

# *IN LEAGUE*

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**League of Women Voters of the United States**



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# Preface

Throughout its history, the League of Women Voters has been a dynamic, changing organization, adapting procedures to meet current and future needs. As a League leader, you play an important role in making the League of Women Voters a force in your community. You will find this handbook an essential tool in carrying out that role. It discusses the history and organization of the League, areas such as membership and program, and ways leaders can work together to achieve League goals.

While there are fundamental similarities among Leagues everywhere, each League has its own special characteristics. The needs of your members and your community; the size, distribution and demographics of your membership; time and money resources; community issues these are some of the circumstances that affect the structure and operations of your League. *In League* contains basic information applicable to every League. At the same time, it offers ideas and suggestions to help you develop specific methods of operation to enable your League to accomplish its goals.

The challenges and opportunities facing the League are almost unlimited, and they can stimulate the best talents in all of us. In an effort to deal with limited resources and limitless possibilities, many Leagues have instituted new procedures, dramatically reorganized their boards and completed long-range plans in order to focus their resources on key priorities. The ideas presented herein draw on over 80 years of League experience and especially on current practices of Leagues and information from many state and local League publications. They can save you some trial and error time and help your League to formulate effective strategies for a rapidly changing world.

Special thanks are due to the many state Leagues whose materials are included in this publication. The 1989 edition of *In League* was researched and written by Isabelle P. Weber, director of the LWVUS Membership and Development Division (1985-1988). She was assisted by Dorothy L. Nieweg, director of Organizational Services, Monica Sullivan, director of Publications, Sandra Gillis, director of Member Services, and Elizabeth King, special assistant.

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# Introduction

What is the 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, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) is organized to parallel the three levels of government: local, state and national. In 2002, there were 872 local Leagues and 50 state Leagues, plus the LWVs of Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, Hong Kong and the Virgin Islands. In some areas, local Leagues have formed Inter-League Organizations (ILOs) to address regional concerns. The national League, as are all local and state Leagues, is governed by a volunteer president and board of directors.

Any citizen over 18, male or female, may become a voting member of the League. Associate membership is available for younger people or non-citizens. Joining at any level automatically confers membership at every level, and with that membership comes the opportunity to work on local, state, regional and national program issues.

# 1: Leadership

What does the League need in a leader? Is it different now than when the League was founded in 1920? or during the 1940s? the 1970s? What will the League need from its leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Since the beginning, League leaders have searched for the magic that will help foster tomorrow's leaders, the kind of leaders our organization needs.

Leadership is an elusive concept, subject to personal interpretation. But we all know it when we see it...and we all suffer if it is lacking in our lives, in the organizations for which we volunteer and in the places where we work. The essence of leadership, the crucial component that ultimately defines a leader, can be defined as empowerment. Being a good leader means empowering others to accomplish their goals. There are a lot of nitty-gritty ways to empower people; most employ common sense and a willingness to set personal agendas and egos aside for the greater good of the organization. Flexibility and relevance play crucial roles in empowering a large and diverse following, and they are thus important watchwords for effective leaders.

Leaders have different personalities, very different experiences, a wide variety of styles. They come in all sizes, shapes, colors, ages. League leaders are no different. They may rise to leadership progressively through the League, or they may be thrust into a leadership position abruptly by the immediacy of the situation. The paths to leadership are as varied as leaders themselves.

Whatever their differences, League leaders share a concern about how the organization will take the necessary bold steps forward and develop a viable vision of the future. Who is going to set and achieve the goals for the League of the future? It will be the members, working within a social and economic context. How will they accomplish all of this? With the guidance and encouragement of their leaders.

The purposes of the League are to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, to work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and to act on selected governmental issues. If the League believes in an educated citizenry and in participatory democracy, then its leaders can never do such a good job as to put the League out of business. The very heart of citizen education, participatory government and advocacy on issues is constant change—change in the nature of the citizenry, change in the circumstances of governing and change in the issues to be addressed. An organization working to educate and involve must be ready and willing to change—in fact, must be in the forefront of predicting and preparing for change. And since predictions of change and the future are just that—predictions—the League and its leaders must encourage and empower members to set a course based on circumstances and experience and must enable members to develop the skills necessary to survive, and thrive, on change.

Barbara Mikulski, U.S. senator from Maryland, has noted that leadership involves building a framework for the future. To do that, she said, we must prepare our workers for the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we must also prepare the workplace for the new work force. To translate that framework to the LWV, it is League leaders' responsibility, as volunteer leaders in a volunteer organization, to develop both the League's job and the members to get the job done. How to do that when it is not clear what the future holds? Leaders can empower individuals by helping them acquire the skills to create their organization's future and then prepare to meet it. Skills such as assessing situations, evaluating experiences, planning and setting goals, defining priorities and conserving resources are essential. These skills enable individuals and organizations to meet the future optimistically, enthusiastically and creatively.

As a League leader, you are expected to produce an incredible range of results, including representing the organization to the public, making timely decisions, building an effective team, overseeing the generation of revenue, increasing membership, running a productive meeting, training the leadership for tomorrow, seeing the larger picture and doing something about it...to name just a few!

Thinking of leadership in terms of empowering helps to put these myriad expectations into perspective. It means that leaders have lots of help, for one thing. Leaders empower individuals to define and achieve the results they expect. Writing in *Working Woman* magazine in 1984, Janet Hagberg said about leaders, "They do not lead projects, they light the fires in others, to encourage their projects."

How does this play out in the day-to-day arena of League life? To lead your League and empower your members, you must know what individuals are thinking, dreaming, hoping, expecting, needing. You need to listen. You need to maintain a climate for healthy exchange of ideas and plans. You need to provide the opportunities to set and evaluate goals, develop and implement strategies and assess resources. Your results are measured in the forward movement of your organization—a League of Women Voters that is active, responsive and relevant, a League of Women Voters that makes a difference.

An organization such as the League is more than the sum of its parts. Individual components have meaning in the context of the whole. The organization must knit those components together in a way that enhances the individual contribution, strengthening it by affiliation with other individuals' contributions for a common purpose. The strength of the League's grassroots lies in the network, being bound together, effectively and efficiently, to achieve common goals. A leader thus empowers the organization as a whole, as well as its individual members, to accomplish its mission. As you certainly know if you are reading *In League*, LWV leaders function within a structure, making their jobs both easier and more difficult. The structure is the organization and, like any living thing, it must be flexible and relevant or it will not survive.

Of course, this does not mean change for the sake of change or change to avoid dealing with underlying issues. It does not mean change to accommodate every issue or personal agenda. It does mean that leaders must keep their eyes on the goal, the mission, evaluating the League's position, strengthening where it is vulnerable, changing the structure to remain flexible and

relevant. It means, above all, that leaders must recognize the organization's most valuable resources: its members and its organizational network.

Like a ship with a captain and crew, the League chooses a destination, plots a course, trains the crew and sets sail. To reach the destination the captain and crew must work together as a team, must inform and consult one another, must be flexible and exercise good judgment in meeting challenging and changing circumstances, must take individual and collective responsibility for arriving at the appointed place at the appointed time, and be individually and collectively accountable for the results.

The final, most important step to ensure future successful voyages is assessing and evaluating the voyage—the entire voyage, not just the fact that you arrived but the journey itself...how you got there. Then on the next journey, when captain, crew, destination and circumstances change, you will be prepared to meet the challenge.

A word or two about leadership development. In a long-term social change organization such as the League, there always must be a cadre of individuals who are willing and able to take on leadership responsibilities. Providing the opportunity and the encouragement to acquire and practice those skills is the responsibility of the organization. Institutionalized leadership development opportunities and ongoing leadership training are the hallmarks of successful, long-lived organizations. All levels of the League have the responsibility to foster new leadership, through formal training and informal apprenticeships, through supportive policies and procedures, and through effective role models.

*In League* is a handbook that can guide you through the structure of the League, suggest routes used in the past and routes in use now to keep the League the vital, effective organization it must be to meet the future. Use it wisely, as a foundation and blueprint from which you can chart your course and build the organization that empowers you and your members to make a difference.

## 2: Political Yet Nonpartisan

*In the League of Women Voters we have an anomaly: we are going to be a semi-political body. We want political things; we want legislation; we are going to educate for citizenship. In that body we have got to be non-partisan and all-partisan. Democrats from Alabama and Republicans from New Hampshire must work for the same things.*  
Carrie Chapman Catt at the League's founding in Chicago, 1920

The choice made in 1920 to neither support nor oppose any political party or candidate for public office continues today to ensure that the League's voice is heard above the tumult of party politics. The nonpartisan policy has added strength to the League's position on issues. It has made possible wide acceptance of League voters service and other educational activities.

At the same time, the League is a political organization and encourages members to participate fully in the party of their choice. It is an advantage to the League to have politically active members and, equally important, it can be a personally satisfying experience. The same is true for members' paid employment, which also might give rise to conflicts of interest.

Each League's board of directors is responsible for drafting and carrying out the League's nonpartisan political policy in its community, keeping in mind that everything the League does should be measured against the yardstick of nonpartisanship. (See Appendix A for examples) The board also is responsible for seeing that both its members and the public understand the League's nonpartisan policy. The goal, of course, is to ensure the credibility of the League as a nonpartisan organization. Establishing and maintaining a nonpartisan policy is one of the seven basic requirements for League recognition. (see Chapter 4)

### Controversy

The League's nonpartisan stance does not mean that the League should not get involved in controversy on issues it has chosen for study, member agreement and action. A League will be a strong and effective political force to the degree that it can deal with and accept controversy, live with uncertainty, and avoid using its nonpartisan political policy as a shield for not getting involved. Sometimes, the public accuses the League of violating its nonpartisan policy because of what is viewed as a partisan stance on a controversial political topic. You can deal with this by explaining that the League takes stands on issues but not on candidates.

### Coalitions

Joining a coalition is an effective use of resources to work on an issue, yet Leagues are sometimes concerned that coalitions to which they belong may eventually endorse candidates. This need not always keep you out of a coalition the League might otherwise join, but it is

important to think through the ramifications for the League's policy of not supporting or opposing candidates for political office. If a coalition that the League belongs to or is considering joining will concentrate its activities on supporting or opposing candidates, then the League should not participate.

## Applying the Nonpartisan Political Policy in Your Community

To avoid public confusion, Leagues should formulate a nonpartisan political policy that includes specific guidelines to govern the political activities of their board and off-board members. And keep in mind, too, that conflict of interest may arise between a board member's paid employment and her or his role in the League; potential conflicts of this kind should be brought to the attention of the board (see below). To help Leagues that want to update their current policies or write new ones, samples of nonpartisan policy statements developed by Leagues are included in Appendix A.

In keeping with the League's grassroots philosophy, each board determines a policy that best reflects existing conditions in its League, as well as the political climate and traditions in its community. These are key points to consider in this process:

- \* □ The sensitivity or visibility of specific board assignments or functions
- \* □ The extent to which the public identifies a board or off-board member's activities with those of the League
- \* □ An overall assessment of the League's credibility as an effective nonpartisan political organization in the community
- \* □ The visibility associated with a specific political activity (ranging from participation in partisan social affairs to signing petitions or making campaign contributions or serving as a campaign manager).

Of course, a general policy can never cover every situation and the board will need to deal with specific cases as they arise.

**Since times and conditions change, it is essential that boards discuss their nonpartisan political policy annually and update it as necessary.** The ideal time to review your League's implementation of the nonpartisan policy is at the orientation meeting for your new board, when you clarify the policy-making role of the board as a whole, as well as individual responsibilities. It is important to review the nonpartisan policy before specific cases come up. Even if no changes are necessary, the review is important, both to educate board members and to anticipate situations that might cause difficulty later.

# Developing a Nonpartisan Political Policy

In drafting or reviewing your League's nonpartisan political policy, keep in mind that guidelines should be positive in approach, emphasizing what board members may do rather than what they may not do. This was the philosophy underlying the decision of delegates to Convention '72 who determined that the political activities of a spouse or relative of a board member should be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the board member.

## Party Affiliation

Board members usually have party affiliations and should certainly carry out the responsibilities of every voter in exercising the franchise, including the responsibility to become informed about candidates.

## Elective (Public) Office

While board members generally may not run for elective office, the definition of what constitutes an elective office varies in our grassroots organization. For example, some New England town meetings consist of elected representatives, but League board members sometimes run for these offices. Members of charter commissions and delegates to state constitutional conventions are often elected, yet many Leagues allow board members to run in these elections. Here again, it is extremely difficult to make a blanket statement to cover all situations, especially since running for office is a natural outgrowth of League training. Each League, therefore, will have to decide on its policy and judge each situation as it occurs.

If a board member declares for an elective office other than one determined permissible by the League, the board decides when the member should resign from the board. The wording of the public notice of the resignation should, if possible, include the name of the person succeeding to the board position and should avoid the appearance of endorsing the resigning board member's candidacy. Resigning from the board does not mean resigning from the League. Nor does it mean that the board member cannot serve on the board later on; the board decides when that is appropriate.

## Public Commissions and Committees

The League sometimes takes the initiative in recommending people to serve on appointed public commissions and committees. Board members are often asked to serve on such committees, either as individuals or as representatives of the League. Such service enables League leaders to further League program goals. However, even if a League member represents the League on a commission, the board is not bound to support that commission's recommendations. If the recommendations differ from or cover more points than the League's position, the board should clarify the League stance and what it does and does not endorse in the commission's report. If the commission's conclusions are unacceptable to the League, this can also be noted and explained.

## Conflict of Interest Policy

Keep in mind that conflict of interest issues may arise that affect the League's overall image and credibility in the community. Your board may want to establish a conflict of interest policy that applies to board members' paid employment, service on other boards, personal lobbying, and so on. As with a nonpartisan political policy, the approach should be positive, while safeguarding the League's interests. See Appendix A for sample policies.

# 3: Bylaws: How the League Governs Itself

Bylaws are fundamental rules drawn up by corporations, associations and organizations to govern their internal affairs and their dealings with members and others. They include rules that the organization considers so important that they cannot be changed without previous notice to members and the vote of a specified majority, and they cannot be suspended except as provided in the bylaws.

League bylaws provide an operating framework. They define the League's purpose and how it organizes to further that purpose. They are meant to protect the organization and its members to provide assurances that rights will be protected, responsibilities and powers defined and limited, and the goals of the organization stated and implemented.

Bylaws should deal with the basics. Leagues should use other mechanisms—board motions, decision at annual meetings and conventions, policies and procedures—to handle details. Boards should review their bylaws from time to time to make certain they are still current.

## First Three Articles

The first three articles of the national League bylaws set forth the League name, purpose and policy and define membership in the LWVUS. **The first three articles of all local and state League bylaws must be consistent with those of the LWVUS in order to define and maintain the unity of the organization and the powers and privileges of members.** (See Appendix B)

## Remaining Articles

Leagues may decide what to include in the remaining articles of their bylaws, provided they reflect democratic procedures. Normally, they contain provisions covering the organization's officers, board of directors, financial administration, nominations and elections, program, business meetings (annual or biennial), parliamentary authority and method of amending. Local and state Leagues should seek legal counsel to determine if there are any special or unusual laws in their areas that relate to their operations and that need to be dealt with in their bylaws.

Sample bylaws for local Leagues are included in Appendix B as a guide for your use. They are modeled after the LWVUS bylaws and reflect the practices and experiences of various Leagues over the years.

# Amending Bylaws

Changing situations and circumstances may necessitate amendments to a League's bylaws. Amendment procedures should be outlined in each League's bylaws. As a League board considers making recommendations regarding amendments proposed by the membership, or as members decide how to vote to amend the bylaws at an annual meeting or convention, here are some questions to consider:

- What is the purpose of the proposed amendment?
- Does the proposed amendment belong in the bylaws or does it address a policy or procedure that could be handled in another way?
- Is the proposed amendment democratic?
- Is the proposed amendment worded clearly and precisely?
- Is the proposed amendment compatible with other bylaw provisions or would its adoption require further changes?

Local Leagues may find it helpful to consult with their state League boards about any proposed bylaw amendments before sending official notice to their members. Similarly, state Leagues and Inter-League Organizations (ILOs) may want to consult with the LWVUS about proposed amendments.

# 4: Organizing Leagues and League Groups

Starting a League can be one of the most rewarding endeavors for individuals and for a community. The formal League structure includes local Leagues, Inter-League Organizations (ILOs), Member-at-Large Units (state League-recognized groups of members in an area where there is no local League), state Leagues and the LWVUS.

## *LWVUS Requirements for Local and State Leagues and Inter-League Organizations (ILOs)*

Leagues must meet the following requirements to gain LWVUS recognition and to maintain League status:

- The League must have bylaws, the first three articles of which must be consistent with those of the LWVUS. The remaining articles must provide for democratic procedures.
- The League must establish and maintain a nonpartisan policy.
- The League must hold an annual business meeting of the membership.
- The League must hold regular board meetings.
- The League must meet its financial obligations to the state and national levels of the League.
- The League must have a plan for membership growth and retention that encourages a membership as diverse as the community.
- Any advocacy pursued by the League must be consistent with League principles, positions and policies.

These requirements should be seen within the framework of the League's Mission Statement which begins this handbook: 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.

The state League consults with local Leagues and advises them on meeting the requirements, which are intended to serve as a continuing gauge of a League's health and well-being. Some state Leagues may supplement these basic requirements with additional ones requiring, for example, a minimum dues level or a minimum number of members based on population served.

## Local Leagues

## Community Basis of Organization

Local Leagues fall into two categories: municipal Leagues that cover a single political unit (e.g., a city, township or borough) and area Leagues that include within their borders more than one unit of local government (e.g., two or more adjoining municipalities, a metropolitan area covering both city and suburbs, a county or part of a county that has both municipalities and unincorporated areas). In consultation with the state board, League members decide on the areas to be included in the new League. The League's name reflects its geographic basis of organization.

Once a League's basis of organization is set, the League studies the community to become familiar with the structure of local government, various resources in the community, issues needing citizen attention and channels through which action is possible. The information gathered through the survey may be disseminated to members and the public through a *Know Your Community* publication, through a series of local League bulletin articles or perhaps through a video presentation.

General League practice is that the activities of a local League will relate to its basis of organization. Local Leagues study and take action on local issues, host candidate meetings for local offices, and choose speakers from within their geographical area. Local Leagues must consult with the state or national League before undertaking any advocacy or voters service activities with state or federal officials or candidates. Similarly, local Leagues should consult with the appropriate level of League before inviting speakers from the state or federal level.

## Program

Local Leagues adopt, study and act on program as follows:

- Members living in the jurisdiction suggest an issue.
- The local board decides whether to include it as part of the proposed (recommended) program.
- The annual meeting adopts or rejects the issue by a vote of all members present or a vote of the members living within the jurisdiction and concurrence of the other members present. Specific bylaw wording is needed for this procedure. (See Appendix B)
- If the item is adopted, members in the jurisdiction research and study the issue, and reach agreement, and the board formulates the position based on the participating members agreement. (see Chapter 10)
- Under the board's direction, action plans are approved and carried out, and members living in the jurisdiction take the lead in lobbying, testifying, monitoring and taking other forms of action.

