

# TheVOTER

**LWV**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF ROCHESTER METRO AREA

**Open  
House**

Learn  
about  
our  
activities

**Lunch  
&  
Schmooze**

## Mini Retreat

Saturday, February 15, 2025

10:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word  
597 East Avenue, Rochester 14607

**State Advocacy  
Decisions  
for 2025**

**Priorities  
for 2025**

More on p. 4.

Register here:

[Registration](#)

### Deadline for Changes in Party Affiliation

Per the New York Board of Elections, changes of party enrollment received up until February 14 each year will be effective immediately. However any changes in party received after that date will be set aside and not entered in the voter's registration record until 7 days after the June Primary.

**Therefore, if you want to vote in a particular party's primary in June 2025, and you are not currently registered in that party, you must update your registration by February 14.**

### In This Issue:

President's Letter	P. 2-3
Mini-Retreat	P. 4
Naturalization Ceremonies	P. 5
Voting Systems	P. 6 - 7
2025 Legislative Session Virtual Meeting	P. 7
League Calendar	P. 7
Ranked Choice Voting	P. 8
Closed vs Open Primary	P. 9
City, County, Town Offices for 2025	P. 10
Village Offices for 2025	P. 11
School Board Elections - Volunteers Needed	P. 11
Public Finance of State Elections	P. 12
First Fridays	P. 13
Book Club	P. 13

## President's Letter

# Should LWNYS Take a Position in Favor of Ranked Choice Voting and Nonpartisan Primaries?

The LWNYS has had committees working on drafting two new policy statements. Each local League now gets to say what they think of them. If enough Leagues support them, they will become the basis for us to lobby. I worked on the committee about Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and nonpartisan primaries.

## Ranked Choice Voting

Here's the language we're being asked to approve:

- The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the use of ranked-choice voting (a.k.a., instant runoff voting), in primary, general and/or special elections to elect federal, state, and/or local officials.
- With the adoption of any electoral system, the League believes that education of the voting public is important and funding for startup and voter education should be allocated.

In NY (except for New York City (NYC)), we use plurality voting, meaning that whoever gets the most votes is the winner, even if it's less than a majority of votes.

A major problem with plurality voting is the "third-party spoiler effect." For example, in the 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush beat Al Gore by 537 votes in Florida, while Ralph Nader had 97,421 votes. Most Nader voters would have been more likely to vote for Gore than for Bush, so his presence on the ballot tipped the scales in a direction that was perverse to voters' actual preferences. This spoiler effect can make people hesitate to vote their true preferences because, while they may prefer a third-party candidate, they know that that candidate is unlikely to win and they don't want to tip the election to their least-favored candidate. Ranked choice voting, also known as instant run-off voting, ensures that the winner must achieve a majority of voters ranking them higher than any other candidate.

Campaigning in a ranked choice scenario can change the tenor of an election. If candidates can compete to be a second choice, they have less incentive to trash-talk opponents. It is claimed that politics would become more positive and issue-focused than the first-past-the-post of our current plurality system.

NYC began using RCV in city elections in 2022. More candidates than ever ran under RCV, and the share of city council seats won by blacks and women increased dramatically. It's possible that the end of the spoiler effect emboldened some voters to vote their true preferences and encourage lesser-known candidates to throw their hats in the ring, unafraid of splitting a block of voters and causing their power to be diminished. [For more information about RCV, see P. 8.]

## Nonpartisan Primaries

The committee I was part of also endorsed a **change to the primary system**. Here's the language:

- The League of Women Voters of New York State supports changing from a closed partisan primary system to a primary system, including a nonpartisan primary system, that allows all registered voters to participate, regardless of party affiliation or lack thereof.

*Continued on Page 3*

Continued from P 2.

- We support the use of nonpartisan primaries to elect federal, state and local officials. The closed primary system we use disqualifies many voters. In NY as a whole, 29% of registered voters cannot vote in a primary; in Monroe County around 40% of young voters cannot. Party activists say things like: "It's their own fault; all they have to do is choose a party." While true, it troubles me mightily that an ideological declaration is required to vote. I think about the voters who left the Republican party since the 2016 election. Should they have to go all the way to the Democratic party to regain a primary vote? Many of them find that a bridge too far. I cherish those folks and would like them to be able to influence who makes it to the general election ballot. [For more information about nonpartisan primaries, see P. 9.]

