



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF  
ROSEVILLE, MAPLEWOOD, FALCON HEIGHTS  
Also known as LWV ROMAFH**

***League of Women Voters Roseville, Maplewood, Falcon Heights Story – Historical***

A fact sheet in our historical files credits the "Guiding Angel" from the Minnesota League of Women office, Miss Hope Washburn, who came to set up the Roseville Provisional League in 1953. Many of the women present at the first meeting of what became our RoMaFH League had been members of the St. Paul League of Women Voters. These members "felt strongly that the local situation was worthy of their attention, and that they could better serve their community through the organization of a Roseville league." The first meeting set up three units with 23 members. The official organizing meeting, where bylaws and a budget were adopted and officers elected, was held June 3, 1953 at the Lexington School. Initial activities included a forum on "sewerage and drainage", and teaching residents on the use of voting machine operation in anticipation of the purchase of voting machines by the Roseville City Council. Women were known by their husband's name, and all articles about our members generally had some comment about "indulgent" husbands who "allowed" them to participate.

***RoMaFH – Current***

RoMaFH continues to follow the tradition of the original organization as well as the National League of Women Voters. Membership is open to both women and men who ascribe to the principles of the League of Women Voters to provide for informed and active participation of citizens in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Many of our members have served or are currently serving on school boards and commissions, city councils and committees, and at county and state elective office. Information on current activities of our league are available at our website at League of Women Voters Roseville, Maplewood, Falcon Heights.org and the VOTER newsletter which is sent to members and available on the website as well. The website also contains pertinent information about the organization including bylaws, officers, directors, committee members, and position statements.



***OPPORTUNITIES***

RoMaFH League of Women Voters is a multilevel organization. Most members join at a local league and discover that membership includes at least three levels - local, state and national. In the Twin Cities metropolitan area there is a fourth level, the Council of Metropolitan Area League of Women Voters (CMAL.) It studies regional issues and monitors the Metropolitan Council. A few members join as national or state members-at-large when no local league is available but they want to support the work of the League of Women Voters.

League of Women Voters at the local level offers many ways to be involved. You might observe a local public meeting, help to put on a candidate event, donate money for a project, serve on a study committee, or learn to lobby the state legislature. We are delighted to have your support and your help in whatever way you can give it. Our advice is to take time to observe, to listen, and to try out possibilities and projects that fit your interests and your life. There is as much to learn and to do as you have the time and interest to give.

### ***Non-partisan Position***

The League of Women Voters offers an opportunity to get involved in policy issues without taking a partisan position. The League of Women Voters encourages open discussion, respect for the right to disagree, and the use of information that looks at an issue from as many perspectives as possible. As you attend meetings join in with your own questions and comments. Consensus is a process of finding the areas in which we do agree — it is seldom that we agree on everything. The material that follows is intended to give you a deeper look at this unique, multi-level organization you have joined. You might want to skim through it now and come back to it as you learn more or have questions. Always feel free to ask — your local members and board, the state board and office, and even the national board and office. This is a grassroots organization and you are the roots, our most valued resource.

## **The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS)**



### ***The STORY***

The League of Women Voters was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920 during the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The convention was held just six months before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote after a 72-year struggle.

The League of Women Voters began as a "mighty political experiment" designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters. It encouraged them to use their new power to participate in shaping public policy. From the beginning, the League of Women Voters was an activist, grassroots organization whose leaders believed that citizens should play a critical role in advocacy. It was then, and is now, a nonpartisan organization. League of Women Voters founders believed that maintaining a nonpartisan stance would protect the fledgling organization from becoming mired in the party politics of the day. However, League of Women Voters members were encouraged to be political themselves, by educating citizens about, and lobbying for, government and social reform legislation.

It wasn't until the 1946 convention that the name was changed to the League of Women Voters of the United States to emphasize the shift from being a federation of state leagues to being a member-based organization. That made members of local leagues members of the state and national levels as well.

The decision to be political - advocate for change on selected issues – but nonpartisan - not to support or oppose political parties or candidates for office - was made at the very beginning. Those

women believed (as the League of Women Voters still does) that without belonging to the same political party thoughtful citizens might unite around legislation in the public interest.