For municipal Leagues, program issues relate to issues in the municipality and special districts, such as school districts, that are wholly or mostly within the city or town boundaries. For area Leagues, program issues cover either the entire area or any municipality or special district within the area. (See Appendix B)

# Administration

The distribution of population in a League's area—where members live and where the League may draw new members—is a major factor in deciding how to organize and administer League activities and communicate with members. The members of Leagues with small geographic areas usually can come together easily in general meetings and other activities, and the board can keep in close personal touch with them.

Larger Leagues covering a wide geographical area may require a series of membership meetings or units (see Chapter 12) to enable members to attend discussion meetings conveniently. Ideally the board will develop ways, such as a general meeting, to foster unity within the League.

## Changing Basis of Organization

If a League wishes to change its name or basis of organization to adapt to new circumstances (e.g., suburban population growth or a desire to merge with an adjoining League with which there is a community of interest), it should take these steps, in consultation with the state League:

- \*□ Make sure there is member agreement to the change.
- \*□ Get the formal approval of the state League.
- \*□ Send the request to the LWVUS for a final decision.

The process is outlined in *Changing a Local League's Organizational Basis*, included as Appendix C.

### *Communication Among Levels of the League*

Good communication among the various levels of the League—local, regional, state and national—is vital to the smooth and efficient operation of our grassroots organization. The LWVUS publishes some key publications on a regular basis to keep League leaders informed and up-to-date on major activities and decisions at the national level.

- \*□ President's Packet, published each September, includes a section that outlines the materials local and state Leagues should send to the national level.
- \*□ Post Board Summary, issued after each national board meeting (usually four each year).
- \*□ Post Convention/Council Summary.

Most state Leagues produce similar publications to keep local Leagues informed of state League plans and activities.

## Inter-League Organizations

Leagues within a county, metropolitan area or region may decide to form an Inter-League Organization (ILO) which acts on governmental issues that are countywide, metropolitan or regional in scope. ILOs are organized **with the consent of the members** in the participating local Leagues, must meet minimum requirements set by the LWVUS convention and must be recognized by the board of directors of the LWVUS. Like local Leagues, ILOs must understand the relationships between the various units of government corresponding to the Leagues they represent. They also should be familiar with the structure of regional bodies and jurisdictions that exist within their areas.

ILOs adopt bylaws and hold annual or biennial conventions at which all Leagues in the ILO are represented. They elect officers and directors, choose program and approve a budget. Program issues, of course, focus on the region covered by the ILO. Each recognized ILO has the right to send one voting delegate to the LWVUS convention; some state Leagues also grant ILOs representation at their conventions and councils. The state League's role in relation to ILOs is to provide guidance.

Coverage of ILO program and activities depends on the cooperation and interest of each League in the ILO. ILOs communicate with individual members of their constituent Leagues by sending them a bulletin directly or preparing an insert to be printed in the bulletins of the member Leagues. Local Leagues share the responsibility for funding the ILO, and leadership for the board of directors is drawn from members of the participating local Leagues. Besides planning and acting on the ILO program, many ILOs assist the local Leagues by coordinating functions such as fundraising, citizen education/voters service, public relations, study materials and action on state and national program.

## Multi-League Groups

Local Leagues sometimes decide to work together on common problems or issues through informal groupings. Such multi-League groups can be temporary or permanent, inter-state or intra-state. Although participating Leagues sometimes adopt a procedural agreement and choose a steering committee, these are informal groups. They differ from Inter-League Organizations (ILOs), which are formally recognized by the LWVUS Board after fulfilling the requirements adopted by the national convention.

A number of such multi-League groups have been formed over the years, most often to address environmental and land-use issues. Some of these have had a shared river basin or one of the Great Lakes as their focus. Others have worked on issues needing regional solutions, such as urban sprawl and transportation.

All Leagues in the area that will be affected by the group's activities—whether or not they decide to join the multi-League group—should be treated as members, supplied with materials and kept up to date on the group's activities. Multi-League groups serve a key role in initiating and coordinating action on the issue/area of concern to their member Leagues. They monitor local, state, regional and federal proposals that affect their issue/area, gather and distribute information to their member Leagues, and make recommendations to the appropriate League

boards for action. Since only recognized League entities may use the League name, the action itself must be carried out by the local, state and/or national Leagues. Multi-League groups may not take action in their own name.

Inter-League Councils are still another example of the informal groupings that exist in the League. These groups, usually made up of local League presidents in an area, meet informally to discuss common concerns that run the full gamut of League activities from fundraising and voters service to program/action and overall organizational issues.

## Member-at-Large Units of a State League

Members-at-large (MALs) are simply League members who live outside the area of, and are not enrolled in, a recognized local League. MAL numbers are steadily increasing, principally due to active member recruitment efforts at the state and national levels of the League. Capitalizing on this growth, state Leagues often establish member-at-large units (MAL Units). An MAL Unit offers members an opportunity to participate in selected League activities, serves the community and helps train new leaders for the organization. MAL Units help increase awareness of the organization and strengthen the League's voice in all parts of the state. In some cases, the group may operate indefinitely as an MAL Unit; in others, the experience as an MAL Unit serves as a stepping stone toward recognition as a local League.

MAL Units operate under the direction of the state League, which sets requirements for these groups. A minimum number of members—typically between five and ten—is set by the state board. A simple organizational structure is prescribed, usually a leadership team composed of a chair, a vice-chair and a secretary/treasurer. A nonpartisanship policy must be approved. And dues are collected to meet state and national per member payment (PMP) obligations. MAL Units are encouraged to participate in state and national program studies and to respond to state and national action alerts. State boards may also give permission to MAL Units to work on local issues under the direction and close supervision of the state League advisor.

# 5: Talent Scouts: The Nominating Committee

Leadership is the key to the League's effectiveness in a community. Finding and selecting those leaders is the responsibility of the nominating committee. Service on this committee, therefore, is one of the most important assignments a member can perform in the League. Individuals chosen to serve on the nominating committee should be well acquainted with the membership, have a thorough understanding of the League and how it operates, and be well grounded in the League's nonpartisan policy. They should also be imaginative, persuasive and discreet.

Unlike other League committees, the nominating committee is responsible to the membership as a whole rather than to the board. The majority of its members, including the chair, are elected by the annual meeting (or by delegates to ILO, state or national conventions); additional members as specified in the bylaws are appointed by the board of directors early in the League year. The nominating committee is the one committee where the president is not an ex officio member. (See Appendix B, Sample Bylaws)

## The Task of the Nominating Committee

The nominating committee selects nominees for officers and directors as well as members of the succeeding nominating committee for election at the annual meeting or ILO or state or national convention. Members of the committee also act as talent scouts for the League, identifying potential leaders on a year-round basis. In addition, the committee should be prepared to suggest names of prospects to fill board vacancies, in response to a request from the board. In carrying out its assignment, the nominating committee is guided by several important principles:

- The importance of the board's working together harmoniously as a team, with the abilities of one member supplementing and complementing those of others. Board members are collectively responsible for all board decisions.
- The League's policy of nonpartisanship. Potential board members who might have a problem with this policy or who are publicly identified with a special cause that could be in conflict with the League nonpartisan policy should be carefully screened.
- The importance, at each election, of turnover in some board positions and of developing new leadership. A balance between new board members and experienced ones is the goal. Experienced leaders can continue to serve the League in many off-board positions rather than becoming permanent board members. There is no automatic succession in the League, nor is it wise to continue to rely on already overworked leadership.

- Not offering specific jobs to nominees other than the officers whose functions are defined in the bylaws (president, secretary and treasurer). This allows a new board the freedom and flexibility to organize itself according to the goals and priorities it sets. However, the committee keeps in mind the skills and abilities needed by the board when selecting nominees, some of whom may be willing to serve only if offered a specific assignment.
- Awareness of the leadership skills and experience that members have developed in other organizations or in paid jobs. Be sensitive also to the fact that some may want to take on an assignment quite different from the expertise developed in their professional life or may be prohibited from certain activities that might present a conflict of interest with their employment.
- Representation of various geographic areas of the community on the board, without sacrificing the goal of getting the best people for the job.

Look for people who can grow with the job. Experience in a particular area/portfolio is not necessarily a prerequisite for service on the board; the ability to transfer skills learned in one job to another and to continue to grow are. You want people who can assume and also delegate responsibility, who can inspire others to follow, who have a sense of perspective and humor, who are imaginative, creative and flexible.

Keep in mind that there are various ways of handling the work of the board. A president, for example, may share responsibilities with the vice-president(s). Or the president's job may be shared by two persons (co-presidents) who divide the major tasks. In an era when many League members have limited time to volunteer, potential board members should be encouraged to find alternative ways of handling League jobs. (See Chapter 6) Try to give potential nominees a clear picture of what is involved in serving on a League board, but don't erect barriers where none need exist. Emphasize the opportunities these jobs offer for personal growth; many former League presidents and board members have capitalized on their League training to land paid jobs or to run for office.

## The Committee's First Meeting

At its first meeting, which should come early in the League year (no later than October), the committee should discuss the tasks and principles enumerated above and do the following:

- Set guidelines for the operation of the nominating committee. One of the most important is to ensure that committee discussions and decisions are kept confidential so that you can have honest discussions of the talents and weaknesses of prospective nominees.
- Review the positions to be filled and the responsibilities of those positions as well as the deadline for presenting a slate to members. (Check the bylaws and any job descriptions developed by the local League) See Appendix D for job descriptions for local League board members and officers.

- Discuss the League's nonpartisan policy. (Each committee member should have a copy)
- Consider the particular needs of your League and qualities you want to look for in candidates.
- Anticipate the possibility the committee will be asked to help fill board vacancies during the year.

### *The Single Slate*

In the League of Women Voters, the nominating committee traditionally presents a single slate of officers and directors to the annual meeting or convention. Candidates for League boards do not run on an individual program or platform. Competition comes not in the voting for candidates, but in the selection of program. League program and policies are determined by the members; the board is responsible for carrying out that program and implement those policies. In keeping with democratic principles, League bylaws do, however, provide for nominations from the floor at the annual meeting or convention.

## Tips for Your Talent Search

Divide responsibility among committee members for attending regularly scheduled meetings, workshops and other League activities to identify possible nominees. Plan to attend meetings of the current board to get a better idea of how the board operates and to evaluate current members. Seek out potential leaders from among members who serve on committees or other League bodies. Encourage member suggestions of potential leaders through notices in the bulletin, at meetings, by phone. Consult the outgoing president, officers and board members for suggestions of people who have done outstanding jobs or who show promise. Ask current committee chairs, especially the membership chair, for names. Every League member is a potential candidate!

Some potential candidates may not even be members of the League yet. In your talent search, be open to the possibility of recruiting dynamic board members from outside the League, especially if you are having trouble recruiting leaders from within. Job experience or experience in other organizations may serve these candidates well, and they might help bring a fresh outlook to the League. Of course, if you go this route, board orientation becomes particularly important and may need to be more comprehensive than for current League members going on to the board.

## Completing the Slate

At subsequent meetings, the committee should, among other things, determine the best way to approach each prospective nominee. Often, the committee chair and a committee member jointly sound out the candidates. In some Leagues, the chair assigns each committee member to talk with a prospective nominee; other Leagues send letters to prospective nominees before making personal contacts. Above all, be positive in your approach.

The nominating committee's goal is to select a slate of individuals who have agreed to be nominated after clear explanations of the purpose and policies of the League, notably:

- An accurate description of an officer's or board member's job, with an estimate of the time needed to do it, as well as the tools, training and help that will be available, including reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses
- The importance of attending board meetings
- The nature and importance of overall board planning, decisions and evaluation
- The nonpartisan political policy of the League

If a nominating committee is unsuccessful in finding a nominee for president, the current board may be able to help by suggesting a reorganization so that a prospective nominee can better delegate some of the work or divide responsibilities. State Leagues may provide help and guidance to both the board and the nominating committee in these situations.

The committee meets again if another whole group of names must be considered. The entire committee then decides on the new choices. The committee will want to sustain its energy and enthusiasm to the very end and make its choices carefully.

# 6: Board of Directors

*"The genius of the League has always been, and will always be, the wisdom, skill and creativity of its members and leaders.*

State Board Handbook  
LWVUS, 1966

The board of directors, led by the president, is the administrative and policy-making team for the League. It provides direction and leadership for carrying out member decisions and is ultimately responsible for all the League's plans, activities and follow-through in three broad interdependent areas:

1. Organization and Management functions: membership growth and participation, adequate financing and realistic budgeting, communications and efficient administrative operations
2. Program: study and action
3. Voters Service/Citizen Education.

## **Local League Board at a Glance**

The board is responsible for the well being and smooth functioning of your League.

### **The board, as a whole:**

- \*  Carries out overall planning and decision-making
- \*  Supports membership and finance activities
- \*  Represents and interprets the League in your community
- \*  Safeguards the League's reputation for nonpartisanship

### **As an individual board member, you:**

- \*  Attend and participate in all board meetings
- \*  Attend and support all League activities
- \*  Inform yourself on League positions and practices
- \*  Carry out your own assignments

### **The president:**

- \*  Leads the League
- \*  Speaks for the League
- \*  Organizes and delegates League tasks
- \*  Convenes and presides over meetings

Working together, you will achieve League success.

Board Handbook, LWV of Illinois, April 1988

# Total Board Responsibility

The authority for the whole League operation rests with the board, whose members together make the decisions. Board members often assume specific duties, but each also shares in the responsibility of the entire board for the local League's operation. Although the finance chair or committee may have the day-to-day job of raising money, each board member has a fiduciary responsibility for the organization. That is, to exercise prudence in the control and transfer of funds and to study the financial statements. Because of this group responsibility, board members are expected to attend board meetings regularly, give thoughtful consideration to all aspects of League work, join in board deliberations and decisions and take part in making the general plans for League activities.

## *Local League Board Member at a Glance*

### **Role**

- \*  Makes the League's decisions and organizes its activities with the entire board

### **General**

- \*  Attends board meetings (gives notification if unable to attend)
- \*  Is a board member first, a specific chair second
- \*  Assists in overall planning and decision-making
- \*  Supports and attends League activities
- \*  Explains and promotes the League in the community
- \*  Understands and maintains the League's nonpartisan political activity policy
- \*  Attends state and regional League meetings
- \*  Assists in fundraising activities
- \*  Promotes growth and diversity in membership

### **Specific**

- \*  Carries out specific assignments
- \*  Keeps a board notebook
- \*  Keeps a portfolio file with reports, publications, memos, clippings, etc.
- \*  Meets deadlines for bulletins, publicity, reports to state and national offices
- \*  Brings plans to board for discussion and for reaching decisions
- \*  Obtains board approval prior to taking action
- \*  Trains successor and passes on files

### **Techniques**

- \*  Reviews assignment/portfolio and discusses past and ongoing projects with predecessor
- \*  Forms a committee if appropriate for the portfolio/assignment
- \*  Prepares brief reports for board meetings
- \*  Provides information for the bulletin when appropriate
- \*  Involves other members; spread the workload

Board Handbook, LWV of Illinois, April 1988

Of course, the president plays the key role in providing leadership for the board and the entire League and in serving as spokesperson to the community. The president is a leader first, empowering the other members of the board to achieve League goals, then a manager. (See Appendix D for sample job descriptions for local League officers and board members, from the LWV of Illinois.)

## Organization of the Board

All Leagues have limited time, money and people resources and need to evaluate these resources in relation to their projected plans when organizing for the year. (See section on Planning: Goals, Priorities, Evaluation, below.) The bylaws of each local and state League and ILO provide for the officers of the League and the maximum number of elected and appointed board members, depending on the size of the League.

The bylaws outline the duties of the president, secretary and treasurer but do not spell out specific tasks of the vice president(s) or other members of the board. This gives each board the flexibility to make assignments in whatever way makes the best use of the time and talents of the board members for that year. Keep in mind that it is more important for a board to organize around what it hopes to accomplish for the year than to try to fill slots just because predecessors have established a pattern.

Today, Leagues are experimenting with a variety of board structures as they search for appropriate ways to achieve their goals. While many League boards continue to assign their members specific responsibilities (e.g., membership, finance, public relations, program issues, voters service, etc.), an increasing number have done away with specific assignments and established three or four committees organized around the priorities they've identified for the year. Others are using a combination of committees and individual assignments. Executive committees, consisting of the president and several board members, can assume specific assignments and take action on board matters between regular board meetings.

Members of the 2000-02 LWVUS board, for example, were assigned to one of four standing committees:

- \* □ Outreach
- \* □ Fund Development
- \* □ Advocacy
- \* □ Education Fund

**Organizing Your Board Around Portfolios**

A clear chain of command should be established to make certain the League's work is accomplished by the entire board. A chart is a big help in clarifying and maintaining the chain of command. Each president and local League board should develop one that is appropriate for that board (it may change as boards and goals change). The division of responsibilities among the vice-presidents depends on the interests and skills of the individuals. Below are examples for Leagues with a sole president or co-presidents.

<b>President</b>		
<b>Secretary</b>		<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Program VP</b> Program Chairs Action Observers	<b>Community Relations VP</b> Voters Service Finance Public Relations	<b>Organization VP</b> Membership Unit/Meetings Bulletin

<b>President</b>		
<b>Secretary</b>		<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Local VP</b> Finance Observers Units/Meetings Program Chair	<b>State VP</b> Voters Service ILO Program Chairs	<b>National VP</b> Membership Bulletin Program Chairs Public Relations

<b>Co-president</b>	<b>Co-president</b>	
	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Local VP</b> Voters Service Finance Observers Units/Meetings Program Chairs	<b>State VP</b> Voters Service Publications ILO Program Chairs	<b>National VP</b> Membership Bulletin Public Relations Program Chairs

*LWV of Illinois, 1988*

*Organizing Your Board Around Chosen Priorities*

**President**

**Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Member Services**

Membership: recruitment, training, retention

*Voter* and other publications distributed to members

Organizing a telephone tree for calling all members when needed

Annual meeting planning and getting information to the budget, nominating and bylaws committees

**Community Relations**

Public relations and publicity

Voters Service

Speakers bureau

Funding and development

Updates on *Know Your Schools, Know Your Area* or other publications sold to the public

**Program/Advocacy**

Conduct local studies and provide materials to Voter (special ad hoc committee may be needed to assist)

Draft consensus questions for board approval and then member discussion for local studies

Plan informational meetings needed for local, state and national topics/studies

Plan advocacy campaigns, action

Observer corps

Virtually all proposals for board decision were first assigned to one of these LWVUS committees. In addition, an Executive Committee, meeting between board meetings, served as the finance and personnel committee. Other committees were set up for specific purposes such as convention and council planning, budget, program planning and bylaws. In the national office, staff carries out board policies on a daily basis.

In 1985, the League of Women Voters of Ohio decided that a committee structure was the best way to accomplish its goals without burdening any one individual on the board. The League designed its board organizational plan around three priorities identified for the year:

- \* □ Support/relationship with local Leagues    Membership Committee. The task of this committee was to deal with local League organizational concerns, membership recruitment/retention, workshops/orientation for local Leagues, etc.
- \* □ Presentation of action/advocacy positions    Advocacy Committee. This committee's job was to oversee the Advocacy Agenda, Statehouse Action and Statehouse Day, etc. It also acted as the Citizen Education Committee for the LWV of Ohio Education Fund and dealt with voters service, educational activities, League studies, etc.
- \* □ Financial development/fundraising    Fundraising and Development Committee. This committee's responsibility was to direct and review all fundraising efforts for the state League; it helped identify funding sources for the LWV of Ohio and the LWV of Ohio Education Fund.

