mexico, this intimate, bittersweet, feature-length film illuminates a community that is nearly invisible to most Americans, and will change the way you look at our national 'immigration problem.'"
- Rural & Migrant Ministry, Youth Arts Group with the help of Director U. Roberto Romano (2014) *"DREAMERS Among Us"* - This short (21 minutes) multiple award-winning documentary tells the of 5 undocumented students and their struggle accessing higher education due to their status. The film gives voice to a struggle facing undocumented students and their families every day as they attempt to pursue a higher education and to fulfill their dreams.

Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck by Adam Cohen

THE BOOK CLUB'S MAY DISCUSSION

The book we discussed in May presented the disturbing story of Carrie Buck, the young woman at the center of the Supreme Court's *"Three generation of imbeciles"* decision which was written by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. The book outlines the history of the eugenics movement in the U.S. Disturbingly, the eugenics movement was led by reformers: academics, doctors, lawyers, and religious leaders. They felt that science could lead to improved genetic stock. Feeble-minded, paupers, epileptics, blind, deaf, deformed, criminalistics, diseased, inebriate, and dependent people were all considered subject to sterilization in the Model Sterilization Law of 1922.

When the Virginia Sterilization Act was passed in 1924, the author of the law suggested that institutions wait until it was tested in the courts before conducting their first sterilization procedure under the law. Carrie Buck was chosen for the test case because she was young (18) with many fertile years ahead of her and Carrie's mother, Carrie and Carrie's child were all alleged to be feeble-minded. Carrie had no one representing her in the various levels of proceedings; her guardian and her lawyer were eugenics supporters. Not only did her lawyer not question the obvious false testimony, he asked questions that hurt Carrie's case. By 1927 the case reached the Supreme Court and Oliver Wendell Holmes coined that well-known expression in writing the majority decision. The smallest amount of due diligence by Carrie's lawyer would have shown that neither Carrie nor her daughter were feeble-minded. It is also unlikely that her mother was feeble-minded. Carrie was sterilized shortly after the decision. Sadly, she was never allowed to reunite with her daughter. She married and led a normal life, showing no signs of her alleged feeble-mindedness.

The story is important not just because of the specifics but because it portrays how the powerful can deny the rights of the powerless. It is estimated that between 60,000 and 70,000 were forced to be sterilized, many of whom were normal both mentally and physically. You may wonder when the last forced sterilization occurred in the United States. In 1950, there were 1,526 forced sterilizations nationwide. California coerced female prisoners to consent as recently as 2010 and in 2015, Nashville prosecutors made sterilization part of plea deals.

The LWV-RMA Book Club will be meeting on August 8th at 1:00 P.M. at Elaine Schmidt's home to select our books for next September through May. To attend, contact Elaine at e.schmidt8@frontier.com.

Judy Weinstein, Book Club member

Katherine Smith moderates hearing on ESSA

On May 30, NYS Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia came to our area for a public hearing about the state's draft Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) standards developed in response to the federal law. Forty-two presenters, including teenagers, parents, educational professionals, and concerned citizens, expressed various concerns with the ESSA plan. LWV-RMA member Katherine Smith moderated the session. It was one of several such hearings held around the state to seek reaction to the plan.



The Honorable Wade Norwood, Local Member of the NYS Board of Regents from our region, and MaryEllen Elia, NYS Education Commissioner at the local ESSA hearing.



Jo Anne Antonacci, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES District Superintendent, and Katherine Smith of the LWV-RMA, who moderated the hearing.

**Democracy is not a
spectator sport.
Tag! You're It!**

Interview: Henry Fitts, May 26, 2017

PANELIST AT LEAGUE'S ANTI-POVERTY FORUM

Henry Fitts is the director of the Office of Innovation and Strategic Initiatives for the Mayor's Office in Rochester. His department provides the analyses necessary to evaluate this ambitious Anti-Poverty Initiative. This article reports on a 45-minute conversation that addressed three main topics. We have been invited to return early this fall to continue our discussion.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS: The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) goal of reducing poverty by 50% in 15 years is daunting. It is an attempt to identify proven programs from around the country and use them to create a unique model that fits Rochester. One change that has just taken place is the reorganization of the RMAPI board to take it from under United Way's wing into a separate entity.