When RCV is used with nonpartisan primaries, the law would specify the number of candidates who move on to the general election, usually 4 or 5. This would eliminate some primaries since, if there are fewer than that number of candidates, a primary would not be needed. It would ensure that the main election, where the important choice is made, is always in November. This would be a big difference in places like Rochester, where there are always Democratic primaries for local elections, but there may be no contested elections in November, since the Republican party seldom fields candidates there. This has the potential to empower more voters to participate in local elections.

The movie "Majority Rules" about the Alaska elections in 2022 showed the impact of broadening the electorate at the crucial step. Senator Lisa Murkowski faced a primary from a Trump-endorsed Republican because she had voted to impeach Trump. If she had competed in a Republican-only primary, she might well have lost there. In the nonpartisan primary, she made it into the top 4 candidates and hence onto the general election ballot, where she won with the help of second choice ballots from voters whose first choice was a Democrat. She's the only Republican nationwide to survive standing up to Trump. Right now it seems really desirable to me to make it harder for parties to be the keepers of narrow gates they can use to punish nonconformists.

Please read the position proposals on the website and come prepared to discuss. There are several links there to material that will help you understand the proposals and what is at stake. Then **come to our meeting on February 15** and help us wrestle with whether to weigh in positively or negatively. More information at: [RCV/nonpartisan primaries](#)

Barbara Grosh  
[president@lww-rma.org](mailto:president@lww-rma.org)



I urge you to watch "Majority Rules" which is available for a small cost on Amazon, Apple TV, Google Play and YouTube.

## **LWV-RMA Mini Retreat**

Saturday, February 15, 2025, 10:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.  
Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word  
597 East Ave, Rochester, NY 14607

### **Open House: 10:30 A.M. - Noon**

What would you like to get involved with in the League this year? This is your chance to talk to various committees about what they do and share ideas you may have. New members are especially welcome and all members are encouraged to bring friends who may be interested in joining the League. Learn about what we do:

- Voter Services
- Vote411
- Candidate Forums
- Birthday Cards to 18-year-olds
- Outreach to New Americans
- State Legislative Advocacy

**Noon: Lunch!** [Registration](#) is requested so that we can plan food.

### **State Advocacy Decisions: 12:30 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.**

LWVNYS wants our opinion on two proposed positions this year, one about voting machines and the other about Ranked Choice Voting combined with nonpartisan primaries. These positions will be available in advance for all to read and study. At this meeting we'll discuss them and decide whether our League is in favor of them.

Please take the time to read the proposed positions in advance.

- [Voting Systems](#) (See details on P. 6.)
- [RCV/nonpartisan primaries](#) (See details P. 8 - 9.)

We are also requested to advise the state League what our highest priorities are for this legislative session, so we'll spend a little time working on that too.





Top Row A.M. Ceremony; Bottom Row P.M. Ceremony

## Naturalization Ceremonies

The League will be participating in naturalization ceremonies again in 2025. If you have any interest in volunteering to help the new citizens register to vote, it would be appreciated. Please contact Sheila Abeling at [sheiler162007@gmail.com](mailto:sheiler162007@gmail.com). You are always welcome to observe a ceremony.

The League participated in the naturalization ceremony on January 21 at 11:00 A.M. in the Monroe County Office Building. David Newman and Margret Roberts welcomed 41 new citizens.

At 1:00 P.M. in the Federal Building on January 21, David Newman and Margaret Supinski helped 31 new citizens register to vote. Judge Elizabeth Wolford officiated the ceremony.

*Submitted by Sheila Abeling*

## LWVNY Proposed Position on Voting Systems

During the February 15 mini retreat LWV-RMA members will be asked if they concur with two proposed positions about “voting systems.” For purposes of the position statements, “voting systems” refers to devices used to mark ballots, tabulate ballots, or both.

