



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA**

**POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES**

AUGUST 26, 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION AND MISSION

“Citizen education” is the foundation for the formation of the League of Women Voters. When the 19th Amendment, which gave women the vote, was ratified in 1920, the League was formed to educate “women”—and now, all citizens—on candidates and issues.

The League is a multi-level organization of local, regional, state and national leagues designed to interact with the appropriate level of government. League program encompasses all levels. Each member is a member of every level of League. These levels of League and interacting local Leagues are interdependent; the efforts and/or activities of one should not be at the expense of another but should strengthen the whole.

League Basics, published by The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), should be considered the basis for this document. This *Policies and Procedures* document applies specifically to the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) and its Education Fund. *Policies and Procedures* should be reviewed periodically.

League of Women Voters Mission Statement

(From LWV.org website 7/2/2012)

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Vision, Beliefs and Intentions

The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.

The League of Women Voters of the United States is a nonpartisan political membership organization, which:

- **acts** after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all government levels.
- **builds** citizen participation in the democratic process.
- **engages** communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters Education Fund is a nonpartisan public policy educational organization, which:

- **builds** citizen participation in the democratic process.
- **studies** key community issues at all government levels in an unbiased manner.
- **enables** people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and conflict management.

We believe in:

- respect for individuals.
- the value of diversity.
- the empowerment of the grassroots, both within the League and in communities.
- the power of collective decision making for the common good.

We will:

- act with trust, integrity, and professionalism.
- operate in an open and effective manner to meet the needs of those we serve, both members and the public.
- take the initiative in seeking diversity in membership.
- acknowledge our heritage as we seek our path to the future.

Core Values:

- We are a nonpartisan political membership organization.
- We believe that grassroots initiatives and consensus building are the strengths of our organization.
- We believe that our organization models the principles of good governance.
- We consider well before taking action and prepare well before beginning to act.
- We believe that citizenship requires knowledge, as well as the ability and will to act.
- We believe that the responsibility of good government rests on the shoulders of its citizens.
- We believe that the rights of citizens at home and abroad are interdependent

2. BYLAWS

This Policies and Procedures should be used in conjunction with the LWVFA and LWVFA Education Fund Bylaws.

3. NONPARTISAN AND DIVERSE

LWVFA Nonpartisan Policy

(Approved 8/15/2012)

The purpose of the League of Women Voters is to promote informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues. The League of Women Voters is nonpartisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. However, it does take action on public issues based on positions reached by member agreement.

While the League urges its members to be politically active as individuals, Board members' activities must be limited to preserve the League's nonpartisan position. Only to the extent that the public and its elected officials are convinced of the League's genuine nonpartisanship will the League be able to render effective voters service and gain a wide base of support for its positions on governmental issues.

All members are expected to keep their League activity and their political activity, both partisan and nonpartisan, completely separate and distinct. For example, at League sponsored activities and meetings, members may not discuss partisan political matters, distribute partisan information or petitions, or display campaign buttons or insignia for a candidate or a political party. They should not display League bumper stickers or signs along side those for partisan political candidates. A Board member shall not indicate her/his political affiliations or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, including on social networking sites or other public venues that also prominently identify her/him as a member of the Board.

The LWVFA shall not elect or appoint to the Board any member who has, within the prior six-month period, held or run for an elective political office. Board members shall not run for or hold an elective political office. Any member who declares for such an office must resign from the Board. Public notices released by the League announcing the resignation of a Board member to run for political office should be carefully worded to avoid the appearance of endorsing the resigning Board member's candidacy.

No Board member may participate in political activity if it would cause them to be identified publicly as supporting any candidate for public office or any political party. These restrictions also apply to off-board directors and committee chairs who regularly testify on behalf of the League. They may attend informational political meetings and campaign/party events in a non-leadership capacity; make financial contributions in an inconspicuous way; perform administrative or clerical work in a campaign office; attend nominating meetings in the absence of primaries; and serve as election officials. Board members may not hold an official position in any party organization, or in an organization whose purpose is to endorse candidates for political office; chair or administer fundraising or political campaigns; chair campaign events; sign political endorsement ads or write candidate support letters to be published in the local press; or work in a conspicuous way in the campaign of a candidate.

A Board member may serve on any public board, commission, committee, or coalition; however, that Board member does not represent the League unless officially designated as the League representative by the Board.

A Board member may not speak or, in any public way, work against a League position.

The political activities of a spouse or relative of a Board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member. Board members who have any doubts about appropriate activities should request a decision from the Board at its next meeting.