1. Current Status of Initiatives:

- a. Adult Mentoring Programs (Bridges to Success and Family Independence Initiative)
 - Bridges to Success:
 - i. Professional Mentor/Life coach model, to help clients address barriers to self-sufficiency and to help with goal setting;
 - ii. Beta testing of 50 households by the end of June, with results folded into Cohort 1, which includes 150 receiving service, and 150 in the comparison group (control);
 - iii. June/July recruitment among these 150 households for the Professional Mentoring and 150 households as a control group for comparison of effectiveness of mentoring [this 2nd group will be referred to services without mentoring];
 - iv. Major barrier to Recruiting: households have little or no knowledge of this program so it must be explained by the interviewing group, Flower City Americorps.
 - Family Independence Initiative:
 - i. Peer Mentoring model with groups of 6-10 families with staff person facilitating meetings and collecting data; groups support one another and work together on goal setting;
 - ii. Recruiting underway for an additional 150 families.
- b. Child Care: Need to coordinate increasing child care slots with needs of clients; a new job often means a new need for child care. RMAPI and partners have made official application for URI [Upstate Revitalization Initiative] funding and strong advocacy push for early childhood and childcare funding to be linked to the two Adult Mentor programs, and targeted in the same neighborhoods.
- c. Other Initiatives: Based on RMAPI's 2015 community engagement and summer 2016 neighborhood survey of needs and barriers to employment; being developed by the City and endorsed by RMAPI. These include:
 - I. VAN POOL: Program goal is to help connect workers to suburban job sites not well served by existing public transit;

currently servicing two employers outside Rochester [del Lago and Pactiv]; vans are full. City expanding vanpool program in the fall of 2017 with \$300,000 grant received from NYS Department of Transportation; seeking ways to individualize transportation, including car share.

II. KIVA: To increase availability of capital for neighborhood start-ups and small businesses through crowd-funding open to all people who want to contribute; provides loans up to \$10,000 at 0% interest; 31 loans for more than \$164,000 have been loaned in Rochester.

III. MDCC Corp.: New local non-profit Market Driven Community Cooperatives Initiative dedicated to launching, growing, and supporting neighborhood-based, worker-owned cooperative businesses; MDCC Corp. and its subsidiary businesses seek to create living wage jobs and wealth building opportunities for residents of high poverty neighborhoods in Rochester. Coop employees have the opportunity to become owners, providing them with decision-making power in company operations and a stake in any profits. MDCC Corp partners closely with local 'anchor institutions' including U of R, RIT, Rochester Regional Health, and St. John Fisher College to localize their spending and build businesses around their reliable source of demand. This project builds on the successful Evergreen Cooperatives model in Cleveland, OH which has created over 100 jobs in three profitable coop businesses.

2. Process of Funding

- a. Funding comes from:
 - i. \$100 million from URI (Upstate Revitalization Initiative of NYS Finger Lakes Economic Development Regional Council) Pathways to Prosperity; awarded on project-by-project basis, requires local matching funding.
 - ii. Private funders (i.e. Greater Rochester Health Foundation; Farash Foundation; RACF; Wegman's Foundation; United Way, Hillside, Home Leasing, ESL Foundation) provide matching funding to unlock URI funding. For example, for adult mentoring, URI provided \$1.5 million, private funders provided \$1.5 million.
 - iii. \$2.7 million from Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI)- supports RMAPI staff, RMAPI Board coordination, community wide policy/systems change efforts.
- b. Catholic Family Center selected by RMAPI to be lead agency and operate the Adult Mentor programs (Bridges to Success/Family Independence Initiative); manages the funding.
- c. Funding is distributed on a "project-by-project" basis upon application to the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council. Pathways to Prosperity committee of the council helps review submissions and ensure there is no duplication of efforts; funding decisions made by NYS staff in Albany.
- d. Requirements on applications listed in materials hosted on the Consolidated Funding Application portal (select URI funding source): <https://apps.cio.ny.gov/apps/cfa/>.