The LWV of Ohio board also set up an executive/personnel committee of state League officers, to handle decisions between board meetings, deal with staff personnel matters and direct the activities of the state League.

The charts included in this chapter give examples of several alternative approaches to organizing League boards    state as well as local. While these are examples of state League board structures, they are transferable to local Leagues.

## Board Orientation

Good orientation gives board members an opportunity to become thoroughly informed about the League and get acquainted with one another, and it is invaluable in building a sense of total board responsibility. It also gives new board members greater confidence in carrying out their responsibilities and minimizes problems for the board later on. The LWV of New York State's Guide for Board Orientation is included as Appendix E and can be adapted by local Leagues to fit their needs.

Some local League boards conduct their own orientation sessions; others call on seasoned local League leaders to lead them. Many state Leagues will send state board members to conduct a board training session if a local League requests it. In some states, such sessions are planned on a regular basis. Similarly, a state board can ask the national board for technical assistance.

Alternatively, some Leagues hire consultants to present leadership development sessions or to facilitate a discussion to restructure their boards as part of board training or daylong retreats. Such a meeting can be divided into two parts, one dealing with the essentials for board orientation and the other consisting of a two- to three-hour session on board organization or leadership styles incorporating motivational and management techniques.

Whatever the design, your board's orientation session should (1) take place **as early as possible** after the new board is elected and (2) review the board's nonpartisan policy as well as its role and responsibilities as a whole to plan and guide League policy, advance League goals, promote membership growth, diversity and involvement and maintain a fiscally sound League.

The orientation should also briefly discuss the basic tools every board member needs to carry out his/her overall board responsibility. All should have a copy of *In League* and, in addition, should be aware of the tools available from both the LWVUS and state Leagues. (see Reading List)

In addition to the overall board orientation session, it's also advisable for the LWV president to hold a brief session for new board members to cover a few essentials already familiar to continuing board members, such as who speaks for the League and the president's role in approving internal and external communications. This is the time to review such details as how to prepare information for the bulletin, board briefings and reports, the League's budget, what expenses are reimbursed, deadlines for the state and national Leagues, etc. The president also should make sure that outgoing members have passed on their files and materials.

## Planning: Goals, Priorities and Evaluation

*Thanks to the LWV of Ohio for permission to use the following advice from its presentation to Convention 88.*

The local League board is responsible each year for setting priorities and, within those priorities, specific goals. This meeting, like the orientation meeting, should take place as early as possible after the board is elected. Consider your resources: people, time and money. Then focus them on your priorities and goals.

How to begin this priority setting with your board? Perhaps by asking each board member to take five minutes and jot down five responses to "What do you want to happen in our League this year?" Go around the group recording the responses. Then ask the board to jot down the three items they consider most important and rank them 1-2-3 with 1 being the most important. Go through the list (similar priorities may have been combined) assigning the rankings. The ones with the lowest scores win.

Your board has now identified what needs to be done and can get organized to do it. Perhaps you've decided you cannot address all the items on the state and LWVUS advocacy agendas but have chosen two to pursue. Perhaps you have decided to do one local voters service/citizen education activity in October or to concentrate on membership this year. As you plan your strategy to accomplish these goals, be imaginative and flexible, and experiment with different

approaches. Appendix J is a worksheet that will help you develop and carry out a strategy. Strategy planning will help the board identify the person or committee responsible, timeframe, cost, other people or organizations involved in a coalition, and so on.

Not all steps need to be outlined at the beginning but the board should have a good idea of the first several steps. Plan to periodically evaluate progress and make changes in strategy as needed; some things might take longer than planned, situations may change, planned activities might not have the desired effect. By testing, reviewing and reassessing you can keep moving toward and ultimately achieve your goal.

Besides periodic review of the progress of a particular strategy, the board evaluates the effectiveness of its own planning and decision-making techniques. It analyzes what it has done well and what has been learned from past mistakes. Such assessment can aid in planning for the future as well.

This process can apply to program issues as well as to League organization and administration: if funding has proven to be a problem, for example, the board can pick financial development as a priority, set goals and allocate the time, people and money needed to achieve the desired results. If recruiting and involving members is a prime concern, the board can develop a goal and strategy for member growth and participation and focus the required resources on that priority. In sum, the board's main task is to identify what needs to be done and to organize to do it. Organizations seen as leaders in effecting change and achieving results naturally attract and keep members and money.

#### *Agenda for a Board Planning Meeting*

- Review of our mission
- Review of our current resources
- What did we get done in the past twelve months?
- What didn't we get done?
- Review of our continuing responsibilities
- What has to be done in the next twelve months?
- Can we get it done?
- What's it going to be like?
- What important projects can't we do next year?
- Who's going to be responsible for what?

## Board Operations

Board meetings are held as often as needed for the board to plan, direct and evaluate the work of the League. Some Leagues' bylaws stipulate that the board meets once a month, others meet every other month; each League decides on a schedule that meets its needs. At its meetings, the

board focuses on the broad policy, program and administrative decisions that must be made and should not get bogged down in detailed planning and implementation, which are the work of committees.

The president prepares an agenda, based on advice from board members about what board decisions are needed at the meeting, and sends it with the minutes of the previous meeting, the treasurer's report and background information to board members before the meeting. An agenda should indicate the topics to be discussed and the person responsible for each topic; some presidents include the time allotted for each item. Generally, the agenda should include these elements:

- \* □ Corrections to minutes of the preceding meeting
- \* □ President's report, including communications from the state and national levels of the League
- \* □ Treasurer's report
- \* □ Major policy discussion and decisions — determining the League's priorities for the year, for example
- \* □ Decisions on committee proposals and directions authorizing committees to proceed with plans
- \* □ Plans for the future
- \* □ Evaluations of past League activities

Written board briefings help board members prepare for meetings and save time, so their value can't be overemphasized. Everyone appreciates short, to-the-point meetings. Another advantage of written reports is that they can double as bulletin articles.

Board meetings should begin on time and end promptly. A quorum (minimum number of members as prescribed in the bylaws) must be present in order for a vote to be taken but is not needed to begin a meeting. Parliamentary procedures save time and help avoid confusion. Board discussion need not be formal, but it should be orderly. What is written should not be read aloud. Some board decisions can be made by common consent; others may need more detailed discussion, a motion and a vote. The president can help by summarizing major decisions — noting what is to be done, who is responsible, the deadlines — and by summing up the discussions and reviewing alternatives before the board makes a decision.

## The Board and Committees

While the board directs and guides the overall work of the League, committees propose, recommend and usually execute. Committee recommendations to the board deal with policy

questions on issues within their responsibility, e.g., proposals for a fundraising benefit, action strategies and other activities the League might undertake to advance its goals and priorities. Ideally, a committee will submit alternative proposals to the board, outlining the pros and cons, the cost figures and the committee's recommendation. A committee does not proceed on policy matters, such as the criteria for participants in a candidate's debate, without getting board direction.

After the board has approved a proposal in general outline (committees decide details, not the board), the committee chair and members proceed to carry it out. The committee chair keeps the board informed of progress through written briefings or oral reports at board meetings.

Ad hoc committees and task forces serve much the same function as regular committees, except that they usually deal with one problem and go out of business when they've accomplished their mission. These mechanisms give the board a flexible means of handling problems and offer members with limited time and special expertise a chance to participate. They also offer ways to deal with issues that cross committee boundaries.

## Scheduling League Activities

The League's calendar reflects the planning and priorities of the board. It is a guide to League activities, but the schedule also is flexible enough to let the League take advantage of unexpected opportunities to perform a community service, act on a program issue or adjust to unforeseen occurrences.

Early in the League year, usually as part of the board's planning meeting, the board lays out the League calendar for the coming year and includes it in the bulletin or member handbook. The calendar doesn't need to give the date of everything for the year, but it should clearly outline what the League will be doing to meet its goals and priorities for the year. Highlight the meetings scheduled for members. Specifics can be given later.

The detailed calendar can include the following:

- \* □ Deadlines for major decisions: local, state and national program planning, budgets, nominations for board and nominating committee; submission of proposed bylaw amendments; member agreement on program issues
- \* □ Board meeting dates
- \* □ Special membership activities
- \* □ Member and community finance campaigns
- \* □ Action campaigns
- \* □ Meetings of legislative and other governmental bodies

- \*☐ Community events that affect League activities
- \*☐ Voters service/citizen education projects
- \*☐ Deadlines for bulletin/newsletter materials
- \*☐ Local, regional, state and national meetings, workshops and conferences
- \*☐ Scheduled membership meetings
- \*☐ Special events, such as go-see tours and public forums
- \*☐ Annual meetings, ILO, state and national conventions and councils

## Administration

The backbone of a good organization is just that good organization. Mail must be answered, records kept, files sorted, and clerical and secretarial operations performed. When these are done efficiently, the League functions more smoothly, and volunteers are freed for other important League activities.

The board oversees the business operations of the League but, in the typical local League, the president is responsible for seeing that things actually get done. It's ideal if the president has an administrative assistant (paid or unpaid) to handle the routine business. Otherwise, the president should delegate as many tasks as feasible (the bite-size approach) to individual board members or to off-board volunteers who are willing to help.

If your League is large and serves a large community, you should plan to set up an office. The benefits are many—a permanent address and telephone number, a central location for most League records and files, a general meeting place, etc. To cut expenses, some Leagues share office space or get someone in the community to donate office space and/or office equipment. Many state Leagues share an office and office equipment with a local League.

Of course, the ability to hire staff (the staff can work from home; an office is not necessary) is a boon to any League. Having someone available on a regular basis can actually save money in the long run and help your volunteers to better utilize their talents and time. Staff can take over routine correspondence, typing, word processing, filing, etc. The board or personnel committee determines the duties of paid staff and prepares the written job descriptions as well as the League's personnel policies.

In smaller Leagues, however, setting up an office with paid staff or even hiring a part-time employee who works at home usually is impractical. For Leagues of this size, we recommend the following steps to keep things functioning smoothly and effectively and to avoid overloading your president:

- \* □ Every League needs basic office equipment – a computer, fax machine, at least one file cabinet, desk and chair – and a place to do League work. This can be in a member's home or donated or rented space. The initial investment will pay dividends through the quality of work performed and will make the job of the president and the board easier. If you have access to it, surplus government furniture is a good source.
- \* □ Set up and maintain a simple, workable filing system that will enable you to retrieve things quickly. Appendix F outlines a two-tier filing system developed by the LWV of Illinois (somewhat modified for general use). It covers both current and historical files.
- \* □ Periodically weed out files. Try to establish a relationship with a local or state library to archive League materials (e.g., studies).

## Visibility

For the League to be of value to the community, it is essential that the community be able to contact the League. For Leagues without an office, we recommend the following steps:

- \* □ List the League in the telephone directory; it's money well spent to make the League easily accessible to members and the public. The president or a board member can install a separate line reserved exclusively for League use with an answering machine or the League can get a voice mail account. Make sure the messages are collected regularly and calls returned promptly.
- \* □ Rent a Post Office box to provide a public address that does not change with each new board.
- \* □ Establish a consistent, professional image through the use of the LWVUS logo on letterhead, bulletins and publications. The logo is available for downloading on the LWVUS website.
- \* □ If at all possible, establish a website and provide a way to contact the League via e-mail.

## Long-Range Planning in the League

If you're not planning, you're planning to fail – can be an unwelcome message for volunteer leaders trying to cope with the here and now. To prevent this admonition from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy for the League of Women Voters, Convention '82 called for the creation of a special committee to develop the national organization's first comprehensive long-range plan. A Strategic Planning Committee produced an updated version of the Long Range Plan, which was discussed, debated, modified and adopted by delegates to Convention '88.

Another planning effort, the Crossroads Project, began in 1991 and culminated in a set of recommendations presented to delegates at Convention '94. It was a grassroots process that gave every member and every League an opportunity to brainstorm about the League's future, offer

suggestions and reach agreement on next steps. Although nationwide in scope, it was not a project of the national board. It was guided by a ten-member steering committee representing all three levels of the organization, with funding provided by Leagues and individuals from all levels. Issues targeted for attention were: ensuring that each level of the organization is focusing its energies and resources most effectively; making League leadership more manageable; and enabling the League to attract the members and funds it needs to carry out its mission.

The Future Plan, presented at Convention 98, built on Crossroads and several other League research initiatives. Gathering input from multiple perspectives helped produce a realistic picture of the League and a plan to guide the organization into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Impact, Visibility and Organizational Development were identified as the three drivers of the League's Strategic Vision. The goals of the Future Plan were divided into four key areas:

- \* □ Project Citizen: Reconnecting Citizens with Government
- \* □ Project Voter: Enhancing Voter Participation
- \* □ Project Diversity: Including all Voices in Civic Life
- \* □ Project Reform: Strengthening Democratic Processes

Many state and local Leagues also have begun to reap the benefits of long-range planning by developing their own plans for the future. Long-range planning is now an essential part of life in the League. Planning for the future has helped the League at all levels to resolve conflicts among competing priorities and to focus efforts, measure progress and match resources to priorities. For more about long-range planning and what it can do for your League, see Appendix I, How to Do Long-Range Planning in the LWV.

# 7: Membership and the Board

*We can grow, if we are willing to bring to this problem the same commitment, the same high priority that we give the causes we pursue as part of our action campaigns. Until we seek new members, of both sexes, all races and all ages, with the same vigor and enthusiasm that we bring to our program, until we are willing to make the same sacrifices, until we are willing to spend the same kind of money, adopt the same innovative ideas, it won't happen.*

Ruth C. Clusen, President, LWVUS  
Speech to LWV of Evanston, Illinois  
July 1974

Members are the League; they are our lifeblood. Members give the League clout and visibility. They are the source of our leadership. A growing, thriving membership means that we can succeed in accomplishing the goals we share at all levels of the League.

No matter how dynamic a local League may be, membership growth doesn't just happen. It requires good planning, year-round attention and a strong partnership among all levels of the League. And since it's usually at the local level that new members get their experience of what it means to belong to the League, the local League has an essential role in making that experience satisfying and enjoyable.

## The Board's Role

The board plays a critical role in the membership arena— attracting, involving and keeping members. Nothing is more important! In addition to its leadership role in building a politically effective League that will attract new members and hold the interest of current members, the board collectively and individually has certain responsibilities:

- \*☐ Thoughtfully considering proposals by the membership committee for special membership plans.
- \*☐ Developing the yearly calendar with membership recruitment plans in mind, so League events most likely to attract new members will incorporate a special recruitment effort.
- \*☐ Planning comprehensively to include recruitment efforts, new member orientation, program issues and citizen education.
- \*☐ Recognizing the importance of the local League bulletin/newsletter. Generally this is the only direct contact with every member, especially those who do not attend meetings. Use it to keep your members informed of League activities. Effective League action requires member participation. Don't leave them out.

- \* □ Providing role models. Most members join because of a personal contact. Don't lose them because you failed to keep that personal touch. Board members should see themselves as perennial recruiting agents; they should be top promoters of the League and carry brochures and applications everywhere.
- \* □ Evaluating the effectiveness of strategies for membership growth and diversity. The evaluation should be included in the minutes and placed in the membership committee's file to be used as a tool in refining the continuing membership plan. The board's overall objective is to build a League that is politically effective in the community. And to do that, the League needs members who will support and participate in its activities.

To achieve the goals of a growing, active, diverse membership, even the smallest League needs to have a membership chair; larger Leagues should have a membership committee. The chair or committee develops overall plans for membership growth, diversity and participation and helps other board and committee members involve members in specific activities.

In developing long- or short-term membership goals, a committee will want to:

- \* □ Capitalize on the findings of LWVUS-sponsored membership research such as *Working Together: Research on Community Engagement/Volunteering* (1999), *Identifying Issues and Activities to Build the LWV* as reported in the *Diversity Tool Kit* (1997), and the 1987 Membership Research study.
- \* □ Evaluate the membership needs of its League. Use membership statistics to assess current trends; review questionnaires giving member interests, talents, age, education and lifestyle. The League reflects the interests and skills of its members. Different experiences bring different perspectives that are valuable in discussing issues and building community support for League positions.
- \* □ Review available materials. Be familiar with the many effective membership materials published by all levels of the League. Tips, guidelines, handbooks, brochures, posters and new member kits are available. Using already printed materials is efficient, economical and effective; you can then concentrate your time and energy on reaching potential members. (See *Membership Management*, LWVUS Pub. #495, which is packed with ideas.)
- \* □ Coordinate the membership plan with all other League events and activities. Recruiting new members and increasing the involvement of current members are vital components of every League plan. Be sure to have membership materials available at all meetings open to the public, along with a sign-in sheet.

## Questions Often Asked About Membership

**Q. Why do people join the League?**

A. There are many reasons: developing associations and friendships with women and men who share a common interest; a desire to understand and influence government at all levels; a wish to be part of an organization that is politically effective; getting accurate factual information on key issues. Leagues with reputations for getting things done attract new members. Celebrate your League's accomplishments. Tell your community that the League is where people can:

- \*  Be heard and make their voices and their votes count
- \*  Get to know the power structure and the people who are part of it
- \*  Do something about current issues
- \*  Learn how the political process works and how decisions are made
- \*  Sharpen communications skills through discussions, debate, writing, speech-making
- \*  Work with a diverse group of doers

**Q. How can we attract members who are representative of our community?**

A. Demonstrate your commitment to a diverse membership. Make it easy to contact the League in your community. Are you listed in the telephone directory? Do you have an answering machine? Is information on the League and how to join available in public places such as the library, community bulletin boards, government building?

Make an effort to reach out to the whole community rather than continuing to work with the same groups. Most important of all, make a point of asking people to join the League and sign them up when they want to join. Offer the opportunity to your friends, relatives, coworkers, neighbors, shopkeepers, students, public officials and retired persons interested in pursuing different interests and new experiences. One of the startling findings of the 1987 LWVUS membership research study was that 91 percent of nonmembers contacted said they had never been asked to join the League! The *Diversity Toolkit* has many suggestions on effective outreach.

The League's visibility, accessibility and outreach can be reinforced in many ways:

- \*  Personal contact – bring guests to meetings and activities
- \*  Provide membership information with all League publications
- \*  Distribute membership information with products sold by the League – jewelry, calendars, tote bags, mugs, etc.
- \*  Be active and involved; be prepared to clearly state how the League is making a difference in your community; wear a League button and carry membership applications

It should be easy to join the League. Sign up people when **they** want to join. Don't refer them to the membership chair or treasurer; don't make them take extra steps. Ask for the check on the spot. Any member can enroll new members and pass the dues check and information to the treasurer or membership chair. And follow up on all prospects. See that membership is a part of every League activity. Capitalize on the fact that all levels of the League – local, state and national – can and do recruit members and that joining the League means becoming a member at all levels.

### **Q. How can we get potential members to join?**

A. First impressions are important. Atmosphere and orientation are tangible ways for your League to tell new and prospective members that you are interested in them and in making them feel at home in the League. Most new members want to know what the League is doing and where they fit in; they want to understand the purpose of a meeting, how it is conducted and what their role might be.

