

The Voter

The official publication of the League of Women Voters of Roseville Area
FALCON HEIGHTS, LAUDERDALE, LITTLE CANADA, MAPLEWOOD, ROSEVILLE

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YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjWhyaOul7m9LEgYY8IMPfg>

Conversations with Constituents Event

What are the issues Ramsey County faces in 2019? How are our communities dealing with education, development, affordable housing, and budget challenges? These questions, among other issues, are the focus of this year's "Conversations with Constituents" on Tuesday, January 15, sponsored by the LWV of Roseville Area. This year's program will be held in the Roseville City Hall Council Chambers, 2660 City Center Drive. Area mayors, school board chairs, and county commissioners will be available for timely and engaging conversations.

Come early at 6:30 p.m. for refreshments and a meet and greet. Conversations with elected officials will begin at 7 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend.

Invited officials are Mayors Dan Roe, Roseville; Peter Lindstrom, Falcon Heights; John Keis, Little Canada; and Mary Gaasch, Lauderdale; City Council member Marylee Abrams, Maplewood; County Commissioners Blake Huffman (District 1), Mary Jo McGuire (2), Trista Matascastillo (3), and Victoria Reinhardt (7); and School Board Chairs Jonathan Weinhausen, Moundville Schools; Michelle Yener, North St. Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale Schools, and Kitty Gogins, Roseville Area Schools.



Pictured:
City and county officials who attended the 2018 Conversations with Constituents event

Identity and Acculturation for Immigrants

On Thursday, January 10, the LWV of Roseville Area will co-host with the Shoreview Library and Do Good Roseville the third program in a six-session series on immigration experiences in America, *Becoming American*. The program, "Between Two Worlds: Identity and Acculturation," will be held at the Shoreview Library, 4560 N. Victoria (just north on Victoria off Hwy 96), 6:30-8:30 p.m.

This program will look at how immigrants react and adjust to living in a new country and culture, and how they bridge the divide between the traditions and values of their native countries. The evening will begin with the showing of "The Nigerians," episode 1 of the documentary *The New Americans*.

Discussion following the film will be facilitated by Olga Herrera, Associate Professor of English and Department Chair at the University of St. Thomas. Dr. Herrera's research examines how writers, particularly those of color, document how race, class, and gender affect one's access to work and the urban experience. The program is free and open to the public.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

LWV of Roseville Area Board Members

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Stephanie DeBenedet
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Beth Salzl
Karen Schaffer

Looking back on 2018, we have had a very good year! We have at least 23 new members, registered many people to vote in multiple venues, presented extraordinary programs that educated our five-city area and beyond, presented six well-attended candidate forums, marched in two community events to advertise our chapter, hosted three very fun and interesting social events, and have had lots of active participation by our new members.

This coming year, as our venerated democracy is being challenged from within, we accept new challenges with full force and will work together to help eliminate these threats. To our advantage is our almost 100-year old nationally recognized organization. This helps the two very important issues we need to address in the coming years.

The first is the 2020 census. I would like you all to consider joining forces to support fighting the challenges being presented by the current White House administration and Congress. They are attempting to block full participation by the populace through census underfunding and inserting a citizenship question in the census inquiry. The census has nothing to do with citizenship and everything to do with all who are living in this country, including immigrants and refugees. Help us to confront these census challenges over the next two years. Please contact Vice President of LWV of Roseville Area, Barb Barany, if you are interested in joining her ad hoc committee Census 2020 (see details below).

The other very critical and important challenge is global warming. Scientists say we have just 12 years to halt this progression before it is too late. Our League has a top notch environmental advocate for this issue in Priscilla Morton. Our Board recently approved establishing an Environmental subcommittee under the banner of Action/Advocacy. Priscilla is in charge of the global warming aspect and Donna Peterson is the go-to person for other areas of environmental challenges for the subcommittee. Please contact them if you are interested in joining these very worthy causes and to get involved (Priscilla Morton at prismorton@comcast.net and Donna Peterson at peter080@uwm.edu).