We asked to be provided with financial reports as they are developed.

3. Analysis of Progress:

- a. Adult Mentor programs: University of Notre Dame Lab For Economic Opportunity engaged to evaluate Bridges to Success, funded by MIT J-PAL as well as City of Rochester Office of Innovation.
- b. KIVA, Vanpool, and MDCC evaluations being overseen by Office of Innovation.
- c. RMAPI to establish community dashboard of high-level outcome indicators that all programs, partners, and community organizations should contribute to.
- d. RMAPI and implementing partners set goals and expected outcomes for each project and future funding depends on meeting these metrics.

4. Final Comments from Committee:

- a. League members, as constituents, can inform their local county legislators NOW that it would be an economic benefit to all if they increased the child care slots.
- b. League members can investigate KIVA funding opportunities. (This is not an endorsement.)
- c. To witness the May 1 poverty forum, go to YouTube and enter LWV Forum. This forum was recorded in three parts which are shown in the description.
- d. Send any follow up questions for our next meeting to Georgia DeGregorio at georgiatd1@gmail.com or 585-314-1815 (phone or text).

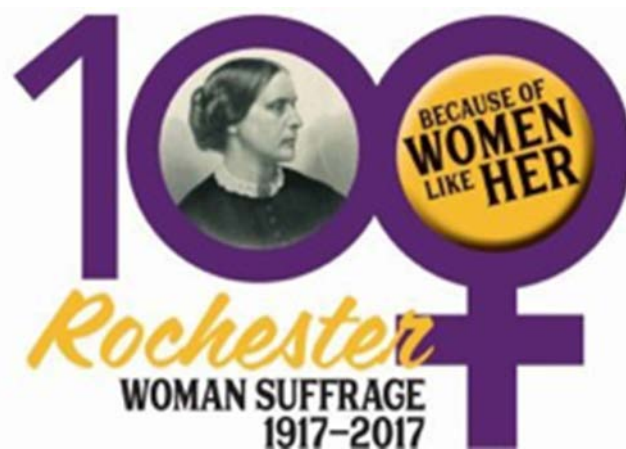
For those who would like to see the panel presentation, go to YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjC9NCupn9AhZpH2k83m5_g.

Committee Members

Georgia DeGregorio, Chair

(Call or Text: 585-314-1815)

Larry Burnette, Sandra Frankel, Hasana Martin, Chris Pryor, Joan Rosenthal



Celebrating 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in NYS

LWV-RMA will be joining The City of Rochester and many local organizations (Susan B. Anthony Museum & House, AAUW, UR Susan B. Anthony Center, Geva, WXXI, RMSC and many others) in celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in NYS this summer at a variety of events, including Vote-Tilla and ROC Women's Music Fest on the weekend of July 21-23. Check the schedule of events at: <https://rrlc.org/rocsuffrage/>.

Please contact Gin Busack (ginbusack@aol.com) to volunteer, or just mark your calendar to attend!

To help you plan ahead, here's a short list of upcoming anniversaries:

- November 6, 2017 - 100th Anniversary of women in New York State securing the right to vote
- November 19, 2019 - 100th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters of New York State
- February 14, 2020 - 100th Anniversary of National League of Women Voters
- August 26, 2020 - 100th Anniversary of the official certification of the ratification of the 19th Amendment by the US Secretary of State



Election Reform

It's in the news, and it's on our agenda. New York State is behind the curve in making voting accessible to its citizens, and we're joining forces with LWVNY and several partner groups to advocate for reform.