You can give potential members information about the League in a variety of ways: in print (a brief history, bylaws, etc.) or in special meetings that provide a chance to meet and talk informally with movers and shakers of the League. Be creative in giving members access to the League its purpose, program, procedures and leaders.

New member kits are an especially effective tool for recruiting and orienting new members. They provide basic information about the League, help new members feel a part of the overall organization, and give them something tangible to take home. Many state and local Leagues as well as the LWVUS have developed attractive, useful kits. Check them out. At a minimum, a kit should contain:

- \*  A brief history of the organization and its purpose
- \*  A membership application form
- \*  A factsheet on national, state, regional and local program
- \*  A meeting schedule
- \*  A list of the League officers and board
- \*  A copy of the local League newsletter (and possibly *The National Voter* or state newsletter)

You also may want to include a recent publication, such as a Voters Guide, or a catalog of available publications.

### **Q. What can we expect of new members?**

A. It s up to the board and the membership chair/committee to make certain that all members have a variety of ways to get involved in the League. But be realistic in your expectations! Available time and energy vary from one volunteer to another and from one year to the next. Many are employed, full- or part-time, outside their homes; others are busy juggling the myriad responsibilities involved in running households; others are enrolled in graduate school or continuing education programs. Almost all have limited time to volunteer. Research conducted by Lake, Snell and Perry and the Tarrance Group in 1999 found that people want to be most active where they can make an impact, and that is at the community level. Activities that involve the entire family or are well-defined and time-limited are most appealing.

Serving on a committee or attending meetings are only two ways members can participate. Look at things from a fresh perspective. Develop bite-sized job descriptions that allow people to accomplish tasks in a short time. Try to match jobs with the skills, interests and time constraints of those you ask to do them. Be available to help, but give them freedom to be creative. Run efficient and productive meetings, so people feel their time is well spent.

In sum, to grow and prosper, Leagues need to make a place for members with different ways of showing their commitment. Some will lend financial support rather than time. Others will work willingly but may need help in meeting financial obligations. Find ways to make them all a part of the League, and be sure they know that their contribution is valuable. Always remember that a member who is inactive today may well be active tomorrow.

**Q. How can we keep the members we already have?**

A. Formal and informal surveys taken at the national, state and local levels indicate that the annual turnover rate in the League is roughly one-fourth to one-third. Thus, to grow, a League must replace more than 25-33 percent of its current number of members every year. Developing an effective strategy to increase your renewal rate is the most economical way to keep your membership on an upward spiral. It is central to any membership plan. Here are some ideas to pursue:

- \* □ Ask current and former members why they did or didn't stay. Perhaps no one asked them to renew!
- \* □ Find out why they do or do not participate, which activities, events, and results are liked the most.
- \* □ Devise a short questionnaire (see box for sample) and send it to current and former members with a return addressed (and stamped, if possible) envelope. Keep it brief to encourage responses from both satisfied and not-so-satisfied members. Leave plenty of space for answers and make signatures optional. You can also get the same information by phoning. The answers you receive will provide valuable clues to what is attractive about the League and what may need changing to meet needs/interests of present members.

Outline a plan that addresses the needs you've uncovered through the questionnaire. A membership retention strategy outlined in the LWVUS publication *Membership Management* pinpoints three objectives:

- \* □ Recognition – spotlighting individual member achievements in the League and the community;
- \* □ Camaraderie – adding a social dimension to League activities;
- \* □ Diversity – creating ways for all members to participate.

Other objectives might be to provide special training in leadership skills, lobbying techniques or League issues.

### *Questionnaire for Current and Former Members*

First analyze the purpose of your survey, then design questions to suit that purpose. The following are examples of short questions specifically designed to reveal just how satisfied or dissatisfied present members are with their League membership.

Why did you join the League?

What part of the League has greatest appeal to you?

What changes do you suggest?

Does the League today meet your needs? How? How not?

What changes would you like to see?

Do you think the League today is a worthwhile organization? Why? Why not?

What changes do you think would make it more worthwhile?

Do you enjoy being a member of the League of Women Voters? Why? Why not?

What would make your membership more satisfying?

What League activities appeal to you most? Least?

How long have you been a member of the League?

\*  Few to 2 years

\*  3-10 years

\*  1-5 years

\*  Over 10 years

Does the League today meet your expectations? Why? Why not?

Do let your members know that the board is listening to them. Include a brief report on your findings in your League bulletin and implement your plan. In the words of former LWVUS President Nancy Neuman, It s up to each of us to promote a psychology of growth in the League &we need steady membership growth at all times. That means each League has to have a strategy not only to replace members who have dropped, but also to renew current members promptly and to have a goal for a net increase each year & We need a larger pool of members from which to draw the next generation of leaders.

## *Key Findings of LWVUS 1987 Membership Research Study*

**1. The League of Women Voters has extremely high name recognition among the general public, but there is relatively little in-depth knowledge of what the League does.** Only 13% of our sample of nonmembers named the League first when asked to name a national organization dedicated to educating and informing the public about issues and candidates for office. 46% were unable to name any activity carried out by the League of Women Voters. Debates were most likely to be suggested by nonmembers as a possible League activity by 23%. No other program or activity of the League was named by more than 8%.

**2. The League of Women Voters does not have "an image problem" to overcome in approaching nonmembers.** Only 4% of nonmembers agreed with the interviewer's statement that the League of Women Voters is out of date. Only about one-fifth agreed that the League never takes a stand on the issues or that members of the League are mostly older. Only one in ten agreed with the statement that most League members do not work.

**3. Among both members and nonmembers, there is broad support for the concept of a multi-issue organization, as opposed to a single-interest advocacy group.** Three quarters of all nonmembers said they preferred the multi-issue organization. A slightly higher number of members (78%) preferred the multi-issue organization.

**4. Hearing about the League from a friend is a critical ingredient to a person choosing to join the League of Women Voters.** Nearly half of all locally recruited members indicated this was their point of access. Interestingly, more nationally recruited members indicated that they first heard about the League through a friend (27%) than through the mail (20%).

**5. There is a significant potential for moving nationally recruited members to greater involvement at the local level.** 97% of nationally recruited members express continued interest in the League, and for 43% this interest lies at the local level.

**6. Interest on the part of nonmembers in joining the League is substantial.** 42% of all nonmembers in this survey indicate that they have a future interest in the League. By a margin of three to one, they indicate that this interest is in the League at the local level, as opposed to the national level.

**7. Employment is not a barrier to the commitment of time in the League of Women Voters.** Employed women who are current members of the League are more likely to contribute time to the League than are unemployed members. Unemployed members are the most likely, of all groups, to give just money.

**8. Locally recruited members are more active in the League than nationally recruited ones, but there is a substantial inactivity at the local level as well.** In fact, locally recruited members are more apt to call themselves inactive (43%) than extremely or very active (31%). Only 24% of locally recruited members say they attend most meetings.

# Chapter 8 : Raising and Managing Money

The League of Women Voters at all levels, like any corporation or organization, must be adequately financed in order to operate and achieve its goals. And each level of the League is responsible for the financial well-being of the League as a whole. Financial support for League activities comes from members, non-members and the community at large – foundations, corporations, businesses of all kinds; all sources are essential to League success.

## The League Budget

A budget is a planning instrument. It reflects goals, priorities and activities, showing what a League plans to do and the expenses it expects to incur. It should be possible to tell, by looking at the budget, what the League will spend for administrative and general operating expenses the amount needed to keep the organization going as well as for educational and political activities.

A well conceived, realistic gross budget reflects all anticipated income and expenses for a fiscal year. It shows planned growth in members, dues, contributions and League activities. Income and expenditures balance. Along with direct costs, the budget includes volunteer out-of-pocket expenses that will be reimbursed by the League (parking, child-care, mileage allowances, etc.).

The League budget also reflects **each League's obligation to support the League as a whole.** A local League budget shows League support for the state League in an expense item for per member payment (PMP) to the state; it may also indicate support of an ILO, if the League belongs to one; and it provides for direct support to the LWVUS through the PMP.

The amount of the LWVUS PMP is determined by delegates to national convention. The *LWVUS President's Packet*, published each year, discusses in detail how the national per member payment assessment and billing system works. Funds for the local League's PMP to the LWVUS and payment to the state League can be raised any way the League chooses – through dues, member/nonmember contributions, fundraising activities, sale of publications or League services. Leagues may pay up to 25 percent of their national PMP assessment to the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in unrestricted tax-deductible money (see *LWVUS President's Packet*, LWVUS Pub. #152, for further information). Many state Leagues also have Education Funds and allow their local Leagues to use unrestricted tax-deductible funds to pay a portion of their state PMP.

## Developing the Budget

The League budget is developed by a committee that seeks out the goals of members and the board of directors. Appointed well before the annual meeting or state, ILO, or national convention, the budget committee, chaired by an off-board member, often includes the president, treasurer (who, as stated in the bylaws, may not serve as chair), finance and public relations chairs, as well as off-board members.

Budget development starts with ideas from members and direction from the board on priorities for the coming year, as well as long-term objectives for the League over a period of several years. Remember, for example, that it is important to budget for the expenses of sending delegates to state and national conventions – an investment in your local League's future.

Board members and committees plan what they hope to do and put estimated price tags on their proposed activities. They are guided, but not limited, by actual current expenditures, for this is the point at which chairs and committees can dream a little about the kinds of things they would like to do beyond what they are currently doing. **Budgets that stay the same year after year do not reflect a creative, growing League.** Priorities and activities change as community issues and needs change, and as the League becomes more effective, its budget reflects those changes.

The budget committee prepares and recommends a budget to the board. The board reviews and evaluates the proposed budget, making such changes as it thinks necessary or directs the budget committee to add, delete or change emphasis. The board then approves the budget to be submitted to members for a vote at the annual meeting or to delegates at national, state and ILO conventions.

Once LWV members or their delegates adopt the budget, the board sees that it is carried out. The board can revise the budget to respond to changed circumstances such as an unexpected windfall or a shortfall in income, but it does not usually make major changes in the overall level of expenditures authorized or the general direction of League emphasis approved at the annual meeting or convention.

## Dues

Dues make up a significant amount of the income in most local League budgets. Each League decides the level of its dues and the method of collecting them. In setting dues, Leagues should consider all the costs related to maintaining an effective organization. For example, it is helpful to break down the expenses involved in properly servicing each member – what it costs to produce and distribute the bulletin/newsletter, to purchase publications, to remit amounts due to the ILO (if appropriate) and to the state and national Leagues – and set the dues accordingly. LWVUS bylaws provide for reduced PMP for additional members in a household and for students, and most Leagues also establish a lower level of dues for additional household members.

Leagues sometimes set up categories of dues to help members whose ability to pay may vary, such as individuals on fixed incomes and students. Those who have been members for 50 years are excused from the payment of dues and no PMP is charged for them. No PMP is charged for

nationally recruited members (NRMs). When an NRM renews locally, however, the local League does pay a PMP for that member. Regardless of the dues category in which a member is grouped, local League PMP to the LWVUS and PMP to the state League are figured on the basis of each individual member, although additional members in a household and students are currently charged at half rate. (See *President's Packet* for details)

Local Leagues collect dues through one of two systems – the anniversary system or the annual system. In the former, members pay dues on the anniversary of the month they first joined. In the latter, all members pay dues at the beginning of the fiscal year or in a specific month; new members joining during the remainder of the year sometimes are charged a prorated amount for the rest of the League year.

## Fundraising and Development: Working Together to Fund the League

Giving money and volunteering time remain pervasive activities in the United States according to a 1988 report by the Independent Sector, which found that the percentage of income contributed to an organization by individuals increases directly with the number of hours volunteered.

This is good news for the League of Women Voters. Our most dedicated and committed resource is our members. Leagues must harvest this resource by giving members the opportunity to support the League with contributions as well as time. In addition, Leagues need to seek support from the community at large – corporations, local businesses, individuals and foundations. Fundraising is a year-round effort, not just a once-a-year finance drive. Leagues should seek and accept money whenever a donor wants to give!

### The Role of the Board

As with all nonprofit organizations, the role of the board in development is central in making certain the League is adequately financed. Usually, a member of the board heads a development committee whose job it is to raise the money needed to finance the League budget. The chair and committee also act as finance advisors to the board. The committee may wish to include people outside the League as finance advisors and consultants.

Early in the League year, the development committee prepares and presents to the board its suggestions for various fundraising activities for the year. The board amends, approves or rejects the suggestions. Once the board approves the plan, the finance/development chair may need permission to engage in fundraising from a community local review board; check to see if one exists in your community. Every board member helps in the effort – ideally taking the lead by making personal contributions to help finance the League as well as using contacts and making finance calls to seek support of League projects and general operations.

### Mailings to Members, Friends and Cold Lists

Fundraising letters should make the case for why your League needs money – a specific project, office staff, equipment, a publication or a public service announcement, etc. Always enclose a response form that suggests dollar amounts and a reply envelope in your mailing. Stamped reply envelopes should be included in the letters to your most generous donors; tests have shown that this increases the response rate.

Mailing fundraising appeals to cold lists – that is to individuals who do not know the League – will almost certainly result in a net financial loss in the first year. Your board must be prepared to underwrite the cost of this prospecting mailing and to **renew** these contributors in succeeding years; this is the way prospecting for new donors (or members) will be cost effective for your League.

Mailings to your members and their friends, on the other hand, are generally cost effective from the beginning. People give to people, and the more personalized your appeal – having board members write personal notes on letters to people they know – the more you'll increase the response rate. Don't hesitate to go back to your best donors several times. If their contributions will make a difference, your best supporters will want to be part of your success. Do them a favor – give them the opportunity to be part of the League's important work. And then give them credit!

## Personal Visits to Prospective Funders

A face-to-face solicitation is the most effective way to ask for and get a gift for your League – whether it's from a League member, a member of the business community or a friend. When setting up a fundraising appointment, you may want to follow these guidelines:

- \* □ First send a letter outlining the League's activities and need for funds and requesting an appointment.
- \* □ Follow up with a phone call, asking for the appointment; giving the person two dates to choose from makes it harder to say no.
- \* □ Learn as much as possible about your potential donor before your appointment.
- \* □ Use the team approach to solicit – one person to present the case and the other to make the ask. Remember, you must **ask** for the gift before you can receive it.

When meeting with a prospective donor, it's important that you **listen** for what's important to this donor – why he or she (or the corporation, foundation or business) might want to give to the League (i.e., what's in it for them), and how they would like to be recognized. If it becomes clear that the timing is not right, then ask if you can return for a contribution in six months or a year. Be sure to send a letter of thanks – either for a contribution received or for the chance to discuss mutual concerns.

## Telephone Solicitations

While not as effective as personal visits, telephone calls also are a proven technique to raise money. Although many people dislike fundraising telephone calls, they do work. A number of Leagues around the country are using phonthons to underwrite their excellent work. Generally,

state Leagues rely on local League volunteers to make the all-important calls and share the proceeds with local Leagues in proportion to the number of volunteer hours given by local League volunteers.

A successful phonathon includes these key elements:

- \* □ A leader letter alerting the prospective donor to a future call and its purpose
- \* □ A persuasive phone call asking the individual for a specific amount, and checking the donor's address (a script is helpful to volunteers)
- \* □ A follow-up note from the caller, together with a reply card and return envelope, that goes into the mail the day after the phone call
- \* □ A thank-you letter, mailed to the donor within 48 hours of receiving the gift

## Corporate Matching Funds

Many companies will match gifts to the LWVEF or to state and local League-established education funds. Be sure to include matching gift language on the response forms you enclose in your fundraising appeals. Point out that this is a way to double a gift to the League. Corporations have varying guidelines on the types of nonprofits they will match, but it is worth reminding your donors of this.

## Planned Giving

The League of Women Voters Education Fund initiated a planned giving program in 1981 that benefits all levels of the League. The program promotes tax-advantaged giving options bequests, gifts of stock, real estate or other assets, as well as gifts that return income to the donor throughout his or her lifetime. It operates on a donor's choice basis; that is, gifts go to whichever League or Leagues the donor specifies. The League's national office can provide you with information on how to approach your members and donors to make gifts to the League, either in the form of a deferred gift to the pooled income fund or a bequest.

## Marketing League Products and Services and Special Fundraisers

Many Leagues raise a substantial amount of money by selling their services or products in the community. Some examples are network election reporting; sponsoring vacation trips and go-see tours for members and friends; offering products such as mugs, calendars and tote bags; monitoring elections for organizations; taking the dog census. What will work in your community? Developing workshops, conducting energy or housing surveys, organizing or moderating conferences, publishing voters guides—these are all creative ideas for bringing in funds for your League.

Special fundraisers are yet another way to raise money, get publicity and give members an opportunity to have fun! Raffles, League nights at the theater, wine-tasting parties, legislative parties (invite politicians, sell tickets to the public), luncheons or dinners honoring outstanding citizens are among the most cost-effective money makers Leagues have tested in recent years.

Do plan and evaluate these fundraising methods as thoughtfully as any other League activity to be sure that the money raised justifies the amount of volunteer time needed to carry it off.

## Record Keeping

Make sure your League solicitors complete call reports after visiting a corporation or an individual donor. It's important to maintain careful, up-to-date records of your donors' name, address, giving history and other information that will make it easy for you to go back for contributions in the future. For your most generous contributors, League records should include information on who knows them as well as who is the best person to write or call. Your records should include information on deadlines for submission of funding requests to corporations or foundations as well as any specific criteria they follow for making contributions.

## Tax-Deductible and Non-Tax-Deductible Contributions

As with all League activities, the budget is crucial to the success of funding activities. It can be an excellent design for giving if the League solicitor presents it to the prospective donor in person or by mail as a design for action. League solicitors may accept contributions in the form of both hard and soft money. Hard money is not tax-deductible and can be used to fund any League activity, whether administrative, educational or action-oriented. It can pay office rent, fund an action campaign or publicize a League's preference on a ballot issue.

Frequently, however, contributors may be willing to give to the League only if they can claim an income tax deduction for the contribution or if it can be restricted to a specific project. Such tax-deductible contributions must be made to an education fund or other organization classified by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-deductible. Leagues can accept such soft money donations by requesting that payment be made to the League of Women Voters Education Fund or to a local or state League education fund, if one exists. As a service to Leagues, the LWVEF banks local and state League funds earmarked for educational projects, thus freeing Leagues of the legal and fiscal red tape that operation of such a fund entails. Funds deposited by Leagues are returned to the depositing Leagues once the LWVEF trustees have approved the educational project proposed by that League. There is currently no charge for this service.

## IRS Regulations

The Internal Revenue Service has developed detailed regulations on tax-deductible and non-tax-deductible contributions. Specific language must appear on reply forms for fundraising letters as to whether or not a person's contribution to the League will be tax-deductible. When putting on a fundraising event, you must be sure to let donors know what amount of the contribution to the event is tax-deductible. If you have questions on what to say or how to say it, be sure to check with your tax adviser or the development director at the LWVUS office.

Remember that one of the reasons people do not contribute is because no one asked them. Be sure your League gives every member and friend the opportunity to give to your League.