The incoming Board shall review this policy annually.

LWVFA Diversity Policy

(approved 8/15/2012)

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, in both its values and practices, is committed to inclusion and diversity. This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

We recognize that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. We believe inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs. We affirm our commitment to reflect the diversity of the Fairfax area in our board and programs.

4. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This section should be viewed in conjunction with the Bylaws.

President

The term “president” shall refer to the president or co-presidents.

Vice Presidents

At the first meeting of the Board, two vice presidents are selected from the elected directors. In the event the president is unable to perform the duties of that office, the vice presidents, in the order of their rank, will fulfill the duties of that office as long as required. The Board should keep this in mind when electing vice presidents. Other primary considerations should be a balance of League experience, program knowledge, and familiarity with action efforts to assure an adequate representation of the totality of League.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the president, two vice presidents, secretary and treasurer. Other Board members or committee chairs shall participate when the subject pertains to their portfolios. The executive committee is empowered to meet on a regular basis at a time and place to be determined by the members of the committee. It is empowered to exercise the powers and duties of the Board in an emergency situation provided that a majority of the committee concurs, and provided that a report of such emergency action is presented to the full Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Executive Committee is also empowered to act as an administrative committee to discuss issues of general importance to the operations. Any recommendations for action resulting from this function must then be brought to the full Board for approval. If time does not allow for a scheduled meeting, the committee may conduct its business by telephone or any other electronic means available.

Board Member Responsibilities

The Board, in general, is responsible for the smooth functioning of the organization and its relationships with other Leagues. Specifically, the Board:

- Makes all policy decisions.
- Coordinates League activities.
- Carries out the Bylaws.
- Establishes the annual calendar.
- Approves consensus questions on LWVFA studies and determines consensus and local positions based on membership responses.
- Reviews and accepts reports of unit information meetings when no consensus or concurrence is sought.
- Determines whether requests for concurrence will be considered and acted upon.
- Reviews and approves the proposed budget for presentation to the Annual Meeting and approves expenditures that are in excess of budgeted amounts.
- Determines action and lobbying activities to be taken in support of established positions and principles.
- Approves Voters Service programs and activities.
- Appoints official representatives to citizen advisory committees, external *ad hoc* committees, task forces, boards, commissions, observers, etc.
- Makes procedural decisions when they:
 1. Set a precedent,
 2. Have League-wide implications,
 3. Affect the League's public image,
 4. Have significant budgetary involvement.
- Performs other functions deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Each Board member is responsible for:
 1. Preparing for, attending and participating at all Board meetings;
 2. Carrying out the duties and coordinating all activities of their portfolio;
 3. Updating their job description;
 4. Being alert to and meeting all deadlines for the *Fairfax VOTER*;
 5. Attending unit meetings and explaining League positions and policy when needed;
 6. Encouraging member involvement to develop future leadership;
 7. Being familiar with League principles, positions, policies and procedures;
 8. Assisting to the extent possible in carrying out overall Board responsibilities and projects, such as, but not limited to, public events hosted by the League, member orientations, voters service activities, public relations, distribution of League information and publications, special and *ad hoc* committees, etc.
 9. Carrying out such other functions as requested by the president or directed by the Board.

Board Routines

- Meetings are usually held once each month. An additional meeting is held for the Management and Budget Office presentation of the Fairfax County budget.
- League members who wish to present business to the Board should ask to be included on the agenda and send information to the Board in advance of the meeting. The monthly Board package should include an agenda, proposals, consensus/concurrence questions and background materials to be considered at the meeting, minutes of the previous meeting, and a report of any executive committee decisions. The Board package should be distributed to Board members reasonably prior to the meeting.
- Board members should inform the office of their vacation dates.
- All members are welcome to attend Board meetings.
- In case of inclement weather, the president will decide if the Board meeting will be held or rescheduled for the following week.

Selection of Convention Delegates

All members should be provided with early notice of convention dates and given an opportunity to volunteer as a delegate.

Criteria for Selection:

- The president should head the delegation.
- Prime consideration should be given to the convention agenda and activity related to it. Consideration should be given to including members with expertise in convention lobbying and/or a subject that will be at issue at the convention.
- Consideration should also be given to those who show potential for future leadership.

LWVFA will provide for delegates as much of the official expenses as the budget will allow.

