

League Membership 101

Congratulations! You have chosen to be a member of one of the premier citizen action groups in the country. The following will help you to understand how League functions and your role in it.

- League is a multilevel organization. Most members join a local League and thereby are also members of their state League and of the LWVUS. Members joining at the state or national level are assigned to a local League if there is one in their area. If none exists, they become Members At Large of the appropriate state League.
 - Each level of League has a board of directors, a budget, and most state Leagues and the LWVUS have offices with some part or full time staff.
 - Each level of League has positions reached by member consensus and an advocacy agenda.
 - Local Leagues can act only on local issues but may use state or U.S. positions to do so.
 - Dues paid to a local League include a Per Member Payment (PMP) owed to both the state and the national Leagues. It is the responsibility of the local League treasurer to update the membership information at each of the other levels and to pay the assessed PMP based on the reported local membership count.
 - Most local Leagues hold fund raising events to fund their operations. Donations to fund educational activities may be made to the LWV Ed Fund and are tax deductible. Donations made to fund general League activities are not tax deductible

League Membership 101

because of the advocacy actions of the League.

- The League is nonpartisan; we do not support or oppose candidates.
 - Board members never run for elected office.
 - Board Presidents and Voter Service/Education directors do not participate in any activity that would indicate support of any candidate.
- The League supports issues and legislation after member study and agreement.
 - Consensus* : general membership agreement on a position after study.
 - Concurrence* : agreement with recommendations of a resource committee or another League, decision statements formulated by another League(s).
 - Program* : issues members select to study and on which to take action. There is a separate program for each level of League. Program is multi issued and runs from year to year after approval at the annual business meeting.
 - Action* : member activity that encourages the support or opposition of legislation. Action can take place on all three levels of League organization.
 - *Speak with one voice.* Only the President makes a public statement in the name of League. Media interviews, letters to the editor, op ed articles dealing with League positions or business are done only with the President's permission. It is important that the board(s) set priorities for action based on positions.

League Membership 101

- The League mobilizes people to vote and to have a say in the complex decisions that affect us all.
 - Candidate Forums* : a League sponsored question and answer session at which all candidates for an office are invited to participate.
 - Voter Guides* : print or electronic publications in which all candidates are invited to respond to specific issue questions.
 - They Represent You* : print or electronic publication listed all elected officials in an area, their contact information, terms of office, salary.
- The League is a grassroots organization. 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 directions to plans for the coming year(s). Any member may attend state and/or 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 League.
 - The LWVUS Convention is held in even years and meets alternately in Washington D.C. and other cities around the country.
 - State conventions are held in odd years at various locations around the state.
 - Local Leagues hold annual meetings in the spring to make the decisions listed above.
 - Local Leagues also meet in the winter to give suggestions for state or national program depending on

League Membership 101

whether it is an even or odd year. This is the opportunity for local members to suggest studies and action to both of the other levels of League.

WHAT THE LEAGUE DOES.

Study

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

Advocate

After a position is reached on an issue as result of a study, the League may take action to change or enact laws that reflect that position. This action may include:

- monitoring compliance with a law
- writing letters to the editor or elected official, or contacting them by e-mail
- testifying at a committee meeting
- joining or forming a coalition
- joining or initiating court action

While the effort is political in 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.

Observes

League observers attend meetings of public bodies and monitor how the laws and policies are being carried out. The observer does not speak at these meetings but reports back to the League membership.

League Membership 101

Educate

Leagues hold nonpartisan informational public meetings either to advocate for a position on an issue or to provide balanced information to others with the understanding they will use that information to make their own decision.

Voter Service

Leagues provide nonpartisan information on the election process, voter registration and on candidates through forums, voter guides and web pages.

Citizen Education

This includes informational public meetings, distribution of published League materials on an issue, workshops, and publications on how local, state and national government operates. Such projects may use Ed Funds as long as they don't give League positions.

Inform

All levels of the League provide every member with information via periodic newsletters/magazines, electronic newsletters and electronic listservs.

You will find more information for League members at our national and state websites:

www.lwv.org
www.lwvsc.org

League of Women Voters

Membership 101



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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

803.251.2726
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