

The Voter

*The official publication of the Minnesota League of Women Voters
Roseville, Maplewood, Falcon Heights and surrounding communities*

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Legislators, county commissioners, mayors invited to visit League members at 7 p.m. Jan. 21 at Falcon Heights City Hall.

Annual "Conversations with Constituents" Set for Wednesday, January 21

What are the issues facing the 2015 Legislature? Will the change in party leadership in the House affect ordinary citizens? What are the most pressing issues facing local governments?

Those questions and others will be the focus of RoMaFH's annual "Conversations with Constituents" meeting Jan. 21 at Falcon Heights City Hall, 2077 Larpenteur Ave. W., Falcon Heights.

Officials invited are: Sens. John Marty, Bev Scalze and Chuck Wiger; Reps. Peter Fischer, Alice Hausman, Jason Isaacson, and Leon Lillie; Ramsey County Commissioners Blake Huffman, Mary Jo McGuire, Victoria Reinhardt and Janice Rettman and Mayors Jeffrey Dains, Lauderdale, Peter Lindstrom, Falcon Heights, Dan Roe, Roseville and Nora Slawik, Maplewood.

The event will begin at 7 p.m. and conclude at 8:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served at 6:45 p.m.



We're on the Web!
www.romafh.org

And Facebook!
www.facebook.com/romafh.lwv

Be sure to bring a friend and a food shelf contribution to our January meeting!

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We must continue the fight for voting rights

Happy New Year!

The new year is a traditional time to look back at what happened during the last twelve months and to make plans for what will happen in the new year.

Fifty years ago — March 7, 1965 — hundreds of people were attacked as they attempted one of a series of marches from Selma to Montgomery to protest racial discrimination in voting. This event is considered to have contributed to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Fifty years ago—we'd like to think that something so long ago should be something to note in passing, but not something that is very relevant to issues today. But it is very relevant. The Voting Rights Act has been altered by Supreme Court decisions. The limitations on voting are more subtle than fifty years ago, but they are limitations, often meant to discourage or eliminate someone's right to vote.

So the need for LWV work in continuing to fight for voting rights goes on. Our fight to make our local, state and national communities fair and open goes on.

Each of us can contribute in some way. We can speak up in conversations with family and neighbors, we can write or call government officials at local, state and national levels. We can offer to help with our local LWV activities.

Let's help make this a great New Year!

The League is making democracy work

By Elizabeth McNamara, President

League of Women Voters of the United States

As 2014 comes to a close, the League of Women Voters is reflecting on the major successes we celebrated in Making Democracy Work® over the past year. From protecting voting rights to keeping money out of politics, we've made a big impact in strengthening our democracy. We're excited to celebrate our 95th anniversary in 2015 building on our accomplishments from 2014 -- and setting ambitious goals for the coming year.

Here's a sample of just some of the important work the League accomplished in 2014, and what lays ahead in 2015.

Educating Voters: In the lead-up to the midterm elections, Leagues across the country worked tirelessly to ensure voters had all the information they needed to vote. League volunteers registered tens of thousands of new voters, including the 400 Leagues in 48 states that registered voters on National Voter Registration Day. The League also had a successful youth voter registration effort, registering thousands of young voters in over 40 communities.

(Continued on page 7)

Post-racial? Not on Your Life

By Florence Sprague

Ever since the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 the term post-racial has been bandied about, as if the fact that this black candidate could not have been elected without support from some white voters meant that all racial biases and tensions went poof on that election night in 2008. Only in your wildest dreams. Our very American version of the social construct of race continues to permeate most aspects of our society and one doesn't have to look very far for the evidence.

No one can have missed the ongoing angst and protests triggered by the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri this summer. Do we all see eye to eye on this incident? Obviously not. We don't share an understanding of the underlying issues, attitudes and experiences that make one tragedy take on national significance.

