

**Policies of the  
League of Women Voters of Alabama**  
(as of 7/9/05)

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## LWVAL Board Policies

### 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 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.*

## LWVAL Board Policies

### League of Women Voters of the United States

#### **Mission**

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

#### **Vision, Beliefs and Intentions**

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

We are a nonpartisan political membership organization.

We:

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

We believe in:

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

We will:

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

## LWVAL Board Policies

### Nonpartisanship Policy

The League of Women Voters established and maintains its nonpartisanship policy for the purpose of furthering its political effectiveness. The record of nonpartisanship on candidates and parties is one of our best tools for effective participation on issues.

The League of Women Voters of Alabama follows the broad policy of nonpartisanship as laid down by the national League. This policy states:

- a. The League neither supports nor opposes any political candidate or any political party
- b. It takes a position on issues only.
- c. It arrives at a position on an issue from membership consensus and/or concurrence based on study and discussion.

The Board has the responsibility of maintaining the nonpartisanship of the League of Women Voters of Alabama.

2. The following Board members shall resign to run for or hold elected office, or to take an active and visible campaign role for a political candidate: President, Voter Service Chair, Legislative/Action Chair
3. Other Board members who plan to run for or hold elected office or to engage in active and visible political activity shall notify the State Board. She/he shall resign if the State Board decides that the activity would affect the community's perception of the League's nonpartisanship.
4. When a Board member resigns to work actively for a candidate or to run for office, the announcement should be made in the newsletter. The replacement should be announced at the same time.
5. Members in leadership roles representing the League of Women Voters have the responsibility to insure the nonpartisanship of any meeting and its environment.
6. When acting in public as a League representative, Board members should be sensitive to their responsibilities and must not allow partisanship to be discernible.
7. The political activities of a spouse or household relative of a Board member shall be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of a board member.
8. Conflict of Interest Policy: Board members shall not lobby for a position in opposition to, or in conflict with, an LWVUS or LWVAL position, except as provided below. Board members do have the right, as individuals, to lobby their own representatives or Members of Congress on any side of an issue making clear that they do not represent the League of Women Voters.

*Readopted 7-97, 6-2001.  
Amended and readopted 7/05*

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **Consensus Policy**

In order to act on any issue the League has studied, it is essential that the League has a clear consensus among its members.

Consensus, as explained in the 1989 edition of In League, “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...” (p10-7)

Since all statewide consensus is determined by State Board, State Board must decide what constitutes consensus. It is important that the State Board consider the following questions: Does a local League report complete member agreement? Fairly general agreement? Divergent points of view? All these factors must be considered by the entire State Board for it is responsible for determining whether consensus exists on a state item.

Local Leagues must know in advance when consensus is due so that they can adjust their calendars accordingly. Any kind of consensus requires that members of local Leagues be provided with a timetable for the study, background materials, and a deadline for reaching consensus. This is part of the job of the state program chairperson, or person designated by the State Board to chair the consensus item.

Consensus questions should be drafted by representatives of the consensus resource committee, and key Board portfolio areas relevant to the consensus, such as key portfolio chairpersons for government affairs, action, budget, etc. who can pinpoint areas for consideration and action. All consensus questions must be approved by the State Board.

The questions should be clear to the membership, phrased for usable answers, a yardstick for judgment, and a framework for action. Questions must be objective and reasonably brief. The questions should be based on the resource material that was used in the study and they should cover areas that can lead to action. Do not aim consensus questions toward action on specific bills, instead make them general enough to apply over a period of time and changing circumstances.

Sometimes consensus on one or more questions is impossible to reach. This may happen because an insufficient number of members are concerned with the issue, or because, even with the best kind of study, discussion and participation, there is too much basic disagreement among members. In any case, a statement of alternative points of view should be included in the report. If no consensus is reached, report that no consensus was reached.

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **Consensus Policy**

(continued)

#### **Reporting Consensus**

A consensus report prepared by a local board for the State Board should include the following:

1. The response sheet provided with the consensus questions, completed to show how opinions were distributed (if such a sheet has been provided).
2. A brief statement of the consensus position, if one has been reached, and
3. A brief statement of alternative points of view expressed by members who did not agree with the consensus position.