## Appreciation and Recognition

Everyone needs to be thanked. Make recognition awards to board members, League volunteers and contributors part of your League's development program. Be generous in giving credit to League members for their support and assistance in the fundraising effort—whether with personal notes or an informal get-together.

Donors—individuals, corporations, foundations, unions—all need to be thanked, recognized and involved in the program. Reports are promptly made to donors who have funded or helped to fund a particular project, publication or activity to let them know that you do appreciate their help. Invitations to special League events, recognition plaques and listing the names of contributors in League bulletins or annual reports are easy and effective ways to let contributors know they are needed and appreciated.

# 9: Communications

Clearly, everything a League does involves communications: election services, legislative action, membership, fundraising, program planning, and so on. The target audience may be internal or external or both; the key is making sure that your message is focused, that it is heard and understood, and that it will have the maximum impact on the intended audience. To be effective, a communications strategy cannot be undertaken as an afterthought or an optional activity. It must be built into every activity and project on your League's agenda.

In the League, communications usually is understood to include public relations and publishing—both important avenues for getting your message to the public. (Communications specifically among the levels of the League is discussed in Chapter 4.)

The League board should set aside time to develop an overall communications plan around your League's priorities. A major advocacy campaign, for example, may require an in-depth communications strategy that has both short- and long-term objectives and that includes both public relations and publishing. Another effort may require less planning and fewer communications components.

In a very real sense, communications is a vital part of every LWV leader's job. All board or off-board leaders should keep the PR or communications chair up to date on plans and progress so that, for example, key media representatives can be notified about League activities at strategic times. By working closely together, leaders can multiply the League's opportunities to accomplish its goals and enhance visibility in the community.

## Public Relations

Good public relations take time, planning, goal-setting, decision-making and follow through. It means knowing the media and how they function, analyzing the political forces in your community working for or against a particular issue, taking the pulse of public opinion, making a realistic assessment of your League's resources that can be committed to a particular project and recognizing and promoting the League's niche or perspective on a story. At times it also can mean being ready to drop everything to meet a media deadline, to produce a statement or press release or to call key reporters.

Your public relations chair (or communications or media chair) thus needs to have a good sense of the range of activities that the League plans to undertake and the priority assigned to each one. She or he also needs to know who might make a good spokesperson on a particular issue, who has the background materials needed for a feature story on a LWV activity, who has contacts at city hall or the local network affiliate. Working with other members of the board and members of a communications or public relations committee, she or he coordinates and designs a

comprehensive program to carry the League's message to where it has the most impact. And she or he should always (including evenings and weekends) be available to the press.

## Media Relations

The League's visibility in the community or state depends, to a large extent, on how successful it is in getting stories carried by the media—both print and broadcast. The PR chair should be familiar with media personalities, practices and needs, including what reporters cover what areas, deadlines and editorial positions. Good contacts can mean the difference between a story being covered or overlooked, and scheduling your event to suit the local television stations deadline for the news can make the difference between community-wide visibility and no visibility at all.

Your League won't have a major story every week. However, letting the media know what the League is doing on a regular basis serves many needs: it keeps the League name in front of reporters and identifies the League as a source of information, stories and comments.

That way when you do have a major event or story, reporters are more likely to cover it. Getting into newsprint or on the news isn't easy; there is always brisk competition for the limited amount of space or time available. Persistence and good working relationships with the press can pay off.

Don't be afraid of controversy. The hotter the issue, the more likely you are to get media attention. Don't hesitate to speak out, even in the face of strong and vocal opposition. Be sure of your facts and be prepared for criticism—and for community support and respect for your League's commitment and courage.

For priority League campaigns on a nationwide or statewide level, the national or state League will take the lead in planning overall strategies and providing local Leagues with media messages or tools (such as press releases or op-eds) that you can adapt for use in your community.

To be ready to organize local media campaigns, your League (or a group of Leagues in your area) must take some initial steps. First, systematically identify all available media outlets, including print dailies, weeklies, regional or neighborhood magazines and periodicals, cable outlets, public television stations, net affiliates and independent stations, and radio stations with news or community affairs departments. Collect as much background and operational information as possible and organize it in a media list that includes names and titles of contacts, phone numbers (day, night and weekend) and deadlines. Be sure to update your media list periodically. And make sure the media has the name and phone numbers of the LWV contact person.

**Print media** (daily newspapers, periodicals, community weeklies, regional magazines) offer many opportunities for communicating your message. You can reach this market through print coverage of current local events, published interviews, feature articles, editorial opportunities

(op-eds), editorial board reviews (formal interviews with the editors of a newspaper) and letters to the editor. Press releases, press conferences and interviews are the standard means of approaching the print media (see box).

**Electronic media** (radio and television) attract a larger and more diversified audience than newspapers and, in many communities, far outnumber local print outlets. They broadcast current local news, produce public affairs programming, interview newsmakers/experts, provide on-air guest editorial opportunities and lend their support to community projects through special feature programs or segments, public service announcements (PSAs) or documentaries. Like the print media, electronic media reporters respond to press releases, press conferences and interview opportunities.

### *PR Tools*

- \* □ **Press Release.** This is the most common and generally the most effective means of communicating with the press. Issue the release on your League letterhead, and be sure to include the name and phone number of your League's press contact person. Press releases should be no more than two double-spaced pages. Make certain your facts are accurate and your point is made clearly and forcefully. Depending on timing and resources, press releases can be distributed through the mail, hand-delivered, sent via fax, or e-mail.
- \* □ **Press Conference.** Call a press conference only when you have a very important announcement that cannot be handled in another way, such as an important development in a fast-breaking story, an appearance by a well-known supporter, an impasse in negotiating a debate agreement, or release of newsworthy data from a League survey. Make sure you time your press conference to take advantage of reporters' deadlines.
- \* □ **Press Kit.** This should be issued to all of your media contacts on a particular story or campaign. It should include a factsheet on the League and its leaders, the name of the LWV contact person, a press release, as factsheet or backgrounder on the issue at hand, plus any relevant newsclips or endorsements.

Remember that television thrives on visuals, so when enlisting TV coverage be mindful of the setting you provide. The more exciting, colorful and appropriate the environment for the event, the more likely it is that television will cover it. Television also generally spends less time on a particular news item than most print publications, thus putting a premium on action, brevity and clarity—important points to keep in mind in your planning. Radio generally has a smaller news staff budget than most print publications and often presents news in an even more abbreviated format than television. However, many commercial and public radio outlets carry a variety of talk-show and community affairs programming that may offer excellent opportunities for a League spokesperson to publicize and comment on a key issue. *Guide to Getting Good Media Coverage* (pub #1000, June, 1994) is a good resource for Leagues.

## Community Relations

Well developed community relations are an important asset for any League and can be a critical factor in achieving your goals. Being aware of community attitudes and keeping in touch with key officials and opinion leaders assure that these contacts can be tapped quickly for needed action or information. In addition, feedback from community leaders can help sharpen League thinking about how to proceed with a position, action strategy or event. It can identify both the nature and depth of support on which to build and any opposition to be overcome.

Encourage members to tell others what the League is doing on a priority issue and to seek community support for League stands. Members can do this as part of their daily professional and personal contacts or they can be asked to make a more formal effort. Does an LWV member know the president of the chamber of commerce, a member of the school board, a local union leader, the head of the housing authority? Perhaps that member should be the one to make a first contact with the key person the League wants to reach.

A League speaker's bureau is a good tool for getting your message—whether it be voter registration, League research on household hazardous waste or a local education issue, for example—to community groups and for networking with other organizations. Of course, informal networking also is a very important part of promoting the League and its goals. Encourage members to become involved in League activities, radio shows or issue forums, so that they can share in League contacts and community outreach.

Being accessible to the public is an important part of community relations. A listing in the telephone book, a post office box and a website are invaluable. If your library or other community agencies maintain a directory of organizations be sure the League is listed and the listing is up to date.

The more members promote the League's community relations, the more they feel an integral part of the League and the community. And Leagues that involve their members in reaching out ultimately benefit by retaining and expanding their membership while increasing community contacts.

## Publishing

Publishing can be a major component in achieving League goals—such as informing members and the public on major issues, encouraging citizens to become involved in the political process or soliciting support for League positions. The board should consider publishing plans in the context of overall communications goals and strategies, so that each publication serves a real need and is not just done as a reflex action.

In addition to your own publishing, you can draw on state and national League publications to meet goals in advocacy, citizen education, member recruitment, fundraising and so on. The LWVUS/LWVEF publishes a catalog of general interest publications as well as a list of resources specifically targeted to League leaders; both are available free from the national

League office (see Reading List for selected national League publications). State Leagues also furnish local Leagues with a catalog of publications in print.

## The Bulletin/Newsletter

Your League's most basic tool for communicating with your members is the local newsletter or bulletin. The board's role is one of setting overall policy for the content and tone of the newsletter. The president generally approves final copy for the newsletter. A good newsletter should be an effective tool for membership involvement and retention by conveying a sense of your League's accomplishments and expertise, as well as communicating information. If you add elected officials, contributors or other nonmembers to the mailing list, you should still direct the content to your primary audience: your members.

Look for an editor who will make the most of this communications opportunity and then make sure the editor has plenty of support from the board, from a committee or from interested members. If the editor or the president regularly has to produce all of the copy or make up for missed deadlines, you are writing a prescription for volunteer burn-out. If your League has paid staff, encourage the editor to rely on staff support wherever possible. Or your League could consider contracting with someone part-time to edit and produce your newsletter, freeing volunteers for other roles.

Keep in mind that your newsletter is the only communication from your League that many members will receive on a regular basis. It should give readers a good idea of the full range of League activities and expertise and it should have a welcoming, positive and professional tone. Keep in mind that the newsletter is a widely circulated document that conveys your League's image to those who see it.

Even though your newsletter is primarily an in-house vehicle, take care to keep it free of jargon or inside information that only experienced insiders will understand. Include full names and phone numbers with stories to make it easy for members to get in touch. Cover League or related community events for members who are unable to attend. Include a calendar to alert readers to upcoming activities. Most League newsletters include a president's column, a membership application, a board list or the names of the president and editor, and an address and phone number for contacting the League.

Many state Leagues produce excellent guidelines and advice for writing and publishing League bulletins/newsletters. Local Leagues should check to see what is available from the state League. Some state League newsletters feature activities of local Leagues around the state, which provides a good opportunity for sharing your League's successes and benefitting from other Leagues' experiences.

Remember that design, presentation and readability are as important to your internal audience as to your outside market. Your newsletter has to compete with a plethora of other reading material that comes to every household. The look as well as the content of the League newsletter should convey the image of a professional, vital organization of activists. Explore whether any members

of your League have graphic design expertise or know a graphic designer who can produce your newsletter or perhaps design a strong, simple format that could be implemented using word processing or desktop publishing software. Leagues are asked to use the LWVUS logo on all publications to establish their identity as part of the national organization. Many Leagues are able to get printing donated; if that is not an option for yours, you can hold down production costs by getting competitive bids on duplication. Income from the sale of ads is another option.

The annual LWVUS *President's Packet*, traditionally published and sent to local and state Leagues in September, outlines in-League bulletin-sharing procedures. Local and state Leagues are asked to send bulletins/newsletters to the LWVUS office, and Leagues also send their bulletin to a specific member of the LWVUS board. Local Leagues should check with their state League about any bulletin-sharing system within their state. Make the most of the opportunity, and don't hesitate to borrow editorial or design ideas from other Leagues.

## Voters Guides

Many Leagues publish nonpartisan information on candidates and issues for voters at election time, as a service to the community. In some communities the local newspaper publishes this type of election guide, and the local League focuses on other election-related services. If you do produce a voters guide or candidates questionnaire, be careful in formulating your procedures and question so that they protect the League's nonpartisan stance. (See Chapter 11 for more information)

## Other Publications

Well thought-out publications with a specific targeted purpose and audience are an important chunk of the budget for many Leagues—and they also can bring in significant income. A look back at both successful and unsuccessful publishing decisions can help the board make cost-effective plans for the future.

Consider how publishing can contribute to your League's priorities and to your overall communications plan. Focus on a few needs each year and then ask these specific questions about each proposed publication.

- \*☐ Will the publication be instrumental in achieving one or more of your League's priority goals? How?
- \*☐ Is a publication the best vehicle for achieving your goal? Would a video be more effective? A Public Service Announcement (PSA)? An op-ed column in the local paper?
- \*☐ Does such a publication already exist? Check with the state League, the national League, neighboring Leagues, local government, other community groups working on this issue.
- \*☐ What is the specific purpose of this publication? If you can't answer in one or two sentences, you need to narrow your focus.

- \*☐ Does this publication have an identified audience? Be as specific as you can.
- \*☐ What do you want readers to know and do after reading this publication? Be specific.
- \*☐ Will this publication project a dynamic, professional image for the League, both editorially and graphically?
- \*☐ Do you have the necessary resources (both people and dollars) to publish it? Can you raise the money? Can you get editorial, design or production services donated?
- \*☐ Is the proposed publication newsworthy? Useful to the press? Does it position the League as an authority, resource, leader?
- \*☐ Does the publication have sales potential? To whom? Does the League have the commitment and capability to market it effectively?
- \*☐ Will it attract and involve members? How?

Once the board makes a decision to publish, a realistic schedule should be developed. It is wise to include time for review by knowledgeable people both in and outside the League and, in some cases, by a representative of your targeted audience. Besides providing valuable help in assuring your publication's accuracy and sharpening the focus, outside review is a great way to cultivate potential markets for your finished product.

## Marketing/Distribution

Leagues often are torn between the goals of getting publications to the widest possible audience and earning significant income from publication sales. Since it rarely is possible to accomplish both goals at once, it is the board's job to establish an overall policy or to make policy decisions for individual publications. If income is a top priority, publications need to be planned, developed and packaged with that in mind. A strong cover design, for example, can be an effective marketing tool. A well-drawn map divided by precincts or wards can boost sales of a *Know Your City* handbook.

If it is possible to cultivate advance sales of publications, the income can help offset the costs of production. Can you approach area bookstores about carrying your publication? Can you provide promotional brochures and bulk discounts to other community groups? Would your publication be suitable for a high school, college or adult education curriculum?

If wide circulation is the top priority—in the case of a pamphlet urging citizens to vote for a particular League-supported ballot issue, for example—the board might decide that copies should be given away freely and that it will not be an income producer. Realistic choices will increase your League's ability to meet both issue goals and financial goals.

# 10: Program: Study and Action

Program is the League's reason for being, the basis for both education and action efforts. League program consists of those governmental issues that League members choose for concerted study and action. It includes both adopted positions upon which action is taken and issues for study that will lead to a position and action. League Principles—the League's philosophy or concepts of government—provide the authorization for adoption of national, state and local program. (see box)

The League program process begins with selection and adoption, continues with study and discussion, and culminates in action and change. It involves members of the League and members of the community, and it cuts across government and League levels both horizontally and vertically. Local Leagues work simultaneously on local, state, national and (if applicable) regional program issues. Issues reflect community concerns and range from local park facilities to international trade, from childcare to nuclear waste disposal, from air pollution to arms control, from mental health to energy policy. Name it and the League, somewhere, is involved!

## Managing Program

### Where Does League Program Originate?

The short answer is with League members. Some ideas spring from the particular interests of individual members. Some grow out of previous League work. Still others come from a review of a League's community survey or from interviews with key leaders.

Once members have been stimulated to think about the widest possible range of choices, Leagues collect the ideas and winnow them down. For national program, this is done by a process closely akin to that used during a national study; Leagues submit report forms, which are tabulated and analyzed for board consideration. Local Leagues use a variety of methods to compile a list: discussion meetings, telephone surveys, in-person polls, bulletin tear-offs. As the results come in, member preferences become clear. In fundamental terms, the process outlined in the bylaws for selecting program, whether local, regional, state or national, is designed to ensure member participation in the choices made.

## *League 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 that 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; that government 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.

## *Where Do the Principles Come From?*

The Principles are concepts of government to which the League subscribes. These concepts are a direct descendant of the Platform, which served the League from 1942 to 1956 as the national repository for principles supported and positions taken by the League as a whole in fields of government to which it has given sustained attention. By 1952, the Platform had disappeared from the League vocabulary, but the principles survived as The Principles. Since that time, the Principles have served two functions, according to the LWVUS bylaws: (1) authorization for adoption of national, state and local program (Article XII), and (2) as a basis for taking action at the national, state and local levels (Article XII).

## *What About Action on the Principles?*

The national board suggests that any action on the Principles be taken in conjunction with present League positions to which they apply and on which member agreement and understanding are known to exist. The Principles are rather broad when standing alone, so it is necessary to exercise a certain degree of caution when considering using them as a basis for action. Furthermore, since 1974 most of the Principles have been an integral part of the national program, most notably in the criteria for evaluating government action that appear at the end of the formal listing of public policy positions in *Impact on Issues*.

## Board Consideration

After reviewing and discussing a winnowed list, the board decides what to recommend to the annual meeting or convention as proposed program. In evaluating member suggestions, the board asks questions such as these:

- \*  Does it fall within League Principles?
- \*  Does the League already have positions that can be applied to the proposal?
- \*  Is government action needed? Possible?
- \*  How much member interest has been expressed for the issue?
- \*  Is this the crucial time for the issue?
- \*  Do the political realities permit effective action?
- \*  Is this the appropriate level of the League to address the issue?
- \*  Will the League's involvement make a unique impact? Increase the League's influence and credibility?
- \*  What are the prospects for funding anticipated educational activities and/or action strategies?
- \*  Will the League be able to draw on allies?

Once the board decides which issues to recommend, it words them as succinctly as possible, identifying the problem to be addressed and the scope of the study.

## Program Adoption

The board reports (usually in the local bulletin/newsletter) its proposed or recommended program, which consists of existing statements of positions and any proposed studies, to the members by the deadline specified in the bylaws. Many Leagues also include information on not-recommended issues (issues suggested during the program-planning process but not included in the board's proposed or recommended program). The board should be prepared to explain its proposals and the reasons for its choices.

The wording of a proposed issue may be amended at the annual meeting or convention, provided the intent is not changed. Only program issues submitted by the deadline may be considered. Since each item on a League program must be adopted by vote at the annual meeting or convention, issues or statements of positions previously on the program must be readopted in the same or amended form to continue to be part of the League's program.

A local League's program is determined by members at its annual meeting; state and national programs are voted on by delegates at state and national League conventions. In the course of the program adoption discussion, members often direct the board on scope of inquiry, timing, emphasis and ways to handle the study and/or action phases. The board takes this into account in planning for the year.

## Emergency Program

Sometimes unforeseen events occur that members think the League should urgently address.

League bylaws spell out the circumstances under which issues can be adopted at times other than regular annual meetings or conventions. See the sample bylaws (Appendix B) for suggested wording.

## Committee Organization

Leagues plan and coordinate program in various ways. Often the vice-president (or one of the vice-presidents, if your League has more than one) takes on this assignment; sometimes a board member or a committee plays this role. The assignment includes overall responsibilities for:

- \*☐ Planning a program of study and action for the League year (in conjunction with the action coordinator, if your League has one)
- \*☐ Conducting the program planning meetings where members decide what items will be recommended for state and national program
- \*☐ Overseeing the work of board members responsible for program issues and chairing resource committees

Once program is adopted, the task of forming program resource committees usually is the next step. *Meaningful Meetings* (LWVUS Pub. #319) is a valuable tool at this point, as it details the role of the chair and resource committee in undertaking research and producing successful discussion meetings on program issues.