In the recently concluded legislative session, the NYS Assembly passed an impressive collection of bills which may open the door to change. According to Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, they included:

- establishing a seven-day early voting period for any registered New York voters to vote in person prior to any primary, special or general election day (A.2064, Kavanagh). Each county would be required provide a set amount of early voting hours, but would have the flexibility to offer hours that best meet the needs of its residents.
- amending the New York State Constitution to allow no excuse absentee voting (A.7623, Vanel). Under current law, absentee voting is only allowed if an individual expects to be absent on Election Day, or because of physical illness or disability. These measures offer a more equitable voting experience by allowing busy New Yorkers more options for casting their ballots.
- making voting easier for New Yorkers, in addition to saving millions of dollars statewide for county boards of elections, by combining the federal non-presidential and state primaries to both be held in June (A.3052, Cusick). This legislation would also ensure New York's compliance with the Military Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act and make voting more convenient for all New Yorkers by reducing the number of primary elections.
- promoting civic engagement among young voters. This bill would allow an individual who will be 18 years old at the time of a presidential election to vote in the primary election if he or she is 17 years of age (A.3549, Cusick).
- easing the process of voter registration for New Yorkers. Under the Voter Enfranchisement Act of 2017, New York State would modernize voter registration by establishing an online voter registration process (A.5382, Cusick). In addition, applications to state and local agencies would incorporate voter registration applications as a seamless process for voters and facilitate electronic processing and registration by the boards of elections (A.6283, Walker).
- facilitating the voting process by automatically transferring voter's registration when they move within New York State (A.3411, Kavanagh). Under current law, voters who move within New York but move out of their current county or New York

City must update their registration before the established deadline in order to vote.

- helping boards of elections recruit and retain essential staff by allowing election inspectors to split work days into shifts (A.6907-A, Hunter). During an election, polls are open an average of 16 hours, not including time needed for opening and closing the polls, and election inspectors are required to be present during this entire process.

Each bill has complexity, but the fact that each was passed indicates support, at least in the Assembly.

This fall, we'll begin exploring these and other aspects of enhancing access to voting for New York's citizens. Stay tuned for information on these important programs.

We Oughta Be in Pictures...

We're making it easy to send us your pictures of League events! Simply capture the activity on your phone or your camera, and email them to photos@lww-rma.org – then check the next Voter or our website (www.lww-rma.org) or our FaceBook page (LWVofRMA).



Voter Services in May

It's looking like a robust season for Voter Services as we continue our efforts to expand our outreach with other community organizations by seeking ways that our groups can work together to achieve our mutual goals.

During April, our Voter Education Team members Ida Holloran, Hasana Martin, Mary Olinger, Ellen Scott, and Lois Winterkorn, participated in the East High Neighborhood Open House. *(Photos on this page were taken at this event by Hasana Martin.)* Also in April, Barbara Grosh presented a workshop on "Demographics, Participation and Gerrymandering" at the FR=EE Community Summit. In addition to these events, Barb Grosh and Gin Busack connected with Scott Fairing of the Gay Alliance of Genesee Valley and Dr. Bill Valenti of Trillium Health, while Barb Deming, Lory Ghertner and Gin Busack met with Carlos Santiago, Community Outreach, Action for a Better Community and a LaCumbre Board Member to discuss immigration concerns.

In May, Lois Winterkorn and Gin Busack were invited by the Hungerford United artisans to share our voter services information at their "Arts for Action" event, Barbara Grosh presented at the Trillium Health Consumer Council, and Hasana Martin with Amy James of Finger Lakes Donor Recovery provided voter registration services at the Anthony Jordan "Hustle to Health" Fair.