OR

4. A brief statement explaining that no consensus could be reached.

In order for a local consensus report to be considered, it must be received by the deadline set by the State Board.

*Adopted 12-2-95*

*Amended 7-26-97*

## LWVAL Board Policies

### Concurrence Policy

Concurrence is a way to enable local and state Leagues to support each other and to take action on items they have not studied for consensus by adopting the results of consensus studies of other state and local Leagues. Concurrence can be viewed as a way of aiding state and local Leagues limited by membership or funds to reach support positions on items of interest and urgency.

Concurrence, according to In League, "is the act of agreeing with--or concurring with-- a statement or position...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." (p.10 -8) Often this is accomplished by background materials and fact sheets providing pro and con information on the issue submitted to League members and/or boards. The materials are reviewed and the League determines whether or not it is a valid and applicable position for its own area and, if so, adopts the recommendations, statement or position by "concurrence" for its own League. Concurrence should be considered one means of establishing a state or local position. The policy for reaching concurrence follows:

- I. To be eligible for statewide concurrence in Alabama, items should be matters requiring state governmental action or having the potential for multi-state cooperation.
- II. The State Board or a local League may initiate the concurrence process by taking the following steps:
  - III. 1. A local board requesting that the State Board recommend concurrence statewide with an item which has already been adopted by a local League within Alabama or in another state; or by another state League.  
Or  
State board recommending concurrence statewide with an item which has already been adopted by a local League within Alabama or in another state; or by another State League.
  2. State Board considering any action that would be required and any funding needed if the concurrence is adopted since this would be a new and unbudgeted item.
  3. State Board preparing a fact sheet for distribution to local Leagues explaining: background information, the position which has been taken in another League, how it evolved, the value of concurrence, and what action is planned as a result of adoption. All up-to-date and pertinent facts should be included. These materials should be submitted to and approved by State Board prior to distribution.

## LWVAL Board Policies

- IV. In order to determine approval of concurrence, the State Board and local Leagues should:
1. Consider any extenuating circumstances in the state or local community, evaluating the action that will be required of each concurring local League.
  2. Make available to its membership information concerning proposed position to be reached through concurrence.
  3. Thoroughly inform local Leagues and Members-at-Large (through local boards and state ~ or other state-initiated communication) about the content of the position, time schedule to be followed and mechanism to be used to determine concurrence. If the local board, rather than the membership, is the concurring group, the local board must explain fully the position and value of concurrence to its membership following concurrence. (Concurrence decisions should be made by the local boards, rather than full memberships, only in emergency or extraordinary situations.)
- V. Concurrence requires approval by a 2/3 majority of the local Leagues responding in the state. If the number of Members-at-Large equals or exceeds the number of members of the smallest local League in Alabama, MALs shall be counted as a local League for the purpose of concurrence. Concurrence of MALs would be assessed by a mechanism determined by State Board.

*Approved by LWVAL Board of Directors  
December 2, 1995  
Readopted 8-10-02*

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **LWVAL Legislative Policy**

The LWVAL shall entrust the Advocacy Team with making decisions for support or opposition to pending legislation in accordance with LWVAL priorities established by the State Board for each legislative session. The job of the Team is to compare pending legislation or state policies to LWVAL Program Positions and to ensure that League action is firmly grounded in League's positions and/or Principles. The Advocacy Team is accountable to the Board and to the Local Leagues for its decisions. The full Board may overrule a decision of the Advocacy Team by a majority vote.

Each new Board will appoint the Advocacy Team for one or two years. It shall include a President or Presidents, the Program Chair, and the Legislative Liaison. It may include Consultants (off Board or on) on priority issues, and others as needed. The Advocacy Team will choose its Chair. The Team may receive action proposals from the Legislative Liaison, Local Leagues, Program Consultants and the Board. If the Advocacy Team cannot agree, decision will be referred to the full Board.