Interaction with Other Levels of League

- LWVUS, LWV-VA, and LWNCA have policies and procedures with which Board members need to be familiar and comply.
- Items which may need be sent to other levels may include Board minutes, bylaws updates, policies and procedures updates, *Fairfax VOTER*, LWVFA Update, publications, membership changes and counts, changes in local program, changes in officers and directors, budget, media coverage, and action at other levels of League.
- Local League liaisons can be appointed to next higher League levels (i.e., LWVFA appoints a liaison to LWNCA) to attend Board meetings and serve as a communication interface.
- At the national and state levels of League, liaisons are appointed to the next lower level. LWVUS appoints Board members to serve as liaisons to each state Board and that person is included in all communications from the state League to LWVUS, such as the state Board mailing list. LWV-VA appoints state Board members to serve as liaisons to each local League and that person is included on all local Board mailing lists and in all communications from the local League to the state League.
- If communication affects levels of League other than the local League, the liaison and appropriate level officer or Board member should be “copied” (i.e., if LWVFA has an issue about a statewide program or legislation, the state Board member who is LWVFA’s liaison, the LWV-VA Board member under whose portfolio the issue falls and the regional – LWNCA – Board member and/or LWNCA liaison should be included in the communication).

Coalitions

The decision to join a coalition must be a Board decision. The goals of the coalition must be clearly stated and compatible with the League positions, purpose and policy. Before joining a coalition, the Board needs to consider the partisan activities of the potential partners. The Board should receive periodic reports on the coalition’s activities. LWVUS and LWV-VA participation in coalitions will not necessarily obligate LWVFA to be active in those coalitions unless approved by the Board. Coalition membership(s) should be reviewed periodically. The following guidelines apply:

- An LWVFA representative attends meetings and is involved in decisions.
- The League name or logo may not be used without the express permission of the League president.
- Coalition action using the League name, such as press releases, letters, litigation, lobbying and other public expressions of positions, **must receive the approval of the president.**

Official Boards and Commissions

The Board should consider the following guidelines for League representatives on citizen advisory committees and external *ad hoc* committees, task forces, boards, commissions and other bodies.

- Appointees should be as knowledgeable as possible about League positions and, when possible, should act in support of them.
- When topics under discussion are not covered by League positions, the representative should use good judgment, keeping in mind the principles of the League.
- The representative should be aware that, although he/she is officially representing LWVFA on that advisory committee, this does not imply League endorsement of any action taken or report issued by the committee.
- An annual general summary, or final report, of the committee's activities should be submitted to the LWVFA President.
- If issues arise in which official action would be appropriate, the representative should take the initiative to inform the LWVFA Action Director and/or President.

Contracts/Projects

A contract/project may be undertaken if it is consistent with the League's positions, principles or purposes. The Board should consider the following criteria before determining whether to participate:

- It enhances community understanding of the League's mission, attracts new members, or increases community support.
- It is not likely to subject the League to potential legal action for breach of contract.
- The League has the resources to participate including funds, expertise and volunteers.
- It can be accomplished within a reasonable time without hampering normal commitments to League program, organization or voters service.
- The League retains sufficient control over the contract/project activity.
- It would allow the League the option or freedom to use material and results for its own purposes, but would not commit the League to supporting the results or conclusions.

Every League commitment with an outside group should be formalized, within a reasonable time, in a written agreement or contract. For simple, one-time, or limited arrangements, this may mean only formalization in a letter. Education Fund projects must satisfy Education Fund requirements.

Contract/project agreements should:

- Clearly define the project and the timeframe.
- Clearly define League member responsibilities, including research, formulation of materials, assessing results, and publicity.
- Clearly define who is responsible for materials, facilities needed and any equipment to be used.
- Clearly provide for basic expenses incurred, such as postage, transportation, parking and other fees, office space and equipment, and publications. Define any limitations. Expenses should be based on a currently acceptable public standard.
- Clearly define whether or not the activity is one for which the League as an organization will expect remuneration and in what form; i.e., contribution, honorarium, expenses plus, etc.
- Provide for recognition of League efforts on all publications.
- Stipulate that no wording in materials prepared by the League should be changed without prior League approval.
- State that full cooperation of contractor's staff and access to all information necessary for completion of the project is expected.

5. MONEY MATTERS

Except where noted, the following policies and procedures cover both LWVFA and its Education Fund.

Budget

A Board-appointed committee must propose an annual budget and submit it to the Board. Once approved by the Board, the proposed budget is submitted to the membership for approval at the annual meeting. The by-laws provide guidance on the appointment of the committee.