That's the key: Involvement! Let's Do It! Happy 2019!



Sherry Hood

2020 Census Ad Hoc Committee

Following our November 13 presentation by Ramsey County Policy and Planner Jolie Wood, the LWV of Roseville Area board approved the creation of an ad hoc committee to support the 2020 census. Current activities include joining city and county Complete Count Committees representing our League communities and planning for informational outreach. If you would like to be a part of the ad hoc committee, please contact Barb Barany (baran005@umn.edu or 651-644-3207).

Land Stewardship Project

The Land Stewardship Project (LSP), with sponsors that include LWV of Roseville Area, will hold three "Managing for Stewardship" workshops in Minnesota, one of which will be in Roseville. The workshop is designed for farmland owners and those who rent. About 50% of Minnesota farmland is rented and most of the owners live in metro areas. If you are interested in participating in the workshops, please contact Robin Moore of LSP at 320-269-2105.

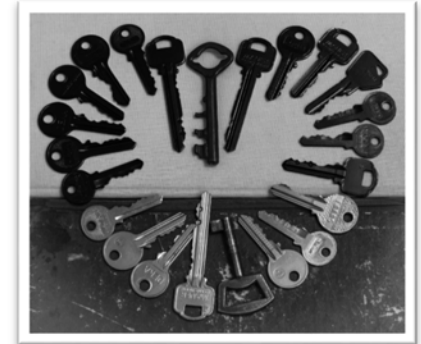
To volunteer at the Roseville workshop for 2-8 hours on January 16, please contact Sherry Hood at 651-633-1434.

To quote Gretchen Sabel, chair of LWV of Upper Mississippi River Region: "Moving farming practices toward conservation is critical for environmental improvement - healthy soil holds water, stores nutrients, and helps to reduce greenhouse gases. Landowners can work with their renters to make these changes; these workshops will help."

White Fragility

By Florence Sprague

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less. — Marie Curie



My list of what to read next just keeps growing. One book that has recently settled onto my pile is *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo. The review of this book by Katy Waldman in *The New Yorker* (July 23, 2018, www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-sociologist-examines-the-white-fragility-that-prevents-white-americans-from-confronting-racism) has me intrigued. Waldman describes DiAngelo as presenting a “methodical, irrefutable exposure of racism.” I need to read this book to get a fuller understanding of her thesis. I hope that I do not misrepresent it.

Some topics are the third rail of civil conversation; for many white Americans racism is highly electric. It is interesting to contemplate why this continues to be so at this point in our history. DiAngelo coined the term “white fragility” in 2011 to describe the extreme, hair-trigger defensiveness displayed by many white people when discussing racism. Waldron notes that DiAngelo, a race and social justice educator, sees behavior at her workshops that is so extreme that it is “as if the mention of racism were more offensive than the fact or practice of it.” Two factors are seen as major contributors—the ease with which white people can be insulated from racial discomfort in this still significantly segregated society and a lack of “racial stamina” when white people do seek to engage in difficult conversations. Their protests of colorblindness, of good intentions, of reverse racism, and more, then act as “weaponized denial” and keep white people in a position of aggrieved dominance. Operating in a binary good/bad system, white people avoid confronting things that might engender feelings of overwhelming guilt, so benefit from a racist system is denied. Loudly.

As I was thinking about this topic I came across an essay by comedian W. Kamau Bell in which he states that white people need to “get comfortable being uncomfortable having conversations about race and racism.” It is important to remember, he says, that “change doesn’t happen all at once—it’s often glacial.”

Overcoming the ingrained and invisible culture of racial preference is a lifelong process. DiAngelo observes that white liberals can cause great harm if they fail to acknowledge that their personal and societal work is not finished just because they have an attitude of good will. Structural racism is still endemic.