### *Guidelines for a Resource Committee*

- \*☐ Agree on overall goals and be aware of **time, money and resources available** to accomplish these goals.
- \*☐ **Pinpoint and coordinate sources of information** on the issue, such as publications, experts, and other organizations and groups, and carry out plans for **additional research** on the issue if necessary.
- \*☐ Devise ways to **get information to members and the public** and design programs and activities for the League and the community that **build and sustain interest in the issue**.
- \*☐ **Formulate questions** for member agreement or consensus and outline possible decision-making methods.
- \*☐ **Suggest action approaches and take part in action** on an issue once a position is reached.
- \*☐ **Evaluate** the success and effectiveness of the committee's efforts.

Regardless of the specific assignment, each committee should devise an outline of all projected activities for board approval. Once plans have been approved, the committee continues its work, reporting to the board for guidance and further decisions as needed.

The board member who chairs a resource committee and the committee as a whole are responsible for pulling information together and planning its use; examining all sides of an issue

so that the information presented to members will be balanced as well as objective; and arranging for meetings, TV and radio shows, go-see tours and other activities designed to spark member and community interest in the issue. Once a position is reached, the committee takes part in developing and implementing action strategies to implement the position.

No program resource committee ever needs to start from scratch. On any issue important enough to be chosen for League program, information already exists in the form of books, magazine articles, videos, or radio or television programs. Build on what has already been done, supplementing existing material as needed. Adapt material developed by other Leagues. Clearly, more in-depth research and writing will be done by a local League on a local issue, whereas with state or national issues its task is more one of choosing and coordinating information prepared at the state or national level.

While the members of resource committees often become expert on issues, they should remember that materials prepared for League members should focus on the information they need to make decisions as **informed citizens**, not as experts or specialists in the field. Sometimes a bibliography, accompanied by a factsheet with provocative questions, may be all that is needed.

The committee also should be alert to ways to involve the community. Consult with community leaders, exchange views with elected and appointed public officials, hold forums and roundtables of experts, debate the issue on radio and television. Supplement the written word with other techniques. Cassettes, films, cable television, debates all are ways to present information and to offer members and the community opportunities to take part in activities, not just to be passive recipients of information. Two of the creative techniques used by Leagues are (1) case histories to present information, alternating one side's view with the opposing view to illustrate differences, and (2) a lively game to illustrate a point.

## Sharing Resources

The most obvious way to share resources is to participate in a joint resource committee with neighboring Leagues or to work through an ILO. In some state Leagues, the state board asks on- and off-board members to form a traveling team to bring information on state and national items to local Leagues, thereby sharing expertise and leadership resources. All of these approaches can save Leagues from duplicating efforts.

## Reaching Member Agreement

Before the League can take action, members must agree in broad terms on what they think about various aspects of a policy issue. The board chooses from a number of methods—group discussion and consensus, concurrence, questionnaires, telephone polls—to reach a League decision about the issue. Regardless of the process used, the important point is that it is essential that members have an opportunity to become informed before being asked to make decisions on the issue under consideration. The board chooses the approach to be used, recognizing that the nature of an issue will affect how it is studied and how decisions are reached.

**Study** makes action possible. It brings to members the knowledge that makes League action uniquely credible and respected. During the study phase, members have an opportunity to examine the facts and key pro and con points. They are encouraged to discuss the political realities of action and to contribute ideas for the board to consider when it formulates an action strategy after a position is reached.

Whatever study and member agreement procedures are used, the board sets ground rules at the beginning so that members will understand the process. It is the board's role to collect the information needed to formulate the position based on member input and agreement. For example, if the discussion group method (see below) is combined with a member questionnaire (e.g., a bulletin tear-off), how will the replies of one or the other be weighted? If a questionnaire alone is used, must a minimum number of members reply for the results to be valid? If consensus is taken at more than one meeting (units), will the replies be weighted?

**Consensus/group discussion** is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a membership meeting or a series of membership or unit meetings.

#### *A Few Words about Consensus*

The American Heritage Dictionary defines consensus as collective opinion or concord; general agreement or accord. In the League consensus is used:

- \* □ Interchangeably with member agreement to refer to the **overall decision-making process** (including various methods such as questionnaires, polls, and so forth) by which a League board determines that there is substantial agreement among members on an issue.
- \* □ To refer to a **specific technique** used traditionally in the League to discuss and arrive at conclusions on issues.

The resource committee frames consensus questions for the board to review and approve. During the study these questions form the framework for member discussion; they help guide the study and focus members on the points that will ultimately be a part of the League's position. Member agreement emerges from the give-and-take of group interaction and exchange of views.

**Questionnaires and other direct member agreement techniques** are another option. The board may decide to send a questionnaire to the entire membership to solicit the views of each member directly. This can be sent in a special mailing or enclosed in the newsletter as a tear-off. It can be of the yes/no/but variety and it may or may not invite comments.

A **telephone poll** is also a way to discover member attitudes on issues. If telephone polling is used either for the total membership or for a representative sampling, be sure members know the

dates the calls will be made and the questions they will be asked so they will be prepared to answer.

**Concurrence** is the act of agreeing with or concurring with a statement or position. A decision-making technique used by the League for some time, concurrence can work in several ways. Groups of League members or League boards can concur with (1) recommendations of a resource committee or a unit group; (2) decision statements formulated by League boards; or (3) positions reached by another League or Leagues.

As a general rule, background materials presenting the pros and cons on the issue being considered are provided to Leagues and members in the concurrence process. In area Leagues, an issue relating to one jurisdiction is often studied by members living in that jurisdiction, and, after member agreement has been reached by those members, the other members are asked to concur with the results.

## Formulating League Positions

Determining whether member agreement has been achieved and how it should be expressed is the responsibility of the board. It is an interpretive process whereby the board evaluates the reports of member thinking in discussion units or in general member meetings where discussion has taken place or the results of a questionnaire or poll and then determines the broad areas of agreement and disagreement that emerge among its members. In the case of **a local issue**, the board then formulates a position that expresses the League's views on that issue and forms the basis for League action. ILO, state and national boards perform the same function for regional, state and national issues. In formulating positions, all boards keep in mind the importance of wording positions in terms broad enough to enable the League to initiate, support or oppose a variety of legislative and executive proposals over a period of time.

Once the local League board has formulated the position on a local issue, it is announced to members and the community. This statement of position then becomes part of the local League's program, and the board can begin taking action on it immediately. Like all statements of position, it must be readopted by League members at the annual meeting in order to remain on the program.

**A local League's members' conclusions on a regional, state or national issue do not constitute a final LWV position and should not be publicized.** In these cases each local board's responsibility is to report the members' conclusions—areas of agreement, areas where no agreement emerged, level of member participation, etc.—to the regional, state or national board. In turn, the appropriate board analyzes the member agreement reports from local Leagues, develops a position statement that reflects member thinking and announces the position to members and the public. That position is then available immediately to be used as the basis for action.

## Taking Action

*To reach (the League's aim), study is not enough, becoming experts is not enough &. Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but ability to act.*

Marguerite Wells, President

League of Women Voters 1934-44

You may think of League action as Action Alerts from National or Calls to Action from State. But much League work in the community is a type of action. For instance, Leagues also act when they:

- \*☐ Testify before a local governing body
- \*☐ Express League opinions on radio or TV or in the printed press
- \*☐ Hold a town meeting on a timely political issue
- \*☐ Take part in a parade
- \*☐ Talk to a friend about League positions

Leagues act both on current program positions and on Principles. (see box on League Principles) How the League acts – the process used both in making action decisions and in taking action – is what makes the LWV unique. Action that is based on decisions of informed members and that involves these members is what sets the League apart from other organizations. And the fact that we are members not only of a local League, but of the state League and of the League of Women Voters of the United States as well, makes us a powerful constituency when the League acts in concert.

Generally, League boards find it works well to assign the coordination of action to a League leader who likes to get things done. At the same time, the whole board must be involved in designing and directing the action strategy. When planning action strategy on a given issue, a board should evaluate supporting and opposing forces, select techniques likely to achieve desired results and create a favorable climate for effective advocacy. It should decide on the kind, extent and timing of community involvement. Even more important, the board should identify specific areas of the plan that can be carried out by members directly and that utilize member power effectively. Members want to be where the action is. Lobbying, writing letters, circulating petitions, taking polls or conducting interviews are tangible ways members can get in on the action. This approach enables leaders and members to experience the rewards and satisfactions of participating personally in the action arena. Whatever form of action your League chooses, be sure to plan to publicize it.

## **Effective Action and Advocacy – Some Tips and Techniques**

**Prepare to deal with controversy.** Work closely with allies and know the opposition. Keep your cool, stick to the facts and try to expose dishonesty. Be sure your membership and key leaders in the community are behind you and set your League up for success. If the League wins,

members will be ready to tackle the next issue with renewed confidence. If you lose, a noisy loss can call attention to an unsolved problem, and your League can continue efforts to achieve your goal, perhaps through new or different approaches. The League will still have the respect of the community because you will have shown toughness and a willingness to back League stands with political action.

**Get to know your elected and appointed officials.** Congratulate city council members, state legislators and members of Congress upon election or appointment; explain League positions; give them League publications; know their backers, interests, and biases; take advantage of timely opportunities to see them. Don't be apologetic about taking officials' time; it's their job to listen to their constituents. It's especially effective to meet with officials when they are newly elected and eager to meet key constituents from their district.

**Work through coalitions.** Combining forces for joint action toward a limited and well-defined objective can double or triple League impact. However, before League boards decide to join an action coalition, they should fully understand the commitment involved (time, money, resources) and should, if possible, plan to play a leadership role (on a steering committee, etc.) in order to influence the activities of the coalition. The goals, if not the motivation, of the League and the coalition should be compatible. This is especially pertinent when it comes to endorsement of political candidates.

If the coalition decides to endorse candidates after the League has joined, the League should, at a minimum, issue a statement dissociating itself from that aspect of the coalition's work, or the League may decide to withdraw. If the coalition will concentrate its activities on supporting or opposing candidates, or if League goals diverge from those of the coalition, the League should not participate. See Appendix I for examples of coalition guidelines.

**Lobby.** Lobbying is a technique that Leagues use effectively at every level of government. Some state Leagues now hire full- or part-time lobbyists to maintain a high profile at their state legislatures. Effective lobbying builds on these techniques:

- \* □ DO know as much as possible about the person you want to influence and establish good rapport.
- \* □ DO be aware of the legislator's history on the issue.
- \* □ DO argue persuasively. Plan your lobbying message ahead of time.
- \* □ DO be brief with your message and follow up periodically.
- \* □ DO ask for the legislator's point of view and listen closely to the reasoning.
- \* □ DON'T be confrontational or get into protracted arguments.
- \* □ DON'T be afraid to admit ignorance on specific points. Say that you will find the answer

and report back a good opportunity for follow-up.

- \*□ DON'T neglect the public officials whose views agree with League's. Solicit their help in persuading others.

**Monitor.** Often the problem is not that more laws need to be passed, but that those already on the books are not faithfully executed or are diluted by poorly drafted regulations. Monitoring, which usually focuses on the administrative process, can determine whether both the letter and the spirit of the law are being carried out. Often it points up the need for revisions in the law or in the regulations. Monitoring can happen at any stage before or after a bill is passed, or preceding or at the point of litigation.

**Litigate.** When laws are not enforced or when constitutional rights are infringed, litigation is often the only kind of action that will remedy the situation. Sometimes litigation can also clarify points in the law that are contradictory or subject to misinterpretation.

A local or state League can litigate as a plaintiff or as an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) in a wide variety of cases from voting rights to the environment, housing, campaign finance and disclosure laws. Sometimes Leagues find free or reduced-fee lawyers and pay for other costs (for example, filing fees, printing briefs) by fundraising or working with other groups that will share costs. Litigation can bring the League extra dividends. It is a useful way to get media attention and to inform the public. It also can put the League in a stronger position in dealing with legislators and officials because often the threat of litigation is sufficiently persuasive to ensure compliance or administrative cooperation. But Leagues should be aware that litigation can be time-consuming and expensive.

## Working Together to Influence Public Policy

**Taking action on national program.** Effective lobbying on national program issues relies on a partnership among all League levels lobbying in Washington and constituent lobbying at home. This one-two punch gives the League a special impact in influencing national legislation.

In Washington, the LWVUS president testifies on Capitol Hill and, with members of the LWVUS board, lobbies members of Congress (MCs) through phone calls and office meetings. The LWVUS frames the substantive issues and develops political strategies, targets key members of Congress and implements lobbying strategies. Day-to-day lobbying of MCs, staffs and committees is carried out by the League's professional staff lobbyists. The League's volunteer Lobby Corps of some 20 Washington-area League members lobbies each month when Congress is in session.

Lobbying in Washington is highly important, but direct lobbying of MCs by their constituents often is the key to persuading them to the League position. The arguments Leagues and League members make to their representative or senators can make the difference in how they vote on housing or childcare legislation, toxics policy or arms control issues. MCs return to their states or districts regularly during congressional recesses. This is a good time to schedule meetings

with them or to catch them at public events. And it's always a good idea to write a strategically timed letter to your MC and to alert your League members to action opportunities.

### *LWVUS Action Services*

The LWVUS provides a number of services to Leagues and members to get them in on the action.

- \* □ Hill Bulletin, published in *The National Voter*, reports to members on the legislative status of national League issues and outlines lobbying opportunities.
- \* □ Grassroots Lobby Corps. Local and state League members who are interested in taking individual action are encouraged to subscribe to the Grassroots Lobby Corps (GLC). Subscribers receive e-mail lobby requests from the LWVUS for quick, targeted lobbying on priority issues before critical congressional votes. Lobby requests contain background information, suggested messages and a link for sending congressional e-mail. Members can subscribe on the LWVUS website.
- \* □ Action Alerts. Local and state League presidents and DPM subscribers receive Action Alerts at critical times in the legislative process. Most go to every League but occasionally limited Action Alerts go to Leagues in states or districts that have representatives serving on critical committees. An Action Alert calls on Leagues and League members to take immediate action on one key issue and provides the necessary substantive and political background.
- \* □ Member mailings. A brief self-mailer to encourage lobbying on a top priority issue sometimes goes to all League members in targeted states or congressional districts before an especially important vote or series of votes.
- \* □ Legislative Action Center. All press releases and lobby requests are posted on the LWVUS website, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). The online Legislative Action Center links to Capwiz also.
- \* □ Capwiz. The LWVUS subscribes to Capwiz and all members can access its information. There are links to Capwiz on the LWVUS website. Some of the information and services provided by Capwiz are a Congressional directory, information on current legislation and key votes, directories of elected officials at the federal, state and local levels, a media guide to local and national media outlets and reporters, House and Senate daily schedules, and a congressional e-mail service.

In addition to written communication, the LWVUS grassroots lobbying staff acts as a liaison between League lobbyists on Capitol Hill and local and state Leagues. The staff works with League leaders and activists in targeted states and congressional districts to help develop and implement grassroots lobbying strategies.

While it is the job of the national board to take the lead in national action and to keep League action synchronized with the Hill, national legislation is every League's and every member's business. Each state and local League president is expected to send an official League letter or to take whatever official action is requested in response to a national Action Alert. Send copies of

your official letter to the state League and to the LWVUS Lobbying Division at the national office, along with any important political information uncovered during your lobbying visit or call.

The LWVUS Bylaws provide that Leagues may act on national program only in conformity with positions taken by the LWVUS. This helps ensure that the League speaks with one voice and is essential for our effectiveness as an advocacy organization. A League board may choose not to respond to a particular call to action but may not take action in opposition to a position articulated by the LWVUS. Individual League members of course are always free to take whatever action they wish, as long as they do so in their own name and leave no doubt that they do not speak for the League. (Similarly, state Leagues are responsible for determining action policies and strategies on state issues and ensuring that the League's message is consistent throughout the state.)

Leagues are encouraged to take action on any national issues discussed in Action Alerts or e-mail lobby requests. It sometimes happens that a League also wishes to take action at the federal level on an issue that is not an LWVUS priority. **A League that wishes to act on an issue that has not been the subject of an LWVUS call to action must consult with the LWVUS about the intended action.** (See Appendix G for information about the consultation process.)

Do encourage your members—and that includes board members—to contact their legislators on key League national issues because their action greatly enhances the League's clout. It's important to remember, though, that only a League spokesperson, usually the president, speaks in the name of the League. Members speak on their own.

**Sharing the action at other levels of the League.** Local Leagues and members are critical elements of state League lobbying efforts; grassroots pressure from local Leagues increases a state president's clout within the halls of the state capitol.

State Leagues provide services similar to those of the LWVUS to involve local Leagues and members in state action strategies, and each develops its own system for coordinating action. The LWVUS cautions local Leagues and ILOs to consult their state boards before taking action on a state position that has not been suggested or authorized by the state board. In approving or disapproving a local League's or ILO's request to take action at the state level, the state board uses guidelines similar to those used at the national level of the League. Local Leagues should send copies of all communications to state legislators to the state League.

When action crosses city limits or state lines into another League's area of organization, it is important to work closely with the affected League(s) to develop a cohesive action plan. As issues grow more complex, one League's position may differ from a nearby League's on a given issue. This fact does not necessarily mean an impasse that forecloses action. It does mean that everyone involved has to do some creative thinking toward a cooperative solution. It is a good idea for Leagues to communicate with their neighboring Leagues on their respective action agendas. This communication not only will serve to spotlight areas of mutual interest but also could head off any possible conflicts. For more detailed information on action techniques, the

board's role in managing action, and effective lobbying, see *Action Handbook*, LWVUS Pub. #161, and *Empowering Citizens: A Guide to Influencing Public Policy*, LWVUS Pub. #1053.

**Acting under positions from another League level.** This is sometimes referred to as vertical action. A local or state League may want to take action on a LWVUS position at the local or state level. If the relevant League board judges that its members are knowledgeable and support the action to be taken, it can undertake action at the local, regional and/or state level under a national position or positions without clearance from the LWVUS board. Leagues may want to check the online Clearinghouse to see if other Leagues have taken similar action. Leagues also may wish to consult with LWVUS board or staff for background on action previously taken at all levels of the League based on a particular position. Many state Leagues also do not require clearance for state positions to be used locally.

#### *Some History on Program*

A kettle of feels was what Maud Wood Park (League president, 1920-1924) called the first League program adopted in 1920. And no wonder! It contained some 69 items grouped in broad subjects: child welfare, education, the home and high prices, women in gainful occupations, public health and morals, independent citizenship for married women! From 1920 to 1946 all League program national, state and local was proposed by national board program departments and standing committees, then authorized by national convention. The national board furnished study materials for all national and some state items. From the beginning the League took action on its stands; for several years through effective lobbying the League got selected issues included in the platforms of both major political parties and worked for enactment of legislation furthering its program goals. Over the years many procedural changes have been made in the way League program is defined, adopted and structured, but through all the changes the basic concept of study-member agreement-action has remained constant.