The positions were developed by a committee who studied the State Board of Elections (BOE) voting system approval process system to see if the process can be more effective in ensuring that approved voting systems meet the SARAT (secure, accurate, recountable, accessible and transparent) criteria.

### **Proposed Position Statement - 1**

The first position statement relates to the approval process of voting systems. It reads as follows:

*The League of Women Voters of New York State believes that a more transparent and open voting systems approval process would improve voter understanding of, and confidence in, our elections.*

- *Support for greater transparency and public input in the approval process, including increased demonstrations open to the public, followed by comment periods.*
- *Public demonstrations should be scheduled to provide public input earlier in the certification process.*

### **Proposed Position Statement - 2**

The second position statement relates to the development of a “publicly designed and developed new customized voting system” for the State.

*The League of Women Voters of New York State believes that supporting the development of a publicly designed and developed new customized voting system for New York State could improve accessibility and confidence in our elections.*

- *Support for a change in Election Law and Code to allow for development of a publicly designed new customized voting system for use for by all voters, including those with disabilities.*
- *State funding should be made available to help fund the design and development process, and to assist counties purchase the new voting system once it is certified by the state BOE.*

According to the Committee Report’s rationale statement, “Voting advocates in New York have long been concerned about vendor-supplied voting systems being limited and not tailored to voters in our state. This concern, and the recent example of the development of a publicly owned and voter-driven system in a different jurisdiction, leads the Committee to propose that New York State should explore how to move from “vendor-driven” systems to allowing the state BOE or a county BOE to develop its own system.”

This references a customized voting system that Los Angeles County created rather than purchasing outright from a vendor.

The Committee Report included a statement in opposition to Position Statement - 2 which is presented at the top of the next page:

Continued from P 6.

Statement in opposition to Position Statement - 2:

"The process of designing and developing a new customized voting system would be expensive and lengthy, and the introduction of any new voting system can cause confusion and disruption at polling places. The process in LA County took 10 years and cost over \$300 million. Under the current system in New York the county BOEs, not the state, choose and buy equipment. Seeking vendors and purchasing a new customized system could require additional state funds, and run the risk of political interference in the process."

The position paper can be found here: [https://www.lwv-rma.org/docs/Voting\\_Systems\\_Approval\\_Process\\_Study.pdf](https://www.lwv-rma.org/docs/Voting_Systems_Approval_Process_Study.pdf).

## **LWVNY Virtual Meeting on 2025 Legislative Session**

February 1, 2025 10:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

Join the State League's topic specialists for a virtual event about the 2025 legislative session. This program will take a look at how the New York State League adopts and takes action on issues and sets legislative priorities. We will also introduce the various state topic specialists, how members can get engaged in their work, and what the expected hot topics are for the 2025 legislative session.

. [Register and get Zoom Link here](#)

## **Calendar of LWV-RMA Upcoming Activities**

The best way to be informed about various League events is to use the online calendar. You do not need to sign in to access the calendar.

The calendar is updated frequently; it is more current than a monthly newsletter can be.

On the calendar, you can click on an event to obtain information, you can add it to your personal calendar, and you can register for an event.

You can see future (or past) months' activities by easily using the < > buttons.