It is not easy to unlearn what you didn’t realize you were learning; don’t be too harsh on yourself, but also don’t make yourself the victim in conversations about racism. We need a more nuanced and generous understanding of personal responsibility to allow us all to grow in a healthy way. Difficult conversations need more humility and open-minded listening and less anger and fear.

At DiAngelo’s website (robindiangelo.com) she offers some resources to help us all discuss race in America and racism without losing face and while working from a stance of curiosity and humility, such as her “Silence Breakers.” Then we can all “get comfortable being uncomfortable” and look at race in America with clearer eyes. Learning to combat both internal and structural racism is important work for a lifetime.

Metropolitan Governance Consensus Study is Ready

By Karen Schaffer and Bonnie Koch

Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters (CMAL) has prepared its study of Metropolitan Council governance and a set of consensus questions for League member consideration at its February meeting. The CMAL committee report and the consensus questions will be available on the LWVMN CMAL page in early January. LWV of Roseville Area members without computer access will receive a copy of the report in the mail.

At the next CMAL meeting, “Is the Metropolitan Council ready for change or is it pretty darn good as it is?,” LWV of Roseville Area members will meet to provide input to CMAL. League members are encouraged to read the report and the consensus questions before the meeting to be held February 19, 6:30 p.m., at the Autumn Grove Park Building (at the corner of Hamline and Lydia) in Roseville. While the consensus meeting is open to the public, only League members will be permitted to vote on the consensus questions. LWV of Roseville Area members who are not able to attend the February consensus meeting will be able to participate by mail. Questions? Contact Karen Schaffer at schaffer-ka@gmail.com.

November Event Recap: Ramsey County and the 2020 Census

By Rachel Geiser

On November 13, Jolie Wood, a policy analyst for the Ramsey County Planning and Policy Department, spoke at a League event about the importance of the 2020 Census for Minnesota and what Ramsey County is doing to help ensure an accurate count for those residing in the county. Wood first discussed how the structure of the census has changed and what the likely number of questions and content would be. She then detailed the timeline for the rollout of the census. This timeline includes mailed postcards arriving in March 2020 asking people to complete the census online, a first for the census (though it can still be mailed in). Census day is April 1, 2020.

Minnesota generally has an 82% census response rate. Wood stated that census data translates to power (e.g., political representation), money (e.g., federal fund distribution to the states), and data (e.g., infrastructure and public service planning). Minnesota is projected to lose a congressional seat in 2020 (thus also eliminating one electoral vote for Minnesota) due to population changes determined by the census. An accurate count goal is important to keep Minnesota's power, money, and data intact. This goal is partly being undertaken by Complete Count committees set up around the county and other areas in Minnesota.

Wood also addressed the controversial citizenship question that was added late to the census. She says the county needs to combat the stigma with answering the census that may arise because of this question. For example, they need to educate people that personal-level census data must be kept secret for over 70 years, only known to the Census Bureau during that time and not available to other government agencies such as the President or ICE.

If you're interested in helping get a complete census count, consider joining the League ad hoc 2020 Census committee led by Barb Barany (details on [page 2](#)). To watch the presentation from November, go to the video at the League YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQuVy5hr9xI.



December Event Recap: Holiday Social Event

By Rachel Geiser

On December 1, LWV of Roseville Area members once again met for a holiday social event. League members met at Guldens Restaurant and Bar in Maplewood for lunch and catching up with the twenty-three members who attended.



Recap: ‘Becoming American’ First and Second Sessions

By Bonnie Koch

The first session of the *Becoming American* series of programs, sponsored by the Shoreview Library, LWV of Roseville Area, and Do Good Roseville was held on November 8. This session, “The Century of Immigrants,” was designed to provide a historical context for understanding immigration.

The first of two films, *The Power and the People*, gave an overall view of immigration from about 1898 to 1918, chronicling the immigrant experience from arriving in the harbor to working their way through Ellis Island bureaucracy to moving on to establish life in a new country.