#### Guidelines for Local League Action on state issues:

- a. When Calls to Action are issued, usually the President or her designee will speak or write in the name of the Local League, using any background or positions papers provided by LWVAL. Leagues will encourage their members to speak or write as individual citizens in their own terms without using the name of the League.
- b. Local Leagues may elect not to participate in a Call to Action, but may not take a stand in opposition to the official LWVAL position.
- c. Individual members of Local Leagues who disagree with League positions may choose to lobby according to their convictions, but they must not mention the League in doing so.

#### Local League Action in State Legislature on local positions .

Every Local League Board interprets its local positions and decides how to act on them. Local Leagues are obligated, however, to ensure that their local actions do not adversely affect another Local League or conflict with LWVAL or LWVUS positions.

1. If the bill to be supported is a local bill or a general bill with local application, Local Leagues must immediately inform the state president of the intended action to allow LWVAL to respond to any questions directed to it and to allow the Advocacy Team or the Board to assess any statewide implications of the bill or policy.
2. If the Advocacy Team should judge that the bill to be supported might adversely affect LWVAL other Local Leagues in Alabama, or LWVUS, it may ask the Local

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **LWVAL Legislative Policy**

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League to provide information and background materials so that the State Board and other Leagues may be consulted. In some cases, the Local League might be asked to specify in its advocacy that its action is based on Local League positions arrived at by consensus. If it should become necessary to consult other Local Leagues, only those affected or potentially affected by the bill or policy should participate.

3. If Local Leagues wish to take action for or against a statewide bill that they deem relevant to their local positions, they should follow the procedure described for local bills.
4. To further assure that the League speaks with one coherent voice at the state level, a local League should notify the President and the Legislative Liaison before any official appearance before legislative committees, agencies or statewide public hearings. The Legislative Liaison may facilitate that appearance or offer advice.

#### Responsibilities of LWVAL

1. The Advocacy Team or the full Board through the President must reply to Local Leagues questions and requests on local program matters in a timely fashion so as not to deny them opportunity for action if proposal is approved.
2. LWVAL will comply with all Ethics Laws of the State of Alabama, including Registration of Lobbyist and reporting of advocacy activity as required.

*Adopted July 12, 2003*

#### **From LWVAL Bylaws: Article XI, section 6**

Local Leagues may take action on state government issues only when authorized to do so by the board of directors of LWVAL. Local Leagues may act only in conformity with, and not contrary to, a position taken by the LWVAL or LWVUS.

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **Organization for Advocacy**

#### **Goals**

- A. Increase advocacy participation and visibility on state issues.
- B. Combine timely action for maximum impact with proper consideration of League criteria for advocacy.
- C. Continue calls to action. Provide position background and talking points for members and Local Leagues on calls to action.
- D. Support the League's multi-issue program and lay the groundwork for more informed action by increasing opportunities for Local League and individual member involvement in the advocacy process. *(See Items 4,5, and 6. below.)*

#### **Policies and Procedures**

1. The Board has overall responsibility for advocacy, for setting action priorities for each legislative session, for appointing the Advocacy Team, for adherence to League principles and procedure, and for the public posture of LWVAL. Letters, testimony, or press releases in the name of LWVAL should be approved and signed by the president(s) or the president's designee. At timely intervals the Board will review with the Advocacy Team how well organization and procedures for advocacy are working.
2. A board-appointed Advocacy Team is entrusted with decisions to support or oppose legislation and state action on LWVAL action priorities. It is the Advocacy Team's responsibility to see that League action is firmly grounded in League positions and/or Principles. The Advocacy Team shall include the President or Presidents, the Program Chair and the Legislative Liaison. It may include Consultants (off board or on) on League priorities and others as needed. The Advocacy Team may receive action proposals from the Legislative Liaison, Local Leagues, Program Consultants and the Board. After consultation as needed, the Team will authorize Action Alerts.
3. The board-appointed Legislative Liaison is observer, lobbyist, chief source of legislative information, and director of advocacy at the legislature. She advises the Board on legislative processes and provides the Advocacy Team with information on decisions about the legislation, effective timing of action, and persons to be addressed on the issues. The Advocacy Team (which includes the Legislative Liaison) will make policy decisions for the Legislative Liaison to act upon. The Legislative Liaison will also seek to advance knowledge of the legislature among Local Leagues by providing information and facilitating visits by Local League members.
4. The Legislative Observer Corps will consist of individual members who can attend the Legislature to cover committees and floor action, as assigned by the Legislative Liaison. They will report to the Legislative Liaison and to the Advocacy Team. They will receive training and written guidelines for observing from the Legislative Liaison.
5. Program Consultants with an interest and expertise in one LWVAL issue will follow familiarize themselves with the relevant League positions and follow legislation and government policy in that area to offer information and recommendations to the Advocacy Team as issues arise. Program Consultants will likely be members recruited from Local Leagues, but LWVAL Board members may also serve.