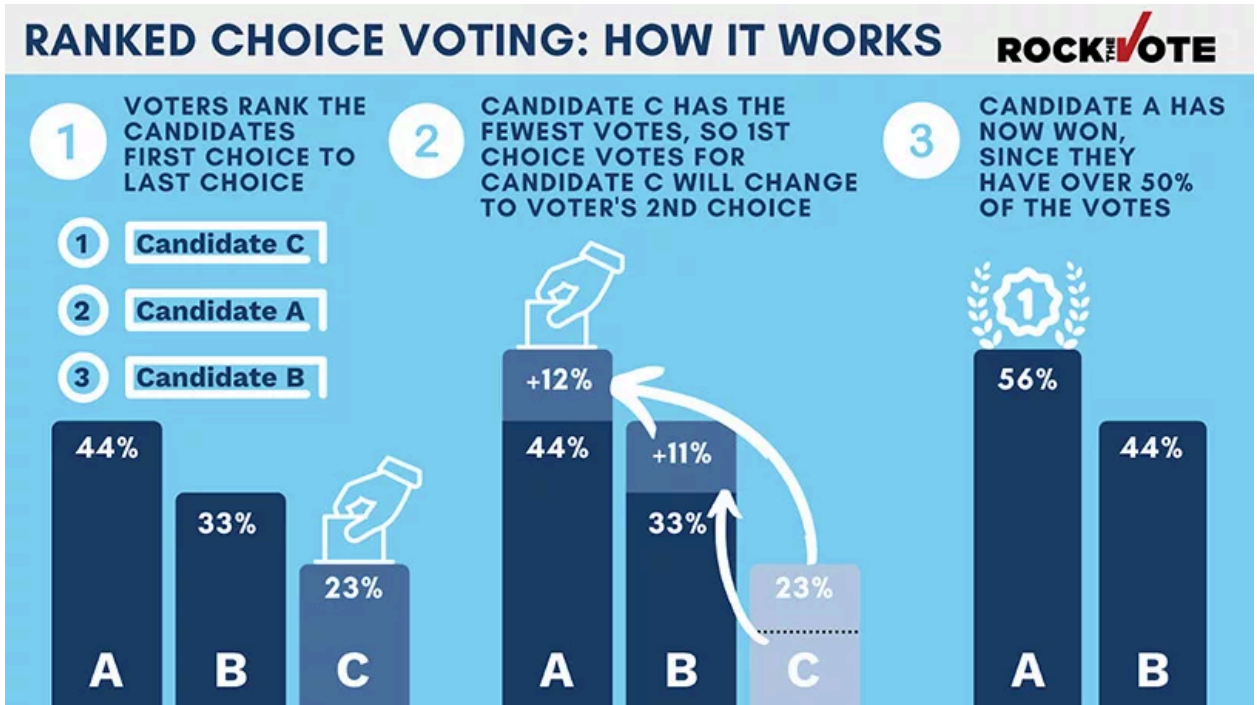
Access the Calendar [here](#).

## Rank Choice Voting Explained

In Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) voters rank candidates in order of preference. (It is also called instant runoff voting.) A voter can indicate that while their first preference is candidate 1, they prefer candidate 2 more than candidate 4, etc. It can be used to avoid runoff elections by resolving ties or to ensure the winner has the support of the majority of the voters. It can be used in primaries and/or general elections

There are multiple ways RCV can be set up, but generally speaking a candidate who earns more than 50% of the vote wins. If no candidate has won more than 50% after every voter's first choice vote is counted, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The ballots with the now-eliminated candidate ranked as first are redistributed to their respective second-choice candidates, and votes are recounted. This process repeats until a candidate has a majority.

Rock the Vote, a national organization dedicated to building the political power of young people, has put together the following chart to help explain Rank Choice Voting. Their website also provides much more information on this topic. It can be found here [Roc the vote RCV explainer](#).



As noted in the President's Letter on page 2, members will be asked to vote on their support of a LWNYS League position on RCV at the February mini retreat. The position paper and supporting information can be found here: [RCV/nonpartisan primaries](#).



## Closed Primaries vs. Open Nonpartisan Primaries

Members will be asked to vote on supporting a LWWNYS position statement on Open Nonpartisan Primaries at the February 15 mini retreat.

Under the current NYS closed primary process:

- Only registered members of a political party can vote in that party's primary
- Independent voters or voters whose party is not holding a primary cannot vote
- Only the person with the highest number of votes advances to the general election, and they advance even if they did not receive 50% or more of the votes

Under Open Nonpartisan Primaries:

- All registered voters can vote for any candidate; everyone receives the same ballot
- The ballot lists all candidates regardless of party affiliation
- The candidates who receive the most votes in the primary progress to the general election. For an election with one winner, the law most often promotes the top 4-6 candidates. For offices with multiple seats (like school board or city council) the general election ballot lists candidates numbering double the number of open seats.

There are alternatives between NY's current closed primaries and an open nonpartisan primary, and the position is written so that we could support intermediate stages, such as letting "blank" voters (those who didn't choose a party when they registered) vote in the primary of the party of their choice.

