



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FALLS CHURCH**

**POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES**

APRIL 2, 2014

League of Women Voters of Falls Church
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1. INTRODUCTION AND MISSION

The Policies and Procedures Manual is designed to help orient and guide all members and to provide a framework for effective and efficient coordinated local League leadership and administration.

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

The League is a multi-level organization of local, regional, state and national Leagues designed to interact with the appropriate level of government. Each member is a member of every level of League. These levels of League and interacting local Leagues are interdependent, and their efforts and activities should strengthen the whole.

2. BYLAWS

This Policies and Procedures document should be used in conjunction with the League of Women Voters of Falls Church (LWVFC) bylaws. The bylaws can be found on the LWVFC website at <http://lwvfallchurch.org/>.

3. LWV FALLS CHURCH BOARD POLICIES

Board policies are binding only on the board that adopts them. Board policies can be amended or altered subsequently by the board or any future board. All members are welcome to attend board meetings. Certain policies are adopted by each new board, i.e., the League's nonpartisan policy.

Executive Committee

The executive committee shall comprise the president/co-presidents, two other officers, and two elected directors, for a total of five members. Members shall be selected by the president(s) and approved by the board. If local board action or a decision thereon is required before the next routine board meeting, the executive committee shall determine and approve such action by a majority vote. In the absence of one of the above, the approval of another knowledgeable board member may be substituted.

Membership

Annual dues are payable July 1 for the fiscal year July 1 to June 30. New members who join the League after February 1 in any year and pay annual dues shall not be required to pay additional annual dues until July 1 of the following year (one and a half years later). For example, a member joining after January 31, 2014 does not pay dues again until July 1, 2015.

Lifetime members shall be those members who have belonged to the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) for 50 years or may be so designated by the board on the basis of length of membership in the LWVFC and individual circumstance. Paid memberships of individuals who transfer to LWVFC from other Leagues are honored as having paid for the current year.

Finance

The cash of the general fund of LWVFC shall be deposited in one or more checking and/or savings accounts. The total balance of these accounts (plus the balance of the local Education Fund) shall always total at least 25 percent of the annual budget. Tax-deductible contributions made out to the LWVUS Education Fund shall be deposited in the LWVUS Education Fund account. The balance of all funds shall be reported in the treasurer's report.

Falls Church cash in the LWVUS Education Fund may be withdrawn to reimburse the general fund for voter service, educational activities, and contributions to per-member payments. The president shall authorize

withdrawal of funds from the LWVUS Education Fund when a project is planned. Members shall submit vouchers and receipts to the treasurer when requesting reimbursement. Members have a spending limit of \$100 without board approval for discretionary items, i.e., flowers, supplies.

Budget

Board members are responsible for helping to build the local League budget by indicating to the budget committee their plans for the ensuing year, with cost estimates. The budget, as adopted at the annual meeting, is a guide, not a binding rule.

Financing League Representatives

LWVFC recognizes that effective participation in the various activities of League interest constitutes an important contribution to both the League and the community. However, such participation is often costly, financially, to individual League members. Therefore, in order not to put an unfair financial burden upon participants, which might restrict services by capable individuals, the policy of this League pertaining to the financing of its representatives to any function shall be:

1. The board or other proper authority shall approve function, delegates, cost, and financing.
2. Expenses shall be reimbursed in full when possible.
3. League members may be reimbursed for actual expenses for out-of-town travel on League business. Members are encouraged to car pool.
4. Official delegates who choose to assume some part of the total cost will not be prohibited from doing so, but are encouraged to report their expenses for budget purposes.
5. The number of members to be reimbursed for a particular event shall be determined by the board.

Monitoring Local Government Meetings

League observers should monitor meetings of the City Council, Planning Commission, and School Board when possible. Information useful to the League should be reported to the board. Observers never make statements for the League. The observers report to the local affairs chair or the president, who reports to the board and membership. All League members are encouraged to attend local government meetings.

Representation

All League-initiated contacts, in person or in writing, with a public official or news media representative shall be approved by the board. Only the president may respond in the name of the League to media-initiated queries. At least two members of the League should be present when a public official is interviewed.

Communications

All formal communication with members, City officials and others must be cleared through the president and/or functional chairs.

Distribution of Materials

No materials, other than LWV materials, will be distributed at League meetings without prior authorization by the board or by the executive committee.

Responsibility for Reservations

In order to protect the League from financial loss when involved in catering contracts, and in order to apply a uniform rule and avoid arbitrary decisions in each case, it shall be a matter of policy of the LWVFC to enforce the following requirements:

1. Notice shall be given of both reservation and cancellation deadlines.
2. Prepaid reservations will not be refundable unless cancelled before the cancellation deadline.
3. Unpaid reservations not cancelled before the cancellation deadline shall be payable in full.

Annual Reports

Board members are responsible for completing an annual report, which is published in the annual meeting booklet and goes to the League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWV-VA) and LWFVUS offices. A copy also shall be placed in the LWFVFC archives, which are housed in the Mary Riley Styles Public Library in Falls Church, VA.

4. LWV FALLS CHURCH NONPARTISAN POLICY

The purpose of the League of Women Voters is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League is nonpartisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. However, it does take action on public issues based on positions reached by member consensus. Although the League encourages its members to be politically active as individuals, it limits the political activities of board members to preserve the League's nonpartisan position.

All Members:

- May not distribute League materials and political party or candidate materials at the same time
 - Must keep League activity and political activity separate and distinct
 - May not distribute partisan petitions or campaign information at League-sponsored events

Members Working on Voter Service Activities:

- Must refrain from publicly identifying their political preferences while working on voter service activities
 - Must refrain from displaying bumper stickers, yard signs, or campaign buttons
- May attend informational political meetings and serve as election officials
- May make financial contributions to candidates, as long as the board member's name is not then used to solicit additional funds
 - Must avoid meetings that are primarily focused on fundraising for political candidates

Elected Board Members:

- Have a special responsibility to ensure that the nonpartisan policy of the League is clear and uncompromised
 - Must not work in a significant way in a candidate's campaign
 - Consult with the Board when there might be a question
- With particularly sensitive portfolios, such as president, local affairs chair, and voter services chair, must not engage in visible partisan activity during their terms of office
 - Must not hold an official position in a political party organization or in any organization that endorses candidates for public office
- Must not speak or work in any way against a League position
- May serve on any public board, commission, committee, or coalition that does not have a competing