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **Organization for Advocacy**

(continued)

6..Local Leagues will be asked to interview their Legislators to identify the legislators' priorities and to learn their positions on LWVAL's priorities for the coming session. These interviews will alert legislators to LWVAL interests, and provide information to the Advocacy Team. In addition they will involve Local Leagues more fully in the advocacy process and promote Local League connections with their representatives. The Board will set the time lines and write the questions.

*Adopted July 22, 2003*

## LWVAL Board Policies

### **Policy Governing Participation of League Board Members on Public Commissions, Boards or Committees**

League board members are often asked to be members of public commissions, boards or committees, either as individuals or as representatives of the League. It is appropriate and important to do so; serving on boards or commissions is consistent with League commitment to active participation in government. Such service also enables League leaders to further League program goals.

When a local or state board member is invited to serve on a public commission, board or committee as an official representative of the League (local or state), the following steps should be taken:

1. The board member should investigate the principles and purposes of the organization to ensure that these principles are not in conflict with League positions. (If possible, obtain written information concerning the group, its areas of authority, and its membership selection process.)
2. Local board members must receive approval from their respective League board. State board members must receive approval from the State Board. If a local League member is appointed to a state level board, commission or committee, State board approval should also be received.
3. The state board should be notified of all appointments (of local League board members) to local and/or state boards, commissions or committees.
4. A local League member cannot represent the state League unless approved and directed by the State League
5. The State Board must be notified of all appointments of any League of Women Voter member to local and/or state boards, commissions or committees.

Even if the League member represents the League, the League board is not bound to support the recommendations of the board, commission, or committee, if these differ from or cover more points than are in the League position. The state or local League can clarify the League's position or what it does or does not endorse in the recommendations, actions, goals, statements, or reports issued by the group.

*Adopted 1978  
Readopted 1995*

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **The League of Women Voters of Alabama State Coalition Guidelines**

The following guidelines will be considered when deciding whether to join a coalition, whether formally or informally organized:

1. The coalition's major issues should mesh with League positions and be nonpartisan, though there need not be a League position on every issue with which the coalition is concerned. The overall aims of the coalition must not conflict with League positions.
2. The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with the state program.
3. The coalition's activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve the League's organization, advocacy or educational goals.
4. The members of the coalition should be organizations with which the League can work effectively. The League should have confidence in the leadership of the coalition and may serve in a leadership capacity.
5. Expenditures for work with the coalition (including staff and volunteer time, as well as cash and in-kind expenses) should be worth the investment and approved by the State Board.
6. The League representative to a coalition, of which the League is a member, must have the prior approval of the state League president before making any formal or public statement of League position on a specific issue. If the League disagrees with the majority opinion of the coalition, a public statement of the League's dissent should be issued.
7. The representative in a coalition must be a State Board member or a State Board designee.
8. Joining a coalition must be a State Board decision.
9. If any coalition materials identify League participation, the materials must indicate that League membership in the coalition does not necessarily indicate League agreement with all positions taken by the coalition.

When the League does decide to join a coalition, a state League board member, or League member designated by the State Board, must represent the League. In a formal organizational alliance or membership, the designated League representative should regularly attend meetings of the group in order to participate in and stay abreast of activities and decisions and to safeguard the credibility of the League relative to state and national positions and nonpartisanship.

It is suggested that coalitions organized at the local level shall apply the same guidelines.