As noted in the section on League history, fundamental changes in the program process occurred in the 1940s, when the national program departments were abolished and the number of program items cut substantially. This action was based on the League's conviction that if the League was to help democracy succeed by increasing intelligent citizen participation in government, it must choose a restricted program which was suitable to widespread member participation and leave enough time and energy to take such a program to greater numbers. (*25 Years of a Great Idea*, 1950.)

During the 1950s and 1960s several refinements took place in the way League program items were categorized. Delegates to the 1954 convention voted to group program into **Current Agenda** ("CAs") government issues chosen for sustained attention and concerted action and **Continuing Responsibilities** ("CRs") positions on governmental issues to which the League had given sustained attention and on which it could continue to act. The 1966 convention redefined program as "those governmental issues chosen for concerted study and action." This change made it possible to have program without the CA and CR categories, and at the following convention in 1968 the program was adopted without categorizing issues.

In 1970 the national bylaws requirement for adopting a not-recommended item was changed from three-fifths to a simple majority. CAs and CRs were dropped from the bylaws, and the national program appeared as one list of issues discussed, amended and adopted at national conventions every two years.

# 11: Voters Service/ Citizen Education

Over the years, Leagues have built up high recognition value and reservoirs of community trust by providing citizens accurate, nonpartisan services and information on elections and on governmental issues. Public respect for the League's commitment to factual, unbiased information is a source of pride for League members—one that can be drawn on repeatedly in seeking community support for League activities and in recruiting new members. Providing voters service and citizen education is a time-honored tradition dating back to the founding purposes of the League.

## Voters Service/Citizen Education and Action

Voters service and citizen education are designed to provide citizens with unbiased, factual information as a basis for reaching their own decisions. League action, on the other hand, is based on member study and agreement on selected issues and involves concerted efforts to achieve public policies consistent with League positions. Legislative action and voters service activities should be handled separately and by different people. Guides and other voters service materials and publications should not contain statements of League positions.

It is particularly important to distinguish between voters service and action in the area of voting rights. Generally speaking, gathering and distributing information—providing services to voters—can include efforts to see that existing election laws are complied with. Therefore, League efforts to improve the administration of election laws come under the category of citizen information. However, working to enact new election laws or to change existing ones is lobbying, taking legislative action under League positions. Such action is not appropriate citizen information activity.

For example, the LWVEF Voting Rights Act Monitoring Project aimed to get local officials to observe statutory requirements in existing state election codes if they were not doing so and to point out administrative changes that officials could make to facilitate registration and voting. This citizen education project, which operated with tax-deductible money and in which several Leagues participated during 1982-1986, led to some changes, but they were administrative changes, not changes in the laws. By contrast, in 1989 LWVUS efforts to enact federal voter registration reform legislation, under the League's voting rights positions, were targeted at changing the law and so were legislative actions.

## The Board's Role

The board may decide to set up one committee to handle all voters service and citizen education

or to divide the job, naming one person or committee to oversee election-related activities (voter information on candidates as well as on the election process) and a second person or committee to handle the many non-election activities that the League may undertake to educate citizens on the issues and to help members and the public understand and participate in government and politics.

Once the board sets its priorities and goals for the League year, the designated committee(s), like other League committees, draws up specific plans for voters service and citizen education for the board's consideration. Plans should include a proposed schedule and background on past activities and their effectiveness so that the board can reach informed decisions.

## Election-Related Services

Directed at all voters in the community, election-related services are as varied as the Leagues that carry them out and the communities that benefit from them. Here is a sampling:

- \* □ **Making available registration and voting information.** Brochures; newspaper ads; TV and radio spots; pre-election telephone or online voter information service.
- \* □ **Having members serve as deputy registrars and poll watchers.**
- \* □ **Organizing voter registration campaigns.** Targeting first-time voters, new citizens, youth, minority citizens, low-income people groups that have not traditionally participated in elections registering them wherever they can be reached, from housing complexes to rock concerts.
- \* □ **Publishing voters guides/candidates questionnaires,** often in foreign language editions as well as in English.(see below)
- \* □ **Sponsoring candidates' meetings, debates and interviews.** (see below)
- \* □ **Designing get out the vote campaigns,** using attention-getting slogans, buttons, balloons, bumper stickers.
- \* □ **Providing speakers** on election issues, such as ballot measures.

## Candidates Questionnaires/Voters Guides

Producing candidates questionnaires or voters guides requires especially careful attention and sound judgment by the entire board, in order to protect the League's nonpartisan policy. It is imperative that the League invite all candidates appearing on the ballot to respond and that all candidates for an office (major and minor parties as well as independents) are treated alike. Some Leagues include all eligible candidates, including official write-in candidates, as defined by state election laws.

The main purpose of an election guide or candidates questionnaire is to help the voters make informed choices. The committee draws up the issues to be addressed and recommends questions to be asked and submits them to the board for review and approval. Formulating questions for candidates is a challenging and important task. Questions should give the candidates a chance to express political philosophy as well as views on specific major issues. They should be confined to issues that can be dealt with at the level of government for which the

candidates are seeking office. For fairness as well as reasons of space, Leagues should set and enforce limits on the maximum number of words candidates can use in answering.

The questions should be sent to all candidates at the same time, and the deadline for return of answers should be clearly stated. Many Leagues have found it wise to use return receipt requested mailings to assure that the questionnaires are delivered to the candidate's address. Return envelopes can be provided as a courtesy. If a candidate or party declines to participate, you need only make clear to the public that all candidates and parties were invited.

If a candidate's reply exceeds the word limit, you can do one of two things: ask the candidate to edit his or her answers if time permits, or state on the original request to the candidate that you will cut off all words that exceed the word limit. Leagues should not edit statements submitted by candidates or change the candidate's statement in any way (for example, correcting a typographical or spelling error) except for cutting off statements that exceed the word limit.

Your League may choose to produce an electronic voters guide, using videotaped interviews or cable TV to present candidates' views on the issues. Of course, the same rules of fairness used for written voters guides apply.

Leagues that have websites are encouraged to publish their voters guide there. DNet, the interactive election information website owned and operated by the LWVEF, is available for use by all local and state Leagues. Internet voter guides have two advantages for the candidates: the space restrictions of a printed guide are relaxed; and submissions that miss the print deadline can still be included.

## Candidates Meetings/Debates

Sponsoring candidates debates, like producing voters guides, requires careful decision making by the whole board to protect the League's nonpartisanship. Leagues are strongly advised to adopt careful, objective candidate participation criteria *before* each election season gets underway and before the candidates are known. For example, you might require evidence that a formal campaign is being waged, such as existence of headquarters, campaign staff, issuance of position papers, and campaign appearances. These criteria can then be used to determine which candidates to invite to participate in the League's debate, should your League choose not to invite all candidates.

**A League may stage a debate even if some invited candidates decline to appear. For federal elections, however, federal regulations require that a debate sponsor not proceed with a debate unless at least two candidates for the same office appear at the same event.** Some states may have comparable requirements for state and local elections. Leagues should refer to the LWVEF publication, *Face to Face: A Guide to League-Sponsored Debates* (Pub. #830) for step-by-step guidance on legal requirements and technical considerations in staging candidates debates, or call the LWVEF if you have questions.

## Working with Other Groups

In providing voter information, Leagues often work with other organizations, including newspapers and other media, that endorse candidates or that have political action committees (PACs). In deciding how to work with such organizations, Leagues need to consider carefully how their participation might affect their nonpartisan status or the public's perception of the League's nonpartisanship. They must make sure that the ground rules are set to ensure that the activity is conducted in a strictly nonpartisan manner. It also is important to make clear that the League cannot waive its nonpartisan policy or any procedures that ensure fair treatment of candidates. The same is true when a League cooperates with a newspaper or other media outlet to produce or distribute election information. Again, be sure to discuss ground rules at the outset when negotiating with newspapers, radio or TV stations about presenting candidate information.

## Citizen Education Year-Round

Citizen education (non-election voters service) encompasses all of the other issue-related or process-related activities Leagues undertake to help members and the public use government services better and to understand and participate in government and politics. It permeates everything the League does and is a key way the League can reach out into the community. Often Leagues whose members are studying a particular issue will share information on that issue with the community at large. In conducting citizen education, keep in mind that the purpose is to identify issues and raise questions so that citizens can think the issues through and reach their own conclusions.

For example, the League can sponsor or cosponsor seminars on government operations, the political process or a hot issue in the community. It can join with educational or academic bodies in organizing and running high school, college or adult education programs. It can use the written word, hold discussions and debates on radio or television, show slides or videos, and invite speakers to meetings. It can work alone or with other groups to explore an issue or to provide political know-how about testifying, petitioning or any other technique for getting something done in the community. The sky's the limit!

## Financing Voters Service/Citizen Education

All levels of the League can raise special tax-deductible funding for many of the activities carried out under the broad headings of voters service and citizen education. Often individuals and businesses will underwrite the expense of producing and publishing League voters guides, *Know Your Town* publications, seminars on local government, etc.

Many innovative voter registration and voter turnout projects have resulted from League partnerships with corporations, the media and organizations. Examples at the national level include the LWVEF/RKO project Taking Charge, which targeted youths 18-24 years old; the Speak Out America national voter registration day project with Holiday Inn; NBC's Take Part in America voter registration effort; and the Take A Friend to Vote campaign with Charming Shoppes and Oldsmobile. In addition to participating in these projects, many state and local Leagues have undertaken highly successful projects to register voters with corporations such as Wal-Mart.

Remember that tax-deductible contributions must be made to an education fund or some other organization that the IRS has classified as an eligible recipient. (See page 44 for more on Ed Funds) The national League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) has this designation. If your League decides to seek tax-deductible contributions for an educational project, you may use your local or state League education fund, if there is one, or you may accept these donations by requesting that the check be made payable to the LWVEF. Send these checks to the LWVEF office in Washington, D.C. Call the LWVEF for details.

Many Leagues get newspapers to print candidates questionnaires, thus gaining much wider distribution of the information. Others obtain in-kind donations of materials or services from businesses or community organizations. Consider asking for free public service time on radio and TV to publicize registration dates and procedures and election information. Include a credit line to acknowledge all such contributions; it will pay off in many ways.

In addition, Leagues often earn income by selling voters service materials in quantity to business and industry, organizations, labor unions, political parties and occasionally individuals. If you sell to a political party or candidate, make sure that you offer the same terms to all parties and candidates.

Be sure that you understand clearly the legal constraints on the giving and receiving of money for election-related activities—national, state and perhaps even local—especially tax-deductible contributions for nonpartisan registration and voter information projects. Chapter 3 of *Face to Face: A Guide to League-Sponsored Debates* (LWVEF Pub. #830) includes information on tax-deductible contributions that is applicable to other voters service projects as well as debates. The best bet is to seek advice from your state League or legal counsel.

# 12: Meetings/Conventions

During any given year a local League plans and conducts many kinds of meetings for many different purposes. Meetings play a special role in the League. Whether general membership or unit meetings, they serve as a forum for exchanging ideas, providing information, making decisions and developing a sense of belonging to the League. They are a tangible expression of the League's commitment to democratic procedures and to the participation of members in all of the League's work. Meetings and public forums also are primary vehicles for much of the League's citizen education efforts.

## Membership Meetings

### Discussion Meetings

Traditionally, the League unit or membership discussion meeting has been held on a regular basis, principally to discuss and study League program local, state and national. The unit system was introduced to local Leagues in 1948 to encourage the exchange of ideas and opinions on program issues through small neighborhood-based discussion groups. In larger Leagues, unit meetings on the same topic are usually scheduled at different times for the convenience of members. Area Leagues usually schedule municipal units to discuss issues specific to the municipality. Today, however, many Leagues do not offer units but instead hold one regularly scheduled meeting on a topic for their members that serves the same purpose as a discussion unit meeting.

Discussion meetings are a focal point of League activity and provide an avenue for members and the board to communicate. They also offer guests and potential members an excellent introduction to the League.

Each local League board is responsible for scheduling regular meetings for members as well as an annual meeting. In designing these meetings, the board considers such factors as members' interests, convenient locations (try different kinds of places and changing locations), special needs such as child care, weekday or weekend groups and time of day. (Lunch or right after work often work well.) The goal is to encourage maximum member participation. Experiment to find what works best for your League.

### Key Elements of a Successful Meeting

Leadership is essential to the smooth functioning of any meeting. In keeping with the organization's grassroots tradition, each League designs leadership patterns best suited to its situation. A very large League may have ten or more units or membership discussion meetings, with several officers handling various assignments (meeting leader, discussion leader, recorder),

but most smaller Leagues have one or two leaders, that is, a meeting coordinator/chair plus a discussion leader and/or a recorder. Rotating these jobs offers valuable training opportunities as well as a practical way of developing future leaders. Descriptions of those necessary functions are included below.

**Meeting coordinators** serve as the administrative officer and chairs the meetings. They:

- \*☐ make sure the meeting opens and closes on time.
- \*☐ act as liaison between members and the board, reporting comments and suggestions of the group.
- \*☐ relay information to members about overall League activities.
- \*☐ create a friendly atmosphere, greeting visitors and guests and making introductions, expressing appreciation to speakers.
- \*☐ set forth the objectives of the meeting briefly (informational, reaching member agreement, etc.).
- \*☐ aid the discussion leader and recorder as necessary to promote member participation in the meeting.
- \*☐ may be responsible for promoting attendance, sale of League publications, and collection of dues.

**Discussion leaders** encourage all present at the discussion to participate in an orderly way. They:

- \*☐ have some basic knowledge of the subject under discussion.
- \*☐ encourage maximum individual participation and free exchange of views.
- \*☐ guide the discussion in order to accomplish the purpose of the meeting.
- \*☐ help to summarize key points made by participants. If the meeting's purpose is to reach member agreement, the discussion leader plays a key role in determining whether there is substantial agreement among those present on the issue under discussion, whether there is a strong minority opinion, and so on (done in conjunction with the recorder or another person assigned to take notes).

Ideally, the meeting leader has had some training in how to lead discussions. Many Leagues offer training for discussion leaders. League publications such as *Meaningful Meetings* (LWVUS Pub. #319), as well as other published materials, cover discussion techniques and skills.

**Recorders** take notes at consensus meetings, especially the opinions and ideas expressed, minority as well as majority. Some Leagues provide recorders with forms for making reports but that is not essential. During the meeting the recorder should:

- \*☐ work closely with the discussion leader to note key phrases and listen for group reactions to the topic under discussion.
- \*☐ take a moment or two at the end of each segment of the discussion to summarize what has been said by the group up to that point. Such summaries enable the group to clarify agreement or lack of agreement on particular issues.
- \*☐ review an overall summary with the group at the end of the discussion to ensure an accurate report of the meeting.

## Annual Meeting

### Making It an Event

Whether it is the local League's annual meeting or the ILO, state or national convention, this is the meeting that gives LWV members a chance, either in person or through delegate representation, to:

- \*☐ Elect officers, directors and nominating committee
- \*☐ Adopt program
- \*☐ Adopt a budget
- \*☐ Consider and vote on proposed bylaw amendments.

It is also a time to have fun, celebrate accomplishments, recognize outstanding individual and group efforts, and learn from each other. Member participation is the key to a successful annual meeting or convention. By making sure it is not just business but also enjoyable, the board can encourage member involvement and help to make the annual meeting or convention one of the high points of the League year.

Try to schedule your meeting at a time when most members can attend—Saturday, a weekday evening, whatever fits best into your members' schedules. State Leagues often arrange for their conventions to overlap a weekend, and the LWVUS schedules its national councils and conventions to open on weekends. Review evaluations of previous annual meetings and conventions. Would members prefer a different time or place? Do they need child care arrangements? Different meal arrangements? Shorter meetings? Workshops? Speakers?

Provide time for members to take pride in past accomplishments and build interest in future

League activities. Displays and use of audiovisual media are effective ways to present proposed program and other sections of the agenda. Local Leagues can consult their state League for helpful suggestions and material. An interesting speaker on a hot issue can spark member attendance.

## Tips for Planning

The following timetable and checklist are designed to help League boards plan for this important event.

### **Early in the League year four to six months before the meeting date:**

- \*☐ Check bylaws for annual meeting date and notification requirements.
- \*☐ Encourage member suggestions for local program.
- \*☐ Review board positions to be filled with nominating committee chair.
- \*☐ Appoint bylaws committee chair and committee members (bylaws say who appoints).
- \*☐ Appoint budget committee chair and committee members (bylaws say who appoints).
- \*☐ Select a chair to coordinate meeting arrangements and activities.

Give chairs and committees directions and materials for their work. Share with the annual meeting chair any suggestions for a site so that selection can get under way.

Encourage member input into the considerations of these committees. Some Leagues print and distribute forms to members requesting suggestions for nominations, bylaws and program.

### **Three to four months before the meeting:**

- \*☐ Select meeting site.
- \*☐ Allot board time for discussion of meeting plans (for example, date, time, place and format). Board members by now will have made some concrete suggestions regarding the next year's budget, possible program developments and bylaw amendments needing consideration.
- \*☐ Arrange for a review of the treasurer's books by a knowledgeable person or committee. The date of the meeting often coincides with the end of the League's fiscal year and, if possible, an independently audited treasurer's report should be presented to members.
- \*☐ To boost attendance, include reminders in the bulletin about the meeting date, time and location, even though all arrangements may not be complete.

- \*☐ Coordinate plans for the publication of needed member materials. Check your bylaws for notification date and deadlines, both for receiving suggestions from members and for sending information on budget, bylaws, nominations and program suggestions. Most Leagues print kits or a special edition of the bulletin at least one month before the announced meeting date.
- \*☐ Arrange for a parliamentarian to assist at the meeting. Often, local Leagues ask a member of the state board to act as parliamentarian.
- \*☐ Local Leagues are encouraged to discuss local bylaw proposals with the state League before sending them to members. State Leagues are encouraged to consult with the LWVUS on their proposed amendments. It is helpful to send a copy of the present bylaws plus an explanation of proposed bylaw amendments to speed up the review.

**One to two months before the meeting:**

- \*☐ Discuss the final meeting agenda in full board session before sending it to members. If possible, include the parliamentarian in the discussion.
- \*☐ Print and distribute to members information on proposed slate of officers, directors and nominating committee, proposed program, proposed budget and proposed amendments to bylaws.

**Immediately after the meeting:**

- \*☐ Board meets to appoint additional directors to the board in accordance with bylaws.
- \*☐ Local and state Leagues and ILOs send the LWVUS a complete list of the names and addresses of the president and all board members; adopted budget; adopted program; bylaw changes. The LWVUS sends forms to Leagues in the spring requesting mailing information. Local Leagues and ILOs send similar information to the state League.
- \*☐ Board or a review committee appointed at the annual meeting approves the minutes.
- \*☐ Board evaluates the meeting to review what went well and what could be improved next time.

## Delegate Preparation for State and National Conventions

Participating as a delegate to state and national League conventions is a rewarding and exciting experience. Besides being forums for important decision-making, these meetings provide an

opportunity for members to experience the diversity and unity of the League as they meet, talk and exchange ideas with members from other areas of the state or country. No other experience offers such a rich opportunity to share and grow and take pride in the League. Delegates to state and national conventions take part in major decisions affecting the League's goals and operations, and so budgeting to send delegates from your League to convention is a valuable investment in the future.