Today, LWV is concerned with political education and action on a wide variety of local, state, national and international issues, including governmental reform, natural resources, social policy, and international relations.

### ***Mission:***

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

### ***Principles:***

- The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.
- The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.
- The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.
- The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation; promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest; share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare; promote a sound economy; and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.
- The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**



### ***Boards***

At each level the League of Women Voters has officers and a board of directors elected by the members at an annual meeting or convention. The boards provide leadership for carrying out member decisions and are ultimately responsible for the finances, activities and projects of their

league. How the board is organized varies among leagues. Some assign specific duties to each member and others divide the tasks among committees.

### ***Conventions, Councils and Annual Meetings***

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization, which means that members have a voice in decisions at every level. Members elect the board and officers, decide what to study, approve a budget and bylaws, and give general direction to plans for the coming year (s). Any member may attend state and national conventions and may serve as a voting delegate if given that responsibility by their league. The number of delegates is proportional to the size of the individual leagues. The LWVUS Convention is held in even years. It meets alternately in Washington D.C. and other cities around the country. The LWVMN Convention is held in odd years at various locations around the state. The state and national leagues also have meetings (councils) in the year between conventions. Local leagues hold annual meetings in the spring to make the decisions referred to above. Every member is encouraged to attend and entitled to vote.

### ***REGULAR MEETINGS***

- Unit or discussion meetings at which the members discuss issues being studied or local topics of interest. If the League of Women Voters is large enough they may meet in small groups called units.
- General meetings are designed to include all members of the local league and often members of the public interested in the subject of that meeting.
- Board meetings are held on a regular basis. Many local boards meet monthly. The Minnesota Board of Women Voters meets at least six times a year. The National Board of the League of Women Voters meets quarterly.

### ***Focus Meetings/ Workshops/Conferences***

Any level of the League of Women Voters may hold meetings on a wide range of topics including background information for a study, preparation for legislative action, preparation for voter service projects, or background information for a regional project.

### ***Education Fund***

Raising the money to finance projects and services is a common problem in volunteer organizations. The national and state leagues as well as a few large city leagues have established League of Women Voters Education Funds with a 501C.3 tax status. That status enables a league to raise tax deductible money from individuals and foundations for nonpartisan projects that educate the public without referring to our advocacy positions. The Minnesota League of Women Voters is itself is a 501C.4 non-profit membership organization. Dues are not tax deductible.

For the Minnesota League of Women Voters the same directors serve on both the regular and the education fund boards but there are separate meetings, minutes and books.

# LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA WOMEN VOTERS ACTIVITIES



## ***Study***

Leagues at every level vote on suggested topics to study and establish a committee to carry out the research. Members receive the collected information, meet to discuss it and arrive at a consensus of opinion about the topic.

## ***Advocacy***

When a position is reached on an issue as the result of study, the local league may take action to change or enact laws that reflect their position. This action may involve monitoring compliance with a law, observing public meetings, lobbying at the local, state or national level, writing letters to the editor or to public officials, or working to draft legislation. While this effort is political in the sense that it seeks to affect the outcome of legislation or policy, it is nonpartisan because it is based on our positions not on party affiliation.

## ***Education***

The League of Women Voters hold nonpartisan informational public meetings either to advocate for a position on an issue or to provide balanced information to others with the understanding that they will use that information to make their own decisions. Our purpose for holding a meeting must be clear to ourselves and to the public. The former is action. The latter is citizen education and may be funded with tax deductible donations through an established Education Fund.

## ***Voter service***

Leagues of Women Voters at every level provide nonpartisan information on the election process, voter registration and on candidates through forums and voter guides. This is probably the service for which the League of Women Voters is best known.

## ***Citizen Education***

Projects may include informational public meetings as described above, distribution of published League of Women Voters studies on an issue such as the selection of judges, and workshops and information on how to work with the legislature or how to run for office. Such projects may use Education Fund money as long as they do not give League of Women Voters positions.