## LWVAL Board Policies

### MAL UNIT POLICY

A Member-at-Large Unit is a state League recognized group of members in an area where there is no local League. To be recognized by LWVAL the group must have at least six members. It must have an organizational structure including a chair to preside at meetings, a vice-chair and a secretary/treasurer. It may also select members to be responsible for voter service, membership or other areas as needed.

The first meeting of the group desiring MAL Unit status not only elects its organizational structure but must also adopt a non-partisanship policy and set dues sufficient to cover LWVUS and LWVAL per member payments and provide for unit needs. MAL units are not required to have bylaws. However, they should adopt as unit policy the first three articles of the LWVAL bylaws covering name, purposes, political policy, and membership eligibility. It is the responsibility of the officers to plan a calendar of meetings to provide members with information about local, state and national league interests. Meetings should be held at least quarterly including an annual meeting to elect officers and pass a budget.

It is the obligation of LWVAL to guide these organizational activities. If the above requirements are met, the Unit is formally recognized by the state board. The board then names a member to serve as the Unit's advisor. The advisor should be available to provide guidance and to attend as many meetings as possible until satisfied that the Unit is running smoothly. She should provide the Unit with copies of LWVAL policies and arrange for a Duplicate-Presidents-Mailing. She should help in the formulation of Unit policies, encourage membership recruitment and report on the Units progress to the state board. A Copy of the LWVUS guide, "Starting Point" will help clarify her obligations. The LWVAL may provide a newly formed group funds to help it get started. It may also temporarily reduce PMP.

#### **A MAL Unit, with state board approval, may**

1. participate in state and national studies
2. work on local issues
3. undertake community service projects that encourage citizen participation in government
4. publish a regular newsletter, usually quarterly
5. such other activities as the state board deems appropriate.
6. respond to league calls to action
7. participate in the legislative interviews carried out each fall and winter by LWVAL.

*Adopted 3/19/05*

## **LWVAL Board Policies**

### **Various Policies of the League of Women Voters of Alabama**

#### **Board Attendance Policy** – Adopted 11/6/04

Attendance at board meetings is considered a duty. Two absences in a given year will be considered a resignation unless there are mitigating circumstances. In such cases, a leave of absence may be granted.

#### **Policy on Dissemination of State Directory and Mailing Lists** - Amended and readopted 7/26/97

The LWVAL State Directory and mailing lists shall not be given to other organizations or individuals without the permission of the LWVAL Executive Committee.

#### **Policy on Policy Review** - Readopted 7/26/97

The various policies of the Board of Directors shall be reviewed, modified and/or readopted every two years or as necessary. The exception to this shall be the Nonpartisanship Policy which shall be reviewed yearly.

#### **Exclusionary Establishments** - Readopted 7/26/97

The League of Women Voters of Alabama shall hold no meetings or social events at any establishment that maintains exclusionary membership policies or practices.

#### **Diversity Policy** - Adopted 8/22/1998

The League of Women Voters of Alabama, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in and commitment to diversity and pluralism.

The LWVAL recognizes that diverse perspectives are necessary for responsible and effective decision making in democratic organizations.

LWVAL affirms its commitment to remove barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or national origin, and to actively seek to be inclusive.

## LWVAL Board Policies

### **Reimbursement Policy** – Adopted 1/29/05

Expenses shall be reimbursed to board members for attendance at state board meetings, state convention and state council, as well as for local field service .

1. Mileage: \$.25 / mile
2. Meeting fees                      \$25.00                      Hotel/day                      \$25.00  
    Breakfast                      \$ 6.00                      Lunch                      \$ 8.00  
    Dinner                      \$ 15.00
3. Daycare: half of daily expenses not to exceed \$30.00/day for any dependent child or adult.  
    (See Daycare policy.)
4. National Convention/Council: all expenses not to exceed total budgeted for two delegates.
5. LWVAL will reimburse state board members for the full registration costs of state convention.

### **Policy on Alabama Voter** - Adopted 3/27/04

Role of the *Voter*: The Alabama *Voter* should be a tool for communicating with members.

The LWVAL web site will be the primary method of distributing the Voter.