Each delegate should take seriously the obligation to come to convention informed but uninstructed. Informed but uninstructed delegates are aware of how members in their state and local League feel about issues to be decided at convention but are not committed to vote either for or against a specific issue.

Being a delegate involves listening to the views expressed by other delegates during debate before deciding how to vote. Preparation should include the following:

- \* □ Becoming familiar with convention materials sent from state or national, which contain important background information on decisions to be made. Delegates need to read these materials carefully so that they will be prepared to participate actively in the meeting.
- \* □ Learning elementary parliamentary procedures, which will enable the delegate to participate to the fullest extent in discussions and floor debate and to make motions for convention consideration.
- \* □ Participating in orientation sessions held to brief delegates. Orientation for first timers, as well as parliamentary briefings, are regularly scheduled at national conventions, but delegates should arrive early to participate since they take place before the opening session of convention.
- \* □ Planning to report the results of the convention to your local League. Be sure to include your own personal impressions and experiences as well as major organizational decisions.

# League of Women Voters: Making History

From the spirit of the suffrage movement and the shock of the first World War came a great idea – the idea that a nonpartisan organization could provide political education and experience that would contribute to the growth of the citizen and thus assure the success of democracy. The League of Women Voters was founded on that idea.

In her address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) 50<sup>th</sup> convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1919, President Carrie Chapman Catt proposed the creation of a league of women voters to finish the fight and aid in the reconstruction of the nation. A League of Women Voters was formed within NAWSA, composed of the organizations in the states where woman suffrage had already been attained.

The next year, on February 14, 1920 – six months before the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution was ratified – the League was formally organized in Chicago as the National League of Women Voters. Catt described the purpose of the new organization:

The League of Women Voters is not to dissolve any present organization but to unite all existing organizations of women who believe in its principles. It is not to lure women from partisanship but to combine them in an effort for legislation which will protect coming movements, which we cannot even foretell, from suffering the untoward conditions which have hindered for so long the coming of equal suffrage. Are the women of the United States big enough to see their opportunity?

Maud Wood Park became the first national president of the League and thus the first League leader to rise to that challenge. She had steered the women's suffrage amendment through Congress in the last two years before ratification and liked nothing better than legislative work. From the very beginning, however, it was apparent that the legislative goals of the League were not exclusively focused on women's issues and that citizen education aimed at all of the electorate was in order. For more than 80 years, the League has helped millions of women and men become informed participants in government. And it has tackled a diverse range of public policy issues.

In fact, the first League convention voted 69 separate items as statements of principle and recommendations for legislation. Among them were protection for women and children, rights of working women, food supply and demand, social hygiene, the legal studies of women, and American citizenship. The League's first major national legislative success was the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act providing federal aid for maternal and child care programs.

In the 1930s, League members worked successfully for enactment of the Social Security and Food and Drug Acts. In 1934, when federal and state government agencies were hiring thousands of employees to administer the new social and economic laws, the League launched a nationwide campaign in support of the merit system for selecting government personnel. The League was the only national organization acting consistently for the merit system in those years. And due at least in part to League efforts, legislation passed in 1938 and 1940 removed hundreds of federal jobs from the spoils system and placed them under Civil Service.

During the postwar period, the League helped lead the effort to establish the United Nations and to ensure U.S. participation. The League was one of the first organizations in the country officially recognized by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO); it still maintains official observer status today.

The witchhunt period of the early fifties inspired the League to undertake a two-year community education program focusing on the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. Next came an evaluation of the federal loyalty/security programs and ultimately a League position that strongly emphasized the protection of individual rights. In 1969, the League was one of the first organizations calling for the United States to normalize relations with China.

In response to the growing civil rights crisis of the 1960s the League directed its energies to equality of opportunity and built a solid foundation of support for equal access to education, employment and housing. In the early 1970s, the League addressed the issue of income assistance and also began its efforts to achieve a national Equal Rights Amendment.

Dating back to a 1920s study of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the League's concern about the depletion and conservation of natural resources was rekindled in the mid-1950s with a study of water resources. The League's deep interest in the environment was dramatically evident in the 1970s. The League has since built a sequence of broad national positions on water as well as air, waste management, land use and energy issues.

The League was in the forefront of the struggle to pass the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1982 and contributed significantly to enactment of the historic Tax Reform Act of 1986. In the arms control field, LWV pressure helped achieve Senate ratification of the groundbreaking Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in 1988. In that same year the League also completed a study of U.S. agricultural policy.

Later in the 1920s, the League organized institutes to study defects in our system of government and initiated Know Your Town surveys, candidates questionnaires and meetings and nationwide get-out-the-vote campaigns activities that remain a hallmark of the League's services to the electorate today. Classes also were set up to train volunteer teachers for citizenship schools.

These citizen-directed activities laid the foundation for the countless diverse and creative efforts that make up the League's year-round program of continuing political education today from the Presidential Debates, local and state debates and candidates questionnaires produced by Leagues throughout the country, to the myriad projects (hazardous waste, voting rights, fair

housing, energy education, international trade, and many others) funded through the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

While the League's programs, priorities and procedures have changed over the years to meet changing times, a League pamphlet written in 1919 describes with remarkable accuracy its basic aims today: The organization has three purposes—to foster education in citizenship, to promote forums and public discussion of civic reforms and to support needed legislation.

There is probably no other national volunteer organization in America that inspires such a great degree of commitment from its members. As a direct result of that commitment, the League of Women Voters has evolved from what it was in 1920—a mighty political experiment designed to help 20 million enfranchised women carry out their new responsibilities—to what it is today: a unique, nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy and promoting informed citizen participation at all levels of government.

## Organization and Membership

In contrast to its basic purposes, the League's structure has undergone some major changes over the years, with the most fundamental changes occurring in the 1940s.

As noted earlier, the League began as the National League of Women Voters, inheriting its structure from the National American Women Suffrage Association. From 1920 to 1946, it was a federation of affiliated state Leagues, most of which had been in existence as state headquarters of the NAWSA. State Leagues were the keystone of the League's structure, with the responsibility for organizing and stimulating the development of local Leagues. By 1924, the National League was organized in 346 of 433 congressional districts. Twenty-three state Leagues and 15 city Leagues maintained regular business headquarters, nearly all with one or more paid staff.

A convention, held annually at first and then later biennially, of the state League representatives selected a program that for many years was national, state and local all in one. Local Leagues were not represented at the conventions. The state League delegates also chose the national officers and directors:

to the latter the Leagues looked for leadership which molded them together into one effective organization. The National Board continued the practice of extensive field work which had been so successful in the suffrage movement. Its members carried the enthusiasm and inspiration for the whole League to the remotest and smallest towns. The League had from the beginning the dual advantages of grassroots and central thinking, planning and leadership. That the League structure ran somewhat parallel to the structure of our federal system was an additional advantage because it provided experience which made our form of government more understandable.

*(25 Years of a Great Idea, 1950)*

During its first two decades, the organization concentrated on study and getting needed legislation, leading to national board and staff expertise and legislative successes that

overshadowed the goal of political education of the lay citizen. The structure that developed in the departments and committees of the National League tended to build up special interests and specialists in subject matter. But there was a sense that another facet of League purpose — development of the well rounded, effective individual citizen — suffered by comparison.

The depression of the 1930s (the National League's budget was cut in half, necessitating a major cut in staff and services to Leagues) and the onset of World War II brought far-reaching change to the League. Perhaps the most important was that League members started meeting in small groups in their neighborhoods (a creative adaptation to gas rationing) to discuss fundamental issues — the threat to democracy itself and the importance of the informed individual to the success of democracy. Grassroots activity thus was firmly institutionalized as a way of assessing concerns, studying and strategizing.

The 1944 convention wrought major changes in the basic structure of the League, proclaiming it an association of members, rather than a federation of state leagues, and abolishing the department system of managing the various facets of the League program. By the 1946 convention, the groundwork had been laid for further far-reaching changes in the national bylaws.

The organization's name was changed to the League of Women Voters of the United States, and the national program was considerably shortened. Members joined the League of Women Voters of the United States by enrolling in local Leagues in their communities. The local League became the basis of organization and representation in the League, while power was vested in the members. It is in and through the local League that members determine, directly and indirectly, what the League does and how it does it. Members influence League decisions either personally or through representatives at state and national levels by electing leaders, determining how money will be spent through adoption of budgets, choosing program, participating in the member agreement process and by deciding the League's basic rules — the bylaws.

At the same time, a continuing strong role for state Leagues was delineated: they were delegated responsibility for organizing and developing local Leagues and for promoting in the local Leagues' finance programs requisite to further the work of the Leagues as a whole, including transmission of funds adequate to support the national budget.

Later structural changes included the establishment of several Leagues at colleges (from 1948-1956) and of the unit system in 1948, which encouraged the development of small neighborhood-based discussion groups to further the opportunity for member input and participation. In 1972, Inter-League Organizations (ILOs), created in many parts of the country to deal with regional issues, were added to the formal structure of the League. The 1974 convention amended the bylaws to allow men to join the League as full voting members.

To broaden membership and address the issue of membership decline, the 1982 convention amended the bylaws to permit member recruitment by the national and state levels as well as the local level. Convention delegates also called for the development of a long-range plan for the organization. The plan, which defined the League's mission and outlined goals and strategies for

the future, was the subject of spirited debate at the convention. During the 1984-88 period the League's long-range plan was refined and updated, then adopted by the 1988 convention with some modifications. These steps, together with the restructuring and streamlining of League boards, the institutionalization of leadership training and an emphasis on modern techniques of management and communication, are evidence of the League's efforts to adapt to the realities of a changing world and to ensure its place as the leading citizens' organization in the United States.

## The League of Women Voters Education Fund and OEF International

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the League established two 501(c)(3) educational organizations which, like the LWVUS, are nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations but, unlike the LWVUS, also can accept contributions that are deductible for income tax purposes. In 1957, the LWVUS board established the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF). The LWVEF undertakes a broad array of citizen education and research efforts, which complement the membership and political action activities of the League of Women Voters of the United States. For example, the Agenda for Security Projects in 1984, 1986 and 1988 underwrote some 150 debates focused on national security issues for U.S. House of Representatives and Senate seats. The production of *The Nuclear Waste Primer*, distributed to more than 100,000 citizens, the 2001 Election Administration survey and DNet, the interactive election information site, are other examples of projects undertaken by the LWVEF in partnership with local and state Leagues.

Although a separate legal entity, the LWVEF is closely related to the LWVUS; in fact, the LWVUS board members also constitute the LWVEF board of trustees. While the LWVEF provides citizen education information to a larger-than-League community, the LWVUS benefits from its research, and the budgets of each organization reflect this relationship. Thus, (1) the LWVEF conducts and funds research on national issues and undertakes educational projects in cooperation with state and local Leagues aimed at providing information and educational services to citizens; (2) the LWVUS conducts and funds all action, membership and organization-related activities; (3) administrative services used by both organizations are shared.

The unique network of local and state Leagues has a multiplier effect in bringing the Education Fund's services to the wider public. Through workshops, conferences and the distribution of publications, Leagues disseminate the LWVEF's research and how-to citizen aids. The LWVEF sponsored the 1976, 1980 and 1984 Presidential Debates and the 1988 and 1992 Presidential Primary Debates, an essential service to voters paralleling the countless nonpartisan candidate forums provided by local and state Leagues at election time.

Many local and state Leagues and Inter-League Organizations (ILOs) use the services of the LWVEF to finance state and local educational projects by raising tax-deductible money. In addition, many state and some local Leagues have established their own education funds, which can accept tax-deductible contributions.

The Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund (CCCMF) was set up in 1947 as a vehicle to expand the League's work and to service requests from women in former totalitarian countries for

guidance on the role of citizens under a democratic system of government and for help with civic action programs. In 1961, its name was changed to the Overseas Education Fund (OEF) and in 1986, it became OEF International.

Although established by the LWVUS, the CCCMF and its successor organizations, OEF and OEF International, were always independent, setting their own policies, raising their own funds and carrying out their own programs. The board, too, has always been separate from the LWVUS board, although in the early years many of the CCCMF (and later OEF) board members also served on the LWVUS board. Until the late 1970s all LWVUS board members were among the 40 OEF trustees that elected the OEF Board.

In its early years, the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund provided citizen education publications for use both in the United States and abroad. Of particular significance to the League was the Fund's work with the LWVUS in developing a series of pamphlets and discussion guides for the Freedom Agenda project. These became the resource materials for League members and community groups on the League's study of the relationship of national security to individual liberty, adopted by the 1954 convention. In the 1950s, OEF began to work with women in Latin America and later in Asia. In the 1980s, OEF International worked primarily in Asia, Africa and Latin America, although its Women, Law and Development program was global.

OEF's efforts have enabled women in more than 20 countries to work together to manage profitable enterprises, increase local food production, overcome legal inequities and organize for community development. Among development agencies OEF was a pioneer in promoting participatory organizational skills, part of its rich inheritance from the League of Women Voters. The OEF ceased operations in 1991 after spinning off several independent organizations to promote various aspects of its mission around the world.

# Reading List

## A Leadership Library

*The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck, M.D., Simon and Schuster, New York, 1987.

*In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*, Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, New York, Harper and Row, 1982.

*Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, New York, Harper and Row, 1985.

*On Leadership*, John W. Gardner, New York, Free Press, 1990.

## League of Women Voters Publications

Order from League of Women Voters of the United States, 1730 M Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20036, (202) 429-1965. Information is current as of 2002. Publications marked with an asterisk (\*) can currently be downloaded from the LWVUS website, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

*Action Handbook*. Basic resource for planning comprehensive, effective advocacy, including lobbying, monitoring and litigation. How to set action goals, develop an action calendar, encourage member involvement and develop community support. 1978, #161, \$1.50.

*Catalog of the League of Women Voters*. Contains titles of all League publications on such subjects as election services, debates, government, international relations, natural resources, social policy, how to be politically effective and information about the League. #126, free.

\**Creating Communities of Inclusion*. Highlights lessons learned by Leagues on creating broad-based community coalitions. Offers models and guidance to organizations and community activists on what works. 1998, #1077, \$3.50 (\$3.00 for members).

\**Designing a Voter Education Website*. Designed to provide guidance on League policies and federal regulations that apply to voter education projects using the Internet. #1074, \$2.50 (\$1.50 for members).

\**The Diversity Toolkit*. Learn the techniques you can use to build a diverse membership base in your organization. Through practical steps and examples, toolkit users will learn everything from how to create a foundation for change to how to form partnerships with other organizations. 1999, #1090, \$3.50 (\$3.00 for members).

*\*Duplicate Presidents Mailing (DPM).* Includes the same materials sent to League presidents (including Action Alerts). Each League should have at least one DPM so that publications and memos can be distributed to the appropriate people, leaving the free president's mailing for the League's master file. A DPM can be transferred to another name, upon notice to the national office, if the annual subscription has 60 or more days to run.

*Empowering Citizens: A Guide to Influencing Public Policy.* Designed to help League leaders develop and implement a compelling, inclusive local program that builds membership, visibility, diversity and financial security. #1053, \$5.00.

*\*Face to Face: A Guide to Candidate Debates.* The newest edition of this tried-and-true League handbook on sponsoring candidate debates for any elective office. Based on the combined experience of LWV debate sponsors at all levels. 1996, LWVEF, #830, \$10.00 (\$8.00 for members).

*Get-Out-And-Vote Kit.* Comprehensive resource for encouraging voter participation. Includes wide range of materials providing basic information to support community-level efforts to Get Out the Vote. 1996, LWVEF, #1051, \$15.00 (\$12.00 for members).

*Getting Out the Vote: A Guide for Running Registration and Voting Drives.* A basic how-to for Leagues and other organizations, suitable for general or targeted drives. 1984, LWVEF, #424, \$1.25 (.75 to members).

*\*Impact on Issues: A Guide to Public Policy Positions.* Basic resource on LWVUS public policy positions. Includes statements of position, history and significant action. Updated after each LWVUS convention. #386, \$5.00.

*Know Your Community.* Guide to help Leagues take a look at the structure and functions of their local government. 1972, #288, \$1.75 (\$1.25 for members).

*\*League Logos and Usage Guidelines.* Downloadable logos for print and web use.

*League of Women Voters Sign.* Red cardboard with white letters. Easel back. 7"x20", #236. \$2.50.

*Ledger-de-Main for Local League Treasurers.* Outlines the duties, practices and procedures that every local LWV treasurer should know. Somewhat dated, but good information. 1981, #248, \$3.00.

*Making a Difference: A Voters Service/Citizen Information Handbook.* A comprehensive guide for planning and carrying out election and non-election services for voters. 1978, #330, \$2.50.

*\*Management Tips.* Successful strategies for running a state or local League, developed over time by leaders all over the country. A series of tips from Starting Point.

*Meaningful Meetings.* Somewhat dated, but still useful for Leagues in planning unit meetings as a vehicle for member agreement. 1976, #319, \$6.00.

*Membership Management.* A marketing approach to getting and keeping members, with successful recruitment strategies. 1977, #495, \$2.25.

\**National Bylaws.* #381, \$1.00.

\**President's Packet.* Basic information on the relationship between local Leagues and the LWVUS. Includes membership processing manual. New edition every year. #152, \$3.00.

*Simplified Parliamentary Procedure.* Based on Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. 1979, #138, \$.75 (.50 for members).

*Service for State and Local Grants Guidelines.* Explains how to use the LWV Education Fund to raise tax-deductible contributions to fund state and local League projects. 1997, #348, \$3.00.

*Starting Point: A Guide to Organizing New Leagues.* Intended primarily for state League leaders as they nurture member-at-large units and new local Leagues. #263, \$10.00.

\**Website Development Guidelines for State and Local Leagues.* Build your League's online presence with this guide.

\**Working Together: Community Involvement in America.* A national survey conducted for the LWV by Lake Snell & Perry and the Tarrance Group, shows that more than half of Americans (56%) are somewhat involved in community activities and issues.

Consult your state League's catalog of publications for additional materials. Many publish materials on how to plan for annual meetings, recruit/retain members, raise and manage money, manage a study committee and so forth.

## Reference Publications

\**Government Reporting Requirements.* Available in the Training Tools section of the LWVUS website.

\**League Clearinghouse User's Manual.* Easy to follow guide for posting information on your League's successes into nationwide, searchable online database of LWV information. #2050, free.

*State and Local League Guidelines for Candidate Participation in DNet.* Included in the President's Packet ; good guidance for printed voter guides.

*IRS Publication 557: Tax Exempt Status for Your Organization.* Basic reference for 501(c)(3)s and 501(c)(4)s. Downloadable in PDF at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

*IRS Publication 1771: Charitable Contributions Substantiation & Disclosure.* Guidance for fund raising activities when the donor gets something of value in return for the donation. Downloadable in PDF at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

*Election Year Issues*, Judith E. Kindell and John Francis Reilly. Part of IRS CPE Technical Instruction program for 2002. Q&A format covers issues relating to voter guides, forums, and what constitutes participation in campaigns. Numerous citations of court rulings. Download: [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/topic02.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-utl/topic02.pdf).

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (10<sup>th</sup> Edition), Perseus Publishing, 2000. Most League bylaws cite the current edition of Robert's as the parliamentary authority. The book is revised every 10 years.

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