The position statement can be found here: [RCV/nonpartisan primaries](#)



## County, City and Town Offices to be elected in 2025

Per the Monroe County Board of Elections website, this is the **preliminary** list of offices up for election in 2025 as of January 7, 2025. The number in parentheses represents the number of positions for that office. The election will be held on November 4, 2025. (Some village elections will be in April or June.)

- State Supreme Court Justice-7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District (2)
- Family Court Judge
- Sheriff
- County Legislator -3<sup>rd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>
- Mayor City of Rochester
- Member of City Council At-large (5)
- Commissioner of Schools (3)
- Brighton – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Member of Town Council (2)
- Chili – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Town Justice (2) Member of Town Council (2)
- Clarkson – Supervisor, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways
- Gates – Supervisor, Town Justice (2), Member of Town Council (2)
- Greece –Supervisor, Town Justice (3), Member of Town Council (Wards 1,2,3,4), Receiver of Taxes
- Hamlin – Supervisor, Member of Town Council (2), Supervisor of Highways
- Henrietta – Supervisor, Member of Town Council (2)
- Irondequoit – Supervisor, Town Justice (2), Member of Town Council (2)
- Mendon – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways
- Ogden – Supervisor, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways
- Parma – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways
- Penfield – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2)
- Perinton - Supervisor, Town Clerk, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2)
- Pittsford - Supervisor, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2)
- Riga - Supervisor, Town Clerk, Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways
- Rush – Supervisor, Member of Town Council (2)
- Sweden – Supervisor, Town Clerk, Member of Town Council (2), Town Justice
- Webster – Supervisor, Town Justice, Member of Town Council (2)
- Wheatland – Supervisor, Town Justice (2), Member of Town Council (2), Superintendent of Highways

## Village Offices to be Elected in 2025

Per the Monroe County Board of Elections website, this is the **preliminary** list of local village offices up for election in 2025 as of January 7, 2025. The number in parentheses represents the number of positions for that office.

### MARCH 18, 2025 VILLAGE ELECTIONS

- Churchville - Village Trustee (2)
- Honeoye Falls - Village Mayor, Village Trustee (2), Village Justice
- Pittsford - Village Mayor, Village Trustee (2)
- Spencerport - Village Mayor, Village Trustee (2)

### JUNE 17, 2025 VILLAGE ELECTIONS

- Brockport - Village Mayor, Village Trustee (2)
- Webster - Village Mayor, Village Trustee (2)

### November 4, 2025 General Election

- East Rochester– Village Trustee (2)

## School Board Elections – Volunteers Needed

LWV-RMA would like to provide residents voting in local town school board elections information on the candidates. Typically, most of us are “low-information” voters when it comes to suburban school board candidates.

The League hopes to update Vote411 with relevant information and responses to specific questions, something we did for the first time two years ago. It would even be better if the League could host debates or provide links to debates sponsored by other organizations.

Gathering candidate information for so many school districts requires volunteers. And the work needs to be done in a compressed time frame. The candidates can petition to be on the ballot until April 21 and the elections are on May 20. We need a group willing to reach out to each district and potentially each candidate, to gather contact information.

If we have enough volunteers willing to:

- participate in pre-planning during late March and early April
- gather information in late April and early May

we can make an important impact for the local school districts.

There are 17 school districts in suburban Monroe County. Would you have time to call your own district? Could you call one or two or three others? If we can get 5-9 volunteers, this becomes manageable, and it could make a difference to voters. If you would like to join in this effort, please contact Barbara Grosh, president - [president@lww-rma.org](mailto:president@lww-rma.org)

## Public Finance of State Elections in NY

On January 22, 2025 Cheryl Couser, Co-Director of the New York State Public Campaign Finance Board provided a report on the first elections where the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program was in place.

The law governing the program created a voluntary, publicly financed matching program for NYS statewide and legislative offices and reduced the amount that individuals can contribute to campaigns. It provides matching funds for eligible contributions between \$5 - \$250 from NYS residents to participating candidates running for these offices. For statewide elections, the contributor must live in New York State. For state legislative elections, the contributor must live in the district.

