

## GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL LEAGUE ACTION UNDER STATE POSITIONS

AT THE STATE LEVEL, the state League will continue to follow legislation in the General Assembly, implementation by the Executive Branch, and the interpretation by the Judiciary. The League will take action on appropriate legislation and implementation when they fall within the state position and will notify members when it is “time for action.”

If a local league wishes to take action at the *state level*, it shall ask permission of the State Board.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, Leagues may take local governmental action under a state position without requesting specific permission from the State Board *if the contemplated action falls within the state position, is based on criteria to which leagues have agreed state-wide, and is authorized by the local League Board*. Refer to “Working Together to Influence Public Policy” (League Basics, pages 14 & 15)

Local Leagues are expected to respond to Action Alerts except when local Leagues are not in support of this position and should then inform state that no action will be taken.

## COALITION EVALUATION GUIDELINES

### THE LEAGUE

- The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.
- The League must maintain a nonpartisan policy. The League does not support nor oppose candidates or political parties. The policy of nonpartisanship has always been a source of strength and must be judiciously protected.
- The League is political in that it takes positions on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.
- Any advocacy pursued by the League must be consistent with League principles, positions, and policies.
- An overall assessment of the League’s credibility as an effective nonpartisan organization in the community is an ongoing responsibility of the board/board coalition representative. Only to the extent that the public and its elected officials are convinced of the League’s genuine nonpartisanship will the League be able to render effective voters service and gain a wide base of support for its positions.

### COALITIONS

Joining, keeping membership, or dropping membership in a coalition is the responsibility of the League board. The following guidelines can be used in the evaluation process for formal or ongoing coalitions as well as ad hoc committees. The coalition activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve the League’s organization, advocacy, or educational goals.

#### **Will coalition activity be more effective than the League acting alone?**

While coalition activity by no means precludes the League from acting alone, coalition membership should enhance the League’s ability to achieve the ultimate goal.

**Do the aims of the coalition mesh with League priorities?**

This should be yes. The aim of the coalition must not conflict with League position.

**Are the issues and goals of the coalition timely on the national, state, or local agenda?**

This should elicit at least a qualified yes. Acknowledge that some issues may be on the “back burner” due to higher priority programs.

**Are we confident in the leadership of the coalition? Do they understand the League nonpartisan obligation?**

The answer should be in the affirmative to both.

**Will the League be a visible member of the coalition? Do we have expertise to provide?**

Preferably yes. But there are exceptions in cases where the League may deliberately enter into a coalition in order to gain information for an issue which is not a League top priority. In every case, of course, we should be firmly committed to the League’s name being attached to the coalition.

**Will the demands on volunteer time in the coalition be worth the effort?**

This is an important consideration. Board involvement in successful coalition activities demands a commitment of time.

**Will any cash or nonpersonal in-kind donations to the coalition be worth the investment?**

The importance and effectiveness of the coalition and the monetary considerations should be weighed.

#### LEAGUE REPRESENTATION

- The League representative should be informed about his/her responsibilities to the president, board, and the community.
- The League representative to a coalition of which the League is a member must have prior approval of the League president before making a formal or public statement of League position on specific issues.
- Keep the board informed, and consult when appropriate. Members representing the League in the community must recognize that, as a result of close identification with the League, the member has a special responsibility to see that his/her activities do not create a partisan impression.
- Member(s) representing the League in a coalition should have a clear understanding of the goal, strategy, timetable, and role of the activities.
- The coalition League representative should, if possible, be a Board member.
- The League member must take the responsibility for clearly differentiating between her/his personal opinions and the League position.
- League members are expected to keep their League activity and their political activity separate and distinct.

#### Guidelines for Representing LWVTN

- If you are asked as an individual to serve on a committee, board, commission or other body, you will not be officially representing the League. You may use your League membership for identification purposes only. The length of your term will depend on the body.
- If you are appointed by the LWVTN to serve in a position held for a League representative, you will be officially representing the League and your term will end when the term of the board that appointed you ends. The next board may reappoint you, or is free to designate a new

representative.

- While serving as a League representative it is important to be aware that your comments, actions, and personal opinions expressed will be presumed by many to be the comments, actions and positions of the League and will affect their perception of the League.
- Know the League position(s) that are pertinent to the body you are on. While the opinions you express will be personal, you may not speak in opposition to a League position while representing the League.
- Your position does not authorize you to speak for the League, sign on to statements or to make commitments for action on behalf of the League. All formal statements and plans for action must be presented to the LWVTN board for approval/participation. “I have to take that back to my board” is often the appropriate response.

Some tips for being an effective League representative:

Do your homework before meetings

Express yourself firmly, but calmly and courteously

Attend meetings regularly

Be open to compromise; League positions are strong but rarely rigid

Expect that decisions made by a majority vote may not be your personal preference