Contrasting earlier immigration, this period saw a huge influx of people from southern and eastern Europe. Immigrants tripled the New York City population. There were more Italians in New York City than there were in Naples. While most represented generations of pent up problems of mere survival, some Americans feared this surge and advocated for restrictions on numbers. These “new immigrants” were said to take jobs away from Americans, refused to learn English, and were generally not intelligent enough to assimilate into American culture.

The second film, *The Jewish Americans*, took us from a broad view of immigration to a specific group’s experience. Jewish immigrants tended to settle in the Lower East Side of New York City, making it the largest Jewish community in the world. Living in tenements and filling positions in the garment industry, their employment in deplorable factory conditions was brought to light in 1911 when 146 people lost their lives in a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

Dr. Dina Gavrilos, associate professor of Communication and Journalism at the University of St. Thomas, led the discussion following the films. She related her own experience as a second-generation immigrant speaking Greek at home until she was 4, then learning to speak English by watching Sesame Street. Others in the audience shared their family immigrant experiences, particularly stories of grandparents.

The final conversation of the evening addressed the question, “Were there parallels between immigrants of the past to those of today?” Points raised included past actions such as the Governor of Iowa issuing a WWI proclamation forbidding Iowans from speaking foreign languages in schools and in public conversations, movies that often romanticize the immigrant experience of the past while minimalizing the difficult challenges faced, and today’s social media making today’s experiences more profound.

The second session, “Promise and Prejudice,” was on December 13. An hour-long film, *Welcome to Shelbyville*, provided a basis for discussion on the experience of today’s immigrants. The film, a mosaic of different groups of people with different views of life, work, and community, followed the events in Shelbyville, Tennessee, when Somali immigrants—a very visual change to the community—came to the area to work at the Tyson chicken processing plant. Commentary from the mayor included the possibility of diseases being brought to the community and knowing from the 9-11 experience that “Muslims are out to kill us.” Church leaders in this Bible Belt area struggled on how to guide their parishioners through demographic changes. Other individuals including the ESL teacher who taught English to immigrants and members of the black and Latino communities who had experienced non-acceptance worked to befriend and learn more about the Somalians’ perspective.

Dr. Gavrilos once again facilitated discussion that centered on fears that are rooted in our belief systems. Thoughts covered a range of perspectives including the idea that “Minnesota Nice” keeps us from talking about our feelings; if you’re brown or black you must prove your patriotism as opposed to European-American immigrants who can visually blend in; when you have a shift in demographics, you have a shift in power; and increased headline frequency instills fear, hatred, violence. Participation by a male Somalian was particularly helpful in hearing a personal story.

With four remaining sessions in the *Becoming American* series, the compelling documentaries and thought-provoking discussions will provide a strong learning experience in a time when America is examining its immigration system.



**Speakers at the first Becoming American Event
(photo by Barb Anderson)**

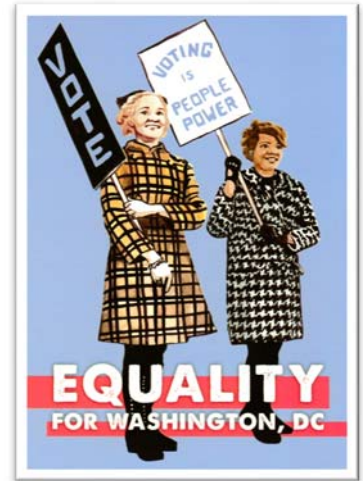
Washington, DC, Statehood Update

By *Bonnie Koch*

In our joint September meeting with LWV of New Brighton, Josh Burch, member of LWV of Washington, DC, presented information about advocacy, supported by LWVUS, to give statehood to the DC area. Presently, voters living in DC proper have a non-voting representative in the House and no representative in the Senate. Their laws and budget are controlled by Congress, placing them literally in a taxation without representation situation. LWVUS has supported self-government for DC since 1938 and endorsed statehood in 1993.

