

# An Overview of the League's Advocacy Process

# League Positions: The Basis for Action

- + Action may be taken ONLY in those areas where there is member understanding and agreement
- + Formal adoption (by members at an annual meeting or by state/national convention delegates) of an issue for study.
- + Member study and agreement on broad concepts.
- + Formulation of a position by the relevant board.
- + Action as directed by the board—when, where and how to apply the position..
- + Annual or biennial re-adoption of the position.

# Studies and Member Agreement

- + Program adoption-includes existing positions and items for study
- + Member agreement through consensus or concurrence
- + During study, members examine facts and key pro/con points
- + A League's position reflects membership understanding and agreement on a particular public policy issue
- + Responsibility of board at each level of League to determine whether consensus achieved and formulate position
- + Then readopted each year at the annual meeting or biennial convention to remain on program for future action.

# Impact on Issues

- + LWVUS Impact on Issues contains all LWVUS positions agreed to through study, consensus and concurrence as well as information and history of how applied.
- + New York State recently LWVNYS Impact on Issues updated as of end of last Legislative session. Intend to update on an annual basis going forward.

# League Advocacy

- + Concerted efforts to achieve public policies consistent with league positions
- + Can be funded with Ed Fund monies as long as no call to action on particular legislation
- + Can involve public policy discussions and recommendations for specific reforms. Does NOT have to give both sides of an issue
- + Forums for discussion issues and educating policy makers and the public

# Lobbying

- + Influencing SPECIFIC legislation, both already introduced and proposed.
- + Aimed at elected officials and staff, or urging the public to contact their legislators about specific legislation
- + Must be funded by 501(c)4 monies

# Lobbying on National Issues

- + Can only be done in conformity with LWVUS positions
- + League board may choose not to respond to a LWVUS call to action but may not take action in opposition
- + With LWVUS permission, can take action on federal level on non-LWVUS priority
- + LWVUS website has form for doing this. Local leagues should consult with LWVNYS prior to seeking approval.

# Taking Action in the Community

- + Again, a League MUST have a position before it can take action.
- + Interpretation of a League position is the responsibility of the board that oversees that position. Local League boards are responsible for interpreting their own positions before taking action.
- + Uniform interpretation at each level of League is essential for the League's effectiveness.
- + Local boards can decide to use national positions for action at local or state level
- + Action at the state level MUST have state approval FIRST.

# How to consider action?

- + Is there a position and member understanding and agreement?
- + Is it a priority for the League? Chances for success?
- + Does the League have a unique role to play or would the League's assets (time and money) be better spent on other activities?
- + Are other organizations or a coalition already working on the issue?
- + What action techniques would be most effective? How will the League deal with controversy?
- + How can members and the community be involved?

# Speaking with One Voice

## Consistent messaging

- + National League responsible for consistent strategies and action policies on national issues
- + State leagues responsible for action policies and strategies on state
- + Local Leagues ensure regional issues addressed in consistent manner
- + Only the President (or designee) speaks for League in an official capacity
- + Members can always take action as individuals

# State League Advocacy Process

- + Overseen by the Board directly or through the State Issues Committee
- + League action can only be taken in support of one or more League Positions. New areas for study to develop positions can be suggested through the biennial program planning process.
- + Frequently some interpretation involved in whether or not there is a position
- + Strict constructionism vs. extrapolation

# State Issues Committee

- + Any local League board or member can bring a potential action item to the State Issues Committee
- + Consists of Issues and Advocacy Vice President, Legislative Director, Grassroots Advocacy Director, and any relevant Single Issue Specialist
- + Approval is NOT necessary for items which the League has supported/opposed in the past so long as action is consistent with a current position
- + State Board has ultimate authority.

# Advocacy at the Local League Level

- + One person should be responsible for coordination League's action activities, may be President. Coordination essential to avoid duplication and effective efforts.
- + Appropriate board approvals obtained and League members should understand and support League position and proposed action.
- + Procedures for taking action at state and national levels understood and followed
- + Criteria for setting action priorities similar

# Lobby Visits

- + ONLY visit your own legislators and coordinate with other local Leagues for overlapping legislators
- + Two or three members should go and one should take notes
- + If the legislator is not available, see an aide
- + Know your legislator and know your issue but admit when you don't know an answer and follow up
- + Be succinct, friendly and positive

# Coalition Building

- + Organizations can work together to accomplish more
- + Purpose should be clearly stated
- + Local League boards should review and approve joining coalitions
- + Local Leagues joining coalitions on statewide issues must inform and get approval from state board

# Lobbying for Other Levels of League

- + Essential for implementation of program goals at state, national and ILO levels
- + Look for action calls requesting local Leagues take immediate action on an issue
- + Annual State Legislative lobby visit—State provides Legislative Packet with key information and questions for legislators.
- + Inform the state office of legislators' positions on legislation. It is VERY important we know of what they are telling you in the district.