- The proposed budget may be provided to the membership electronically or in print.
- Each portfolio should be budgeted an annual amount for its use.
- The General Fund budget must provide for an available reserve approximately equal to at least two months' operating expenses.

Financial Matters

Monies earmarked for the Education Fund are kept entirely separate from general funds. They may be used only for appropriate activities as specified by the Internal Revenue Service for 501(c)(3) educational organizations. These would normally include citizen education and voters service activities, and not lobbying.

LWVFA-EF has filed an IRS 501(h) election form that allows limited expenditures from the Education Fund to influence legislation, however, it is the policy of the LWVFA that education fund monies may not be used for this purpose.

Board approval is required for the expenditure of monies except when the amount is included in the current approved budget.

The Board is required to provide and exercise adequate internal controls to safeguard the organization's funds, especially in the absence of a separation of financial responsibilities. To this end, a board member designated by the president and who is not a signatory on the accounts must verify the consistency of the treasurer's reports with the bank statements and other underlying documentation at the time each quarterly Treasurer's report is presented to the Board.

Each board member and committee chair is responsible for:

- Keeping an accurate record of expenses incurred in carrying out yearly activities including committee members' expenses.
- Providing the budget committee with anticipated expenses for the current and following year for use in preparation of the proposed budget for the ensuing year.
- Submitting vouchers with receipts to the treasurer, noting which fund and portfolio should be charged.
- Accounting for all expenses, whether the member is asking for a reimbursement or considering it a donation.
- Discussing with the treasurer any proposal that costs more than \$100.00 or exceeds the budget allotment before submission to the board for approval.
- Consulting with the treasurer, prior to conducting a League activity, regarding its tax implications and financial requirements.
- Coordinating with the Development or Finance Director any proposal to solicit funds from or to sell League products to outside organizations in order to prevent duplication of effort or dual solicitation.

Memorial Funds: Unless specifically voted otherwise by the Board, all donations received in memory of or to honor League members will be placed in a general memorial fund and used to support specific Education Fund activities as determined by the Board. Donors will receive acknowledgement of their contributions. Honorees and families of those being memorialized will be sent notification of the donations.

Legacy Committee

The Legacy Committee oversees the assets that comprise the endowment fund. The Committee operates under a charter approved by the Board. Committee members are appointed by the Board and the committee reports to the Board on a quarterly basis. Its primary responsibility is to establish guidelines for and to carry out decisions regarding the investment policy for the endowment fund.

Development

The Board is responsible for organizing and coordinating development activities. This includes all finance drives, solicitation from members and/or the community, sales of products or the sponsorship of special events. The League is best served by undesignated contributions to its General Fund or to the Education Fund.

The following recommendations deal with those contributions that are earmarked as funds for specific purposes.

- All proposals for outside funding or grants for specific projects must have the approval of the Board.
- When contributions are received for educational publications, the following rules apply:
 1. The contributions must be acknowledged on the publication.
 2. LWVFA controls the content of all League publications.
 3. All contributors of earmarked funds/services must be informed in writing of these policies.

External Fundraising:

Board needs to authorize an individual to solicit from the business community or non-League members.

Internal Fundraising:

Units are asked to schedule a yearly fundraiser for the benefit of the LWVFA. Individual League members are encouraged to contribute to the League. A coordinated effort to raise money from League members needs to be authorized by the Board.

Community/Condominium Elections

Community/condominium elections represent a substantial portion of LWVFA's annual revenue and member volunteer participation. The Board, with the elections coordinator, shall evaluate such factors as budget, calendar, time commitments and available personnel before deciding to conduct any or all of these projects. Elections must follow League guidelines.

- A League-prepared agreement shall be signed by the LWVFA president and an authorized representative of the organization holding the election before starting the election process.
- Election directors must clearly understand their duties as specified in the agreement, the scope of responsibility and their job descriptions.
- The Board should be kept informed of the status of each project by the elections coordinator.
- If the contribution is not received in a timely manner, the election coordinator should follow up.

6. MEMBERSHIP

All League members are encouraged to actively recruit new members.

- The membership year is July 1 – June 30.
 - New members who join the League after January 31 are entitled to membership from the time of payment of the full dues amount until June 30 of the following year.
 - Dues paid by current members at or after the Annual Meeting will be for the full amount established for the next fiscal year and will lapse June 30 of the following year.
 - A subsidy fund is available to anyone who is unable to pay full dues, and a statement to that effect is published in the *Fairfax VOTER*.

Meetings

Distribution of brochures or circulation of petitions at any meeting requires the explicit prior approval of the president.