Another topic that receives a lot of press is the educational achievement gap. Nationwide students of color graduate from high school at lower rates than white students, and Minnesota has one of the greatest disparities. ("Minneapolis gaps? Face the truth—it's racism" by Vina Kay, September 25, 2013).

Right out of the gate the child abuse case of football star Adrian Peterson is complicated by fame, football, advertising endorsements, and the expectation of being a "role model." It is also tangled up with the country's fraught racial history. ("Is Corporal Punishment Abuse? Why That's A Loaded Question" NPR Code switch blog, by Gene Demby, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/09/19/349668828/a-decision-about-your-children-thats-also-about-your-parents>).

Here is a sampling of headlines (from the Star Tribune unless otherwise noted) over the past couple of years (with a brief explanation if needed for clarity) showing some of the other fronts where race is still very much of an issue.

- "Black and white students aren't treated as equals" 9/23/14 (decrying differential disciplining of students).
- "White Privilege? Gag me" 9/17/14, followed by letter responses under "Does class matter more than race? No, not in reality" 9/20/14.
- "Study sees signs of redlining" 4/09/14 (minorities more likely to be turned down for a mortgage or refinancing).
- "U.S. Bank accused of bias" 10/01/14 (bank accused of discrimination in maintenance of foreclosed properties to the detriment of borrowers of color).
- "Parks go after diversity" 4/09/14 (Met Council looking into differential use of parks and differential investment into parks).
- "Good news on closing the gap: At this north Minneapolis high school, you'll find success-if you bother to look" (recognize those students who are succeeding) 10/06/14 paired that day with "For racial progress, we just need a 'eureka moment': The lasting lesson of a student and a teacher-and the irrelevance or unimportance of someone's skin color" (set consistent expectations for all students).

(Continued on page 4)



We've eliminated segregated drinking fountains, but we are a long way from eliminating discrimination.

Windows and Mirrors

(Continued from page 3)

- “Battling stereotypes is exhausting” by Tressie McMillan Cottom, Slate, 9/25/13 reprinted in Star Tribune
- “Most say race relations no better since 2008” 9/17/14 Minnesota Poll, second page headline “Poll finds race relations have stagnated since ‘08.”
- “Merrill Lynch settles discrimination lawsuit for \$160 million” 8/28/13 (suit claimed Merrill Lynch discriminated against 1,200 black financial advisors)

I have also read about differential access to health care and differential outcomes for medical treatment for different racial groups, different job opportunities, actions (or inactions) by child protection systems when children of color are involved, imbalance between racial and ethnic make-up of Minneapolis police and the community, higher unemployment rate for persons of color even when we boast of having one of the lowest post-recession unemployment rates in the country. Sometimes the news is upbeat (In Advertising a New Diversity Takes Root,” 4/3/14), too often it is not (“Does race affect child protection? There are reasons to believe it is so in Minnesota”, op-ed 10/20/14). Name a topic and there can be a racial facet and no matter where you get your news I expect that you can recall other places and ways in which you have observed that the American concept of race is still very much an issue.

The opening line to an Op-Ed piece written by Hennepin County Judge Kevin Burke and signed by seven other Hennepin County judges, at least of two of whom are persons of color, published 11/10/14 (<http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/281982511.html>) gives us a good place from which to start moving forward. “The first step toward recovery is to admit that you have a problem.” This essay, given the headline “On race and justice system, Minnesota is still in denial,” discusses the data in an ACLU study (ACLU: Blacks arrested more for minor crimes,” 10/29/14) the latest of a number of studies over many decades finding disparity in the justice system in Minnesota. As the judges note, “The justice system desperately needs the trust of the public.” They admit that the system needs work, partly as a result of the cumulative effect of seemingly small issues over many levels of bureaucracy, many parts of society and many years that become overwhelming. This means that “Without a systemic approach to the problem, gains in one area may be offset by reversals in another.” They acknowledge that “a lot of good police officers feel a bit

besieged” but that there are also “poor people feeling trapped and pleading guilty” even when not, because they just give up trying to deal with this system.