Senate Bill 1278, the Washington, DC Admission Act, would grant statehood to the residential and commercial areas of DC. In November, Josh Burch wrote to our Leagues, saying that since the Congress convening in January is not expected to pass the bill, “now is the time to build our base of support [for the future]. We need to have our supporters lined up and vocal about the fact that it is unfair and unjust to deny 700,000+ tax paying American citizens a full and equal vote in Congress.”

Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar has signed on as one of the co-sponsors of the bill. Senator Tina Smith has not yet done so. If you would like to contact Senator Smith’s office and encourage her to do so, you may contact her through Gohar Sedighi (gohar_sedighi@smith.senate.gov).



Stretching...In a Nonpartisan Manner

By *Rita Mills*

People Power, Ramsey County Elections, Copal, LWV of Roseville Area, ERA MN, Move Minnesota, OFA, Women’s March MN, CAPI, Introverts United, LWVMN, AARP, Sisters of St. Joseph Carondelet Village, Let People Vote, Secretary of State MN, St. Paul Public Library, Hennepin County Elections, LEAD MN, Indivisible St. Paul, Eastside Freedom Library...and many more: How do all these organizations intersect?

A call came out from the Secretary of State’s (SOS) office to convene in December at the State Office Building to discuss voting, civic engagement, and an assortment of nonpartisan issues. Over 60 people attended while an additional 25 joined the group via phone conferencing to represent 50 local organizations. Representatives from 8 local and state LWV chapters also participated. What is the purpose of convening such an array of organizations? It is becoming important for each organization to learn what others do to avoid reinventing the wheel. The SOS’s office could act as a clearing house, organizing regular meetings and providing a directory for organizations to work together when appropriate.

This goal intersects well with LWV. Personally, I found the meeting to be a humbling experience. While Alana Howey and I had recently worked with other organizations when registering transit riders to vote (see the October 2018 issue of *The Voter*) this SOS meeting introduced me to people from more than 50 organizations all with a common goal. Conversations with participants both before and after the official meeting were beneficial.

What was discussed? Interestingly, we found many common threads and questions among the organizations.

- How does one find information on the slate of judicial candidates?
- How do we avoid overwhelming high schools with offers for voter registration?
- Who would be good guest speakers for specific civic engagement topics?
- In all our efforts, are we forgetting about greater Minnesota?
- How does one find out about obscure positions or unfamiliar people on the ballot?
- What can we do to have election judges look more like their respective communities? (There were many comments on seeing mostly older white election judges.)
- What are the major language issues? Did you know that in Minnesota there are almost as many people who speak English as a second language as people speaking Hmong?

All participants agreed about the necessity of fundamental education on the importance of voting; knowing the issues, positions, and candidates; and, perhaps most importantly, why voting is important to specific needs of individuals.

So, where is all this headed? No one really knows other than that getting to know other organizations, their focus, and their strategies is a huge beginning. More to come on this ambitious challenge!

Future League Events

Meetings are usually recorded and posted on our website: www.lwvrosevillearea.org. If you need a ride to an event, contact Sherry Hood (sherryhood@icloud.com / 651-633-1434) or Bonnie Koch (toouray@aol.com / 651-683-2992).

January events are detailed on [page 1](#) and [page 8](#).

- **February 14 – Help Wanted? Immigration and Work (Becoming American Series).** Fourth in the six-part series of films and discussions co-hosted with the Shoreview Library and Do Good Roseville; *Destination American, The Golden Door*; 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Shoreview Library, 4560 N. Victoria St., Shoreview.
- **February 19 – Spotlight on the Metropolitan Council: Ripe for Change or Pretty Darn Good As It Is?** See details on [page 3](#); 6:30-8 p.m.; Autumn Grove Park Building, 1365 Lydia Ave. W., Roseville.
- **March 14 – Family and Community (Becoming American Series).** Fifth in the six-part series of films and discussions co-hosted with the Shoreview Library and Do Good Roseville; *My American Girls*; 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Shoreview Library, 4560 N. Victoria St., Shoreview.
- **March 19 – Behind Closed Doors: Parting the Curtain on Elder Abuse.** Speakers: Jackie Herron, Author/Advocate, Kristine Sundberg, President of Elder Voice Family Advocates; 6:30-8 p.m.; Location TBD.
- **April 11 – Immigration and Popular Culture (Becoming American Series).** Sixth in the six-part series of films and discussions co-hosted with the Shoreview Library and Do Good Roseville; *The Search for General Tso*; 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Shoreview Library, 4560 N. Victoria St., Shoreview.
- **April 17 – Changes In Our Weather: What’s the Big Deal?** Speaker: Dr. Kenneth Blumenfeld, Senior Climatologist, MN Climatology Office, DNR; 6:30-8 p.m.; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 2561 Victoria St. N., Roseville.
- **May 7 – Annual Meeting.** LWV of Roseville Area League Annual Meeting; 5 p.m. social hour, 6 p.m. dinner, 7 p.m. meeting; Wakefield Park Community Building, 1725 Prosperity Rd., Maplewood.
- **June – Sustainability Field Trip.** Tour a LEED Platinum Certified building, the highest level certification for energy efficiency and environmental design; Markim Hall, Macalester College, 1600 Grand Ave., St. Paul.

Voter Services: 2018 Election Season Recap

By Karen Lake

Highlights of the Voter Services Committee work during the 2018 election season include:

- Voter registrations at 15 sites including high schools, National Night Out, senior living facilities, LWV of Roseville Area programs, Rice Street Gardens, candidate forums, the Minnesota State Fair, metro bus riders, a brewery, and new citizenship services. Approximately 330 people registered in addition to over 90% of new citizens.
- Conducting six candidate forums. In addition to the candidates and moderators, there were 250 attendees at the forums, plus cable TV audiences.
- Participation at community parades in Roseville and Little Canada.
- Promotional support in the LWV of Roseville Area Voter newsletter, Facebook, LWV of Roseville Area website, Instagram, Twitter, press releases, e-mail, high school communication channels, and local cable TV.
- Volunteer hours that totaled approximately 2,870.

Among considerations for focus in 2019 is participation in initiatives with the Secretary of State’s Office and with a Ramsey County group, both wishing to form partnerships with others interested in increasing voter/civic engagement.

Every Vote Counts!

By Karen Lake

In the November 6 Maplewood City Council election, candidates Marylee Abrams and Nikki Villavicencio tied for the second city council seat with 5,755 votes each. The candidates agreed to flip a coin to break the tie. Villavicencio won the toss and Abrams filed for a recount. The recount resulted in Abrams gaining two votes, Villavicencio losing three, and four contested ballots; this resulted in Abrams the winner by one vote. Democracy in action and further proof that every vote counts!

According to Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, Minnesota led the nation in voter participation in the 2018 elections with 64.25% of eligible voters casting ballots; Colorado was second. Only 35.75% more Minnesotans to engage in voting. Further proof that every vote counts!

Rachel Geiser, editor
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January LWV Event Calendar

- **January 10 – Between Two Worlds: Identity and Acculturation (*Becoming American Series*).** See the full event description on [page 1](#); 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- **January 15 – Conversations with Constituents.** See the full event description on [page 1](#); 6:30 p.m. refreshments, 7-8:30 p.m. program.

The remaining 2018-2019 LWV of Roseville Area events are on the event calendar on [page 7](#).

The Voter Article Submission Deadline

Submissions for the next issue of The Voter are due 10 days before the end of the month. If you have any questions or information to submit for the newsletter, contact Rachel Geiser at rachelsoup@gmail.com.