Annual Meeting

- An annual meeting shall be held in compliance with the Bylaws. Following the annual meeting, a report will be made to the membership in the *Fairfax VOTER*.
- All Board members and committee and administrative chairs are expected to attend the annual meeting.
- Minutes of the annual meeting will be taken by the secretary. They will be given within thirty (30) days to a reading committee (composed of three persons selected by the president) which will recommend their approval to the Board no later than the Board meeting two months after the annual meeting.

General Meetings

- General meetings may be called by the Board in compliance with the Bylaws.

Briefing/Unit Meetings

Members meet in small, geographically based groups called units. The discussion leaders and program resource members meet first at a unit meeting called the briefing that is open to all members. Unit meetings are to be held monthly, from September through June, except when they are superseded by a meeting or other function approved by the Board.

- Board members are to coordinate their input for unit meetings with the unit coordinator. The unit coordinator will transmit this information to the units.
- The business portion is to be conducted at the beginning of the unit meeting and limited to one-half hour, if possible.
- Detailed information on the role of unit chairs and the conduct of unit meetings is found in the *Unit Chairs Handbook*.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

Representing the League

League members are the custodians and protectors of the League reputation, purpose and policies. This reputation and policies have made possible a wide public acceptance of voters service activities and have given value to League positions on issues. Board and other members are guided in using the League's name externally by a single rule: Only the president or her designee can speak for the League.

Guidelines for representing the League:

- Any letter, press release or public presentation expressing League positions must be cleared by the president.
- Any testimony expressing League positions must be cleared by the Board or the Executive Committee.
- Any response to a request from any outside organization or publication wishing to use the League's name must be cleared by the Board or the Executive Committee.
- Before any member undertakes official League business, the appropriate committee chair or director should be notified.
- Public speeches of an informational or service nature or on a specific action campaign already approved by the Board should be cleared with the president or action director when appropriate.
- Fees for speaking engagements will not be charged, but donations are accepted.
- Personal opinions that conflict with League position(s) should never be given when speaking as a representative of the League.
- Board members may answer or make routine inquiries requesting or giving information.

Correspondence

The preferred method of communication is email. Emails should correctly identify the subject being discussed in the subject line. All persons/portfolios whose work relates to the email should be copied. The entire board does not need to be copied unless the topic will come up for Board discussion. Written material prepared for use by League members only, such as the Membership Lists, should carry the notation "FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY" on each page.

Logo

The League of Women Voters has a registered logo that should be used on all correspondence.

The Fairfax VOTER

The *Fairfax VOTER* informs members of local League activities and opportunities for individual involvement. It also provides program material for unit meetings and questions for consensus meetings. Priorities for publication include:

- Calendar
- President's message
- Current program and consensus or concurrence questions
- Action, Voters Service and Program notes and updates

After these, other articles will be printed as space permits. The aim is to be as inclusive as possible. The president, *The Fairfax VOTER* coordinator/editor will make the final decision on inclusion of articles and edit them as necessary.

Submission of Materials:

Materials should be submitted to the coordinator. Graphics and photographs are encouraged. Be concise, and check articles for accuracy, especially names, dates, places, times and statistical information.

- The deadline for submission is at least one full month prior to issue date. The coordinator will circulate a list of specific deadlines for each month at the July Board meeting.
- Late material will be accommodated if possible.

LWVFA Update

An electronic update will be sent out periodically, preferably at least bi-monthly, informing the membership of issues of current concern.

LWVFA Website

The website, LWV-Fairfax.org, will be kept up to date with copies of the Fairfax Voter, testimony, announcements and the calendar.

Publications

Publications represent LWVFA by providing unbiased, factual, educational material by offering a well-researched and documented explanation in support of issues, and by making LWVFA visible and a valuable asset to the community.

Planning Considerations:

- Usefulness in attaining League goals.
- Purpose and nature of the proposed publication (i.e., education, information, advocacy, publicity, fund-raising).
- Possible duplication of effort by other organizations or other League(s).
- Quantity and proposed distribution: Who needs it? Who might use it or buy it?
- Shelf life: A one-time effort? How timely? Likely to be revised or reissued?
- Timing: Calendar and individual workloads.
- Format & Size:
 - Circular, booklet, newsprint, pamphlet, etc.;
 - Quality: print or copy, cover, color, graphics.
- Financial potential and costs:
 - Quantity;
 - Overhead costs: production, promotion; distribution, unsold inventories;
 - Price to cover basic costs, complimentary copies, handling, tax, bulk discounts;
 - Financing: from General Fund or Education Fund, advance orders, special funds from gifts or donations, donations in kind, coordination with another group, special fund appeal.