Already we have bookings throughout the summer months with more to be added and could really use your help at any of the following:

- 7/15, 16 & 17 Pride Fest
- 7/29/17 Anthony Jordan "Front Porch" Fair
- 8/19/17 Clarissa Street Reunion
- 8/23/17 University of Rochester orientation (9:00-4:00)
- 8/26/17 St. John Baptist Church festival
- 9/15/17 Project Homeless Connect

It's actually fun! You will meet great people, you will never be asked to work alone and you will be "Making Democracy Work for All."

Please either call Gin Busack at 467-6131 or e-mail her at ginbusack@aol.com.



**Democracy is not a
spectator sport.
Tag! You're It!**

Naturalization Ceremonies in May

Naturalization ceremonies are now being scheduled on days other than Thursdays and sometimes at new locations.

Pictured here are new citizens with the Honorable Marian Payson, Federal Court Judge, who presided over the festivities at RIT on May 8, as well as on May 19 at the Federal Building.

Photos by Sheila Abeling



July

- 4 Independence Day
- 4 Naturalization Ceremony (TBA, Genesee Country Museum)
- 7 First Friday (11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M., I-Square)
- 13 Naturalization Ceremony (10:00 A.M., Monroe County Office Building)
- TBD Board Meeting

Coming Events!

August

- 4 First Friday (11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M., I-Square)
- 8 Naturalization Ceremony (10:00 A.M., Women's Rights Museum, Seneca Falls)
- 10 Naturalization Ceremony (10:00 A.M., TBA)
- 10 Naturalization Ceremony (1:00 P.M., TBA)

Please see Voter Services activities on page 14!

Don't let your elected representatives take the summer off!!!

They're always available by phone, email and local appearances.

Remind them that you're a voter!

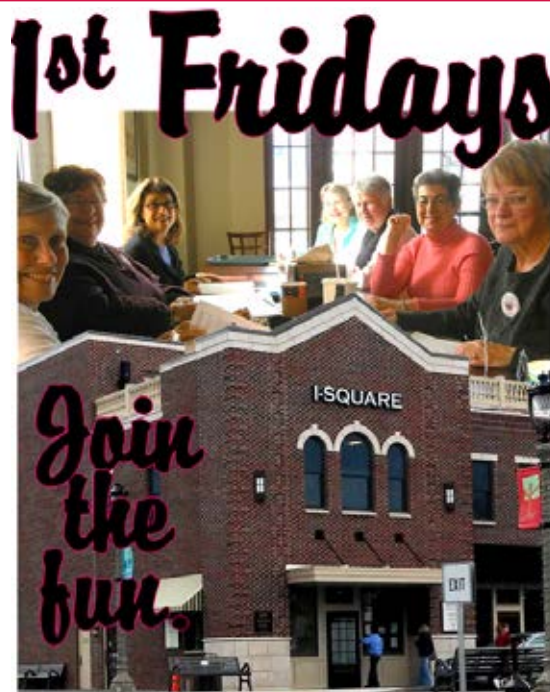
Be sure to check your email and our website for other events as they are scheduled!

Don't miss First Fridays with LWV-RMA

Join League colleagues for lunch or a mid-day coffee break each First Friday of the month, 11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M. at I-Square, 400 Bakers Park, at Titus Avenue, Irondequoit, NY 14617

July 7
August 4

First Fridays help us get to get to know one another by chatting informally. No need to RSVP. Pencil us in on your calendar and join when you can! There's a place at the table for you!



Board of Directors meets monthly at Asbury First UMC. Board meetings are open to all members.

Government Committee meets monthly. For details, call Elaine Schmidt at 530-7414.

Usually Naturalization ceremonies are held on second Thursday of each month. Check League website for updated info each month.

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
585-262-3730
www.LWV-RMA.org

**SEPTEMBER VOTER
DEADLINE IS AUGUST 15!**



SPEAK UP, BE HEARD,
IF YOU DON'T SAY A WORD, EVERYTHING WILL STAY THE SAME WAY

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

or join us online at: www.lwv-rma.org/join.php

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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

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV-RMA

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Layout/Design, Chris Burleigh

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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