## ***Newsletter/Voter***

All levels of the League of Women Voters provide every member with information via periodic newsletters most often called the *Voter*.

## **“PROGRAM”**

Every organization has a few words that it uses in a special way. The word “*program*” is one of those for the League of Women Voters. Program means the issues chosen by the members at any level for study and for action. It includes the positions that have been taken on issues over the years. Since some of these positions are many years old, they must be re-examined every two years and changed dropped or accepted by current members. Program at the state level is adopted through a series of steps that include the local leagues, the State Board, and finally delegates to the biennial state convention.

## ***LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS POSITIONS***

The process of study and consensus to arrive at a league position is fairly unique. When a new study is adopted, a research committee gathers information for League of Women Voters members to use as they consider the issue. Material is chosen to reflect as many sides of the issue as possible. It is often presented in a publication that explores both the facts and the possible consequences of acting or not acting to address the issue. Consensus is a sense of general and widespread agreement on an issue. Local league members weigh the pros and cons of various positions on that issue with the help of a discussion guide. The State Board of Women Voters receives the consensus reports from the local leagues, determines areas of agreement, and formulates position statements. Only after consensus is reached and a position is written can the League of Women Voters take action.

## ***ACTION ON POSITIONS***

To ensure consistency - that we speak with one voice - individual members speak only for themselves unless they have been designated to speak for the League of Women Voters by their local, state, or national board. This may consist of writing letters, lobbying, giving testimony, holding press conferences, monitoring, observing, working to help draft legislation, or any other measure approved by the board. The president is the official spokesperson at every level. Local leagues may take action if that action is consistent with a local, state or national position; their membership is informed and in general agreement; and if other leagues which may be affected by that action are notified ahead of time. The State Board takes official action in the name of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota as the League of Women Voters National Board does on national positions.

## ***LOBBYING WITH NONPARTISANSHIP***

The mission of the League of Women Voters is both political and nonpartisan. It encourages the informed and active participation of all citizens in government. It studies and takes action on selected government issues without regard to political party. The League of Women Voters encourages members as individuals to be active in the political party of their choice, but as an organization does not support political parties or candidates for public office at any level including those who are our own members. Highly visible board members such as the president and voter service chair are restricted to low-level partisan political activities and may not run for party-designated public office.

## **IMPORTANT LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TERMS**

### ***Call to Action***

A plea to all members to participate in a concerted effort to implement a League of Women Voters position by writing, calling or e-mailing elected officials to request a specific vote on legislation.

### ***Concurrence***

Concurrence is a method of reaching a position by concurring or agreeing with a statement or position of another League of Women Voters or of a study committee.

### ***Consensus***

The process used to reach member agreement on an issue that has been studied. It refers to a sense of the group that may be less than unanimity but more than a simple majority.

## ***League of Women Voters Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues***

An inter-League of Women Voters organization composed of local leagues in the seven county metropolitan areas of the Twin Cities. It follows the Metropolitan Council and deals with issues of regional significance.

### ***Lobbyist***

A Lobbyist is a volunteer League of Women Voters member who promotes League of Women Voters positions at some level of government with the approval of the appropriate board.

### ***Observer***

An observer is a League of Women Voters member who attends meetings of a government body in order to report on the processes used and the issues on the agenda.

### ***Per Member Payment (PMP)***

PMP is the monetary support (dues) for the League of Women Voters at the national and state levels in an amount determined by members at the biennial conventions of the League of Women Voters.

## ***LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS RESOURCES***



League of Women Voters of Roseville, Maplewood, Falcon Heights Co-Presidents 2010-2011: Anne Cleland 651-490-5038 anncleland@juno.com Karen Schaffer 651-636-7065 Ksb285171@yahoo.com Website: romafh.org	League of Women Voters of Minnesota 550 Rice Street St. Paul Minnesota 55103 Phone: (651) 224-5445 E-mail form available on MNLWV website LWVMN Web site: lwvmn.org	League of Women Voters of the United States 1730 M Street NW Washington D.C. 20036-4508 Phone: 1-202-429-1965 Email form available at the website Web site: www.lwv.org
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