Preparation, Publication and Distribution:

Although the Board has overall responsibility for publications, specific responsibility is delegated for:

- Research and writing.
- Editing, proofing and technical review by other than author.
- Liaison with printer.
- Distribution.
- Publicity.

Copyright and Reproduction:

All publications to be distributed outside the League, including all studies, should use the notation "Copyright (year) League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (Education Fund, if appropriate)." Requests to reproduce publications, in whole or in part, should be submitted in writing to the president, stating the name and date of the publication involved and when, how and where it will be used. If permission is granted, credit must be given to LWVFA and a citation to the specific publication be made. A new request must be made and approved for each subsequent reproduction.

- LWVFA should be provided a copy of any reproduction of its material.
- Appropriate remuneration for reproduction of an LWVFA publication in its entirety should be agreed upon in advance.

8. VOTERS SERVICE

Voters service activities must be completely non-partisan, impartial, objective, non-political and unbiased. Voters service activities can include voter registration drives, candidates' guides, candidates' forums/debates/events, ballot information, publication of citizen information such as *Facts for Voters*, responses to citizen inquiries, and other informational and educational activities and assistance.

9. PROGRAM

Informational Studies

Informational studies are unbiased information on a topic of interest that is presented to League members. These programs can be culled from various sources and do not necessarily have to be original material. Informational studies can be generated by members, the program director, or committees. An informational study can lead to the development of a concurrence statement that can be presented to the members for approval.

Studies Leading to New Or Revised Positions at the Local Level

The first step to conducting a study leading to a new or revised position at the local level is to have it included in program planning. Biennially, LWVFA conducts local program planning. At that time, members suggest public policy issues that are brought to the Board for consideration. Guidelines for League and Board members to consider when making a choice of study items:

- Can issues be resolved by local government action?
- Do existing positions, at any League level, cover this issue?
- Do we have the resources to work on this: a committee and chair?

The Board then considers suggestions and decides which, if any, should be compiled recommended for adoption by members. Members vote to adopt local program items at the Annual Meeting.

Consensus or Concurrence Study

A "study" is based on primary research and community-based data collection to develop factual evidence on current public policy issues. As a committee works on the study material, they will determine whether the study is more appropriately a consensus or a concurrence.

Consensus is agreement among a substantial number, **not just a simple majority**, of members, reached after study and group discussion. It is the "sense of the meeting." Consensus does not require unanimity. The presence of disagreement may be noted as a minority opinion, but this does not imply taking a vote.

Concurrence is the act of agreeing with, or concurring with, a position reached by another League, study committee, task force, or League board. Concurrence is achieved by member agreement.

The study committee in conjunction with the program director drafts proposed consensus questions which are submitted to the Board for review and approval. Changes in wording may not be made after final approval by the Board. The consensus questions, as approved by the Board, shall be provided to the membership at the same time as the study.

The members discuss the issue at unit meetings and voice their opinions through unit reports, or through individual responses to the program director. The program director, after consultation with the chair of the study committee, will review the reports, discern the areas of agreement and submit a written report and proposed position to the Board. The Board shall use its best judgment in evaluating the report and proposed position and then shall adopt a statement of position.

- New LWFVA positions shall be reported to the membership.
- Positions shall be dated with the month and year the consensus/concurrence was taken.

Program at Other Levels of League

LWVUS, LWV-VA, and LWFVNC study items are handled generally in the same way. The Board shall use its best judgment in evaluating the reports from the membership and then send a response to the appropriate level of League.

10. ADVOCACY /ACTION

Advocacy describes whatever the League does, at every level of government, to implement its positions, principles and program goals. Advocacy, which in League terminology was formerly called “action”, is the end result of the program process. In other words, study leads to consensus; consensus leads to a position; and it is those positions for which we advocate.

“Advocacy” is the League term that includes the support activities that can be done by 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations (LWFVA Education Funds) as well as those that can be done by 501(c)(4) organizations like the LWFVA (tax exempt but not tax deductible for its contributors). Advocacy activities, except lobbying, can be funded with Education Fund monies. This is the case even when only one side of an issue is presented, as long as no call to action on a particular piece of legislation is issued. Such activities can include: analyzing issues, providing information, making recommendations for reform, developing educational materials, and providing forums for discussion and education. Advocacy encompasses working for or against causes, as well as supporting or recommending positions.