In the 2024 election cycle, the first year of the program, the following percentages of candidates participated in the program during the primary, general election or both:

- 67% of NYS General Assembly candidates
- 80% of NYS Senate candidates
- 66% of incumbents and 77% of challengers or those running for an open seat
- 70% of Democratic candidates and 74% of Republican candidates

83% of the candidates who filed to show an intent to participate succeeded in getting onto the primary ballot and 70% made it onto the ballot in the general election. NYS disbursed approximately \$39 million in matching funds.

During 2025 there will be an audit to ensure the campaigns met the requirements for the funds they received. The Board will also be working on:

- Developing new software for treasurers, candidates, the public and staff
- Increased training opportunities
- Outreach to smaller communities across the State
- Preparing for Special Elections
- Preparing for Statewide Elections in 2026 with mandatory debate requirements

**Join First Friday** for social time at I-Square in Irondequoit at 11:30 A.M. each month. Come when you can, leave when you must. There's no agenda but we talk about everything League and discuss politics. Many great ideas originate at First Fridays and a lot of work gets done.



## LWV-RMA Book Club

A small but eager group of book club members met via Zoom on January 16 to discuss ***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*** by professor Robin Wall Kimmerer. This Indigenous scholar's book describes the role of Native American knowledge as an alternative or complementary approach to Western mainstream scientific methods.

The group will meet next at 4:30 P.M. on Thursday, March 20 via Zoom to discuss ***Gallop Toward The Sun: Tecumseh And William Henry Harrison's Struggle For The Destiny Of A Nation*** by Peter Stark.

All are welcome. To join the group for the first time and receive the Zoom link, contact Judy Weinstein at [bookclub@lww-rma.org](mailto:bookclub@lww-rma.org).

The program for the remainder of the 2024-2025 season is:

- March 20: *Gallop Toward the Sun* by Peter Stark
- May 15: *Art of Power* by Nancy Pelosi
- July 17: *Distorting Democracy* by Carolyn Renee Dupont

*Submitted by Judy Wadsworth*



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

**NEXT VOTER DEADLINE:  
February 15, 2025**

## League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, political organization which encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

The League of Women Voters is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principal and in practice.

League membership is open to any person who subscribes to the League's purposes and policies.

**Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.**

### Board of Directors:

President	Barbara Grosh (23-25)
Vice President	
Treasurer	Constance Flahive (23-25)
Secretary	Michele Coxander (24-25)
Director	Cathy Kane (24-26)
Director	Tess McFarland-Porter (23-25)
Director	Mary Micket (23-25)
Director	Deb Leary (24-26)
Director	Carolyn O'Neil (24-26)
Director	Karen Morris (24-26)

### Committee Contacts

**President:** Barbara Grosh  
President@LWV-RMA.org

**Book Club:** Judy Weinstein  
bookclub@LWV-RMA.org

**Communication/PR:**  
communications@LWV-RMA.org

**Naturalization:** Sheila Abeling  
Sheiler162007@gmail.com

**Advocacy:** Barb Murphy / Scott Forsyth  
advocacy@LWV-RMA.org

**Membership:**  
membership@LWV-RMA.org

**Nominating:** Mary Hussong-Kallen  
nominations@LWV-RMA.org

**Programs:** Barbara Grosh  
President@LWV-RMA.org

**Vote411:** Isobel Gillen  
vote411@LWV-RMA.org

**Voter Services:** Deb Gordon / Cathy Kane  
Voterservices@LWV-RMA.org

## Join the League Today!



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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please send this form and your check payable to the LWVUS to:  
LWV-RMA,  
PO Box 10573  
Rochester, NY 14610

Or join us online at: <https://www.lwv-rma.org> or send email to [info@lwv-rma.org](mailto:info@lwv-rma.org)

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Dues are payable to LWVUS. The link on LWV-RMA will direct you to the LWVUS site. A portion of your dues will be distributed to LWV-RMA and LWVNY5.

Suggested dues are \$75, but you may choose any amount of \$20 or more.

Choosing more than \$75 allows LWV-RMA to fund programs while subsidizing membership for those who cannot afford the full \$75.