At the same time as there are systemic issues of fairness, the “public” perception about crime and race are inaccurate. An article by Charles M. Blow for the New York Times reports that a study by The Sentencing Project states that “white Americans overestimate the proportion of crime committed by people of color and associate people of color with criminality.” The article touches on many aspects of the race, crime, poverty, assumptions and stereotypes, abuse of power, opportunity or the lack thereof, and is worth reading in full; it so full of food for thought.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/01/opinion/charles-blow-crime-and-punishment.html?_r=0

There was an interesting op-ed piece “I’m angry, embarrassed, encouraged by Ferguson” by New Orleans Saints player Benjamin Watson looking at the many disparate emotions he feels in response to recent events. <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/284542131.html> While I cannot share his conclusion that Jesus is the solution to the problem, he pulls together many of the emotions swirling around our communities today.

So let’s admit it. We still have a problem in this country with interracial equity. It’s not about making white people feel guilty and defensive. It is about everyone working to develop better ways of doing things. An editorial cartoon I saw recently depicted two cliffs separated by a wide gulf. A black man stood on one cliff and a white man on the other, each with his back to the chasm. The caption read “and the national conversation on race continues...” Ouch! When the I35W bridge collapsed we looked for causes, designed a new bridge and rapidly rebuilt. When human relations collapse we move so much more slowly, but the need is just as great, if not greater. This takes a lot of listening. A lot. It takes identifying assumptions and letting go of preconceptions.

Forget the blame, work on the building.

I began this article some time ago, and when I returned to it so many things had expanded or even exploded, from the ongoing protests in and concerning Ferguson, MO, to the newer protests in and concerning Eric Garner in Staten Island, NYC, to the shooting of a 12 year old in Cleveland. People are publicly engaged to a degree not seen in years, and who knows what has happened since I wrote this piece. We are living in interesting times. Let’s hope and work so that real progress can be made. Make 2015 a truly Happy New Year!

Editor’s note: Florence Sprague is a RoMaFH member.



Brittany Clardy

Honoring Brittany's Place...

When you were a little girl, what did you want to be when you grew up? A teacher? A lawyer? A nurse? A doctor?

All little girls have dreams, but no one wants to grow up to be a prostitute. However, each month more than 200 Minnesota girls are victims of sex trafficking. And most are emotional slaves to the men who exploit them, according to Dr. Tamara Mattison, who spoke at RoMaFH's holiday celebration Dec. 7.

Mattison is the director of Brittany's Place: a Safe Harbor for Victims of Sex Trafficking, which was established this year to help those girls find their childhood again. The new Twin Cities shelter provides rehabilitation services from counseling to drug treatment for up to 14 girls, ages 10 to 17. The shelter also has a classroom, and works with school districts so that the victims can re-enter school.

Mattison and Stephanie Sims, communications associate of the new facility, were guests of the League at the holiday celebration, at the Little Venetian Restaurant in Little Canada. League members contributed more than \$550, plus clothes and toiletries to "Brittany's Place," which is named after 18-year-old Brittany Clardy. The young woman was found dead in the trunk of a car last year. Investigators suspect she was the victim of sex trafficking.

The organization is still looking for grants, donations and loans to cover operating costs. But officials said it was important to open the shelter by Aug. 1, when the state's new Safe Harbor Law went into effect.



Dr. Tamara Mattison



RoMaFH Board member Beth Salzl and her husband Dan at the holiday party

RoMaFH members contributed more than \$550 and gifts to Brittany's Place, a shelter for victims of sex-trafficking;

Planning for Parks:

What does the Met Council's new plan mean for the
Twin Cities' regional parks system?

Featuring panelists: Jonathan Vlaming of the **Three Rivers
Parks District**; John VonDeLinde, Division Manager of **Anoka
County Parks and Community Services**; Jan Youngquist,
Planning Analyst for the **Metropolitan Council**, and Raintry
Salk, Research Analyst for the **Metropolitan Council**.

Saturday, January 17, 2014

10:00am-12:00pm

Roseville Branch, Ramsey County Public Libraries
2180 North Hamline Ave., Roseville, MN



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, Council
of Metropolitan Area Leagues.

The League is making democracy work

(Continued from page 2)

The League was also instrumental in getting out the vote. Throughout 2014, nearly 1.5 million voters used the League's online elections resource, VOTE411.org, to find the information they needed to vote, including their polling place, and candidate and ballot information. Leagues also held



nearly 600 candidate events and handed out over a million postcards and fliers to help educate voters.

In 2015, we'll see the 2016 presidential cycle begin to ramp up and Leagues will continue to register new voters, particularly those in underrepresented communities as well as prepare for state and local elections occurring in 2015.

Voting Rights: This year, our supporters sent over 90,000 letters to Congress in support of the Voting Rights Amendment Act (VRAA), legislation to restore key provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. A repaired VRA will ensure that every American citizen, regardless of race or language, has equal access to the vote.

The League also remained critical to helping protect voting rights at the state level through legislative and judicial action. For example, the League of Women Voters of Missouri helped stop a discriminatory voter photo ID bill and a restrictive early voting constitutional amendment, while the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania was instrumental in thwarting a state voter photo ID law. Meanwhile, the League of Women Voters of Minnesota helped pass online voter registration thereby expanding the voter registration process for Minnesotans.

The League will continue to push back against bad legislation that attempts to prevent voters from having access to the polls, and we're looking forward to more successes expanding fair and equal access to the electoral process in 2015!

Environmental Defense: In 2014, our supporters sent nearly 100,000 comments on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Power Plan in support of critical measures to protect our planet and public health by limiting carbon pollution from power plants. In 2015, we'll continue to #actonclimate as the EPA finalizes these critical regulations by helping implement the process at the state level and defend the regulations in the face of opposition in Congress.

Money in Politics: This year, we continued to work at all levels of government to ensure that citizen participation in the political process is not drowned out by special interests and big money donors because dark money has no place in our elections. So far, we've sent 15,000 comments to the Federal Election Commission in hopes of reducing the influence money has on our elections.

In 2015, we have our eyes on the DISCLOSE Act, critical legislation that would ensure that voters know the identity of donors who have secretly financed campaign expenditures in federal elections. We'll also closely monitor other legislation that defines coordination between candidates and outside spending groups, including Super PACs, in order to limit the big money flowing into our elections. And we'll continue to provide comments to the IRS as it re-drafts a proposal that defines election activities.

As we head into our 95th year, the League will remain active in strengthening our democracy. We're committed to stepping up our work to register more new voters and help all eligible voters participate in our electoral process. We'll also keep pushing for necessary legislation and regulations at the state and federal levels to protect our planet for future generations, keep secret money out of our elections and ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible.

Follow Elisabeth MacNamara on Twitter: www.twitter.com/lwv



**League of Women
Voters, Roseville,
Maplewood, Falcon
Heights**

**Judy Berglund, editor
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Calendar

January 2015

21 “Conversations with Constituents”, 7 p.m, Falcon Heights City Hall, 2077 Larpenteur Ave.

28 Board Meeting

February 2015

17-18 Unit Meetings Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire will focus on Ramsey County planning

25 Board meeting



The Roseville-Maplewood-Falcon Heights chapter of the League of Women Voters offers members the choice of evening or morning meetings, called “unit meetings” in February, March and April of 2015. Evening meetings are on the third Tuesday of the month at Little Venetian Restaurant, 2900 Rice Street, Little Canada. A social hour and dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by a meeting at 7 p.m. Day unit meetings begin at 9:30 a.m. at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, 910 W. County Rd. D, Roseville.

League Board meetings are at 7 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise noted, at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, 910 W. County Rd. D, Roseville.