“Action” covers those activities that are meant to influence legislation, commonly called lobbying. In *League Basics*, lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation that has been introduced in a legislative body. Lobbying includes action that transmits a point of view on a specific piece of legislation to elected officials or their staffs, as well as action urging the public to contact their legislators about a specific piece of legislation. League support or opposition to ballot questions and budget proposals is also considered lobbying. Action must be funded through general operating funds, not education funds. Action is taken in the name of the League **only** by the president, or her designee, and **only with permission** of the Board or the executive committee.

Most other activities promoting League positions that do not fall within the strict definitions of lobbying noted above are general advocacy and may be funded by charitable contributions. One important caveat is Leagues are advised to keep clear lines between voters’ service activities and advocacy activities. For example, Leagues that have taken a position on a ballot measure should not include that position in their Voters’ Guide.

Speaking With One Voice

The national League is responsible for determining strategies and action policies that ensure that the League’s message on national issues is consistent throughout the country. Similarly, state Leagues are responsible for a consistent state message, and local Leagues must cooperate to ensure that regional issues are addressed in a consistent matter by neighboring Leagues and, in our area, with LWFVNC positions and policies.

- Our League is expected to take whatever official action is requested in response to national or state action alerts. Our League should encourage members to take action as individuals on the topic without mentioning that they are members of the League. LWFVA should provide sufficient background for members to take action, and then report the results to the members.
- LWFVA can not take action on state or national positions without consulting the state or national League unless an Action Alert has been issued.
- LWFVA can not lobby state or national officials without consulting with the state or national League.

Advocacy/Action in Our Community

Instances when it is important for LWVFA to publicize and take action on our positions:

- Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools budget proposals
- Fairfax County General Assembly delegation pre-session public hearing
- Bond referenda
- Redistricting of supervisors' districts
- BOS and other hearings on major issues on which the LWVFA has support positions

Board criteria in determining its advocacy/action efforts include:

- Existing position to support this advocacy/action effort
- Importance of the issue
- Importance of LWVFA addressing this issue
- Possibility of conflict with other League positions or other Leagues
- Availability of members for advocacy efforts
- Sufficient time to achieve advocacy goal
- Alternative ways to advocate for this issue

Advocacy/Action Procedure:

Advocacy or action may be recommended by any member of the League based on local positions or positions held by higher levels of League.

- A written proposal listing our position, the recommended action, and any pros and cons should be sent to the Action Director or committee chair. Draft language for any written materials such as testimony or a letter should be included.
- The Board discusses the proposal, determines specific actions to be taken, and assigns specific responsibilities as needed.
- For action involving state or national officials, the Board will request permission from the appropriate level of League.
- When timing is a consideration, the Executive Committee may approve an action proposal.
- Reports of the action taken should be made to the members and notice may be given to the community through follow-up publicity.

APPENDIX – GLOSSARY OF LEAGUE LINGO

ACTION – Activities that are meant to influence legislation, commonly called lobbying.

ACTION ALERT – A request from the national, state or local League to take action in support of a League position.

ADVOCACY – Advocacy describes whatever the League does, at every level of government, to implement its positions, principles and program goals.

ANNUAL MEETING – Local year-end business meeting to elect officers and directors, vote on bylaw changes and adopt a budget and program for the next year.

BRIEFING – Meeting to educate the discussion leaders on the month's program before the unit meetings.

CONCURRENCE – The act of agreeing with, or concurring with, a position reached by another League, study committee, task force, or League board. Concurrence is achieved by member agreement.

CONSENSUS – Agreement among a substantial number, **not just a simple majority**, of members, reached after study and group discussion. It is the "sense of the meeting." Consensus does not require unanimity. The presence of disagreement may be noted as a minority opinion, but this does not imply taking a vote.

CONVENTION – A state or national League meeting held every other year at which delegates elect officers and directors for the biennium, adopt program, make bylaw changes and adopt a budget. Local Leagues send delegates to state convention, local and state Leagues send delegates to national convention. (State conventions are usually held in odd-numbered years; national in even numbered years.)

COUNCIL – An assembly of delegates held in years alternate to convention years to adopt a budget and assess program developments. Local Leagues send delegates to state council; state Leagues send delegates to national council.

DISCUSSION FACILITATOR – Guides discussion at unit meetings; can take participate in discussion.

DISCUSSION LEADER – Guides discussion at unit meetings (usually a consensus or concurrence meeting), but does not take part in discussion because the discussion leader has already voted at the briefing.

EDUCATION FUND – The tax-deductible arms of national, state and some local Leagues that are designated IRS 501(c)(3) organizations. Monies earmarked for the Education Fund are kept entirely separate from General Funds. They may be used only for the following activities as specified by the Internal Revenue Service:

...Organizations described in section 501(c)(3) are commonly referred to as charitable organizations [and]... are eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions... (<http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=96099,00.html>, January 30, 2012) ...501(c)(3) organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office...Certain activities or expenditures may not be prohibited ...For example, certain voter education activities (including presenting public forums and publishing voter education guides) conducted in a non-partisan manner do not constitute prohibited political campaign activity. In addition, other activities intended to encourage people to participate in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives, would not be prohibited political campaign activity if conducted in a non-partisan manner... (<http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=163395,00.html>, April 30, 2012) In general, no organization may qualify for section 501(c)(3) status if a substantial part of its activities is attempting to influence legislation (commonly known as *lobbying*). A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status. *Legislation* includes action by ...[any] governing body, with respect to acts, bills, resolutions, or similar items (such as legislative confirmation of appointive office), or by the public in referendum, ballot initiative, constitutional amendment, or similar procedure. It does not include actions by executive, judicial, or administrative bodies. An organization will be regarded as attempting to influence legislation if it contacts, or urges the public to contact, members or employees of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if the organization advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation. Organizations may, however, involve themselves in issues of public policy without the activity being considered as lobbying. For example, organizations may conduct educational meetings, prepare and distribute educational materials, or otherwise consider public policy issues in an educational manner without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. (<http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=163392,00.html>, May 03, 2012)

FACTS FOR VOTERS – Annual LWVFA publication that lists current contact information for government offices and officials.

FAIRFAX VOTER – LWVFA newsletter, also called The VOTER.

GENERAL FUND – The non tax-deductible arm of a national, state or local League, usually designated with the name of the local League, such as LWVFA; funds can be used for advocacy, action and other non-educational purposes. The General Fund is an IRS 501(c)(4) organization and must be in compliance with its requirements. The 501(c)(4) status of local Leagues in Virginia is established by their inclusion in the state League, and their (IRS) official name is the League of Women Voters of Virginia, with a separate “doing business as – dba” name such as League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area.

HERE WE STAND – Publication containing LWVFA’s positions.

I.L.O. – Inter-League Organization, formed by local Leagues within a county, metropolitan area or region to act on issues that are beyond the local League area in scope. See LWNCA.

IMPACT ON ISSUES – Publication containing the national League’s positions.

INFORMATIONAL STUDY – Discussion topic not expected to lead to consensus or concurrence.

LWNCA – League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (an Inter-League Organization) – composed of Leagues in Virginia and Maryland that surround (and include) the District of Columbia.

LWVUS – The League of Women Voters of the United States (the national League).

LWV-VA – The League of Women Voters of Virginia (a state League).

LIFE MEMBER – a person who has been a member for 50 years.

M.A.L. UNIT – Member at Large Unit, a group of League members in the process of forming their own League

P.M.P. – Per Member Payment, the amount of money paid annually to the LWVUS, state Leagues and ILOs calculated on the basis of the number of local League members as of January 31st.

PORTFOLIO – Area of responsibility, one’s League job.

POSITION – A statement of the League’s point of view on an issue, arrived through member study and agreement (consensus or concurrence), approved by the appropriate Board and used as a basis for League action.

POSITIONS IN BRIEF – Publication that succinctly describes all of a League’s positions.

PROGRAM – Selected public policy issues chosen by members at the various levels of League for study and possible future action.

PROGRAMS – Plans for speakers, discussion or other activities for League meetings.

PROGRAM PLANNING – The process that determines the public policy issues to be studied, retained or dropped.

RESOURCE PERSON – The person serving as a “background expert” for a unit discussion – helps the discussion leader with questions about the subject under discussion – is usually a member of the study committee.

STUDY – Adopted at annual meeting or convention in order to pursue consensus or concurrence.

UNIT – Groupings of members within large local Leagues which provide opportunities for smaller group discussions on a topic. Units may be time-oriented (day, evening, lunch hour) or geographically oriented.

UPDATE – LWVFA’s periodic email newsletter

VOTERS GUIDE – Nonpartisan League publication giving candidates’ qualifications and positions on selected issues.

VOTERS SERVICE – Year-round activity to help citizens be politically effective and to encourage their participation in the political process. Registering voters and presenting factual, nonpartisan information on candidates and election issues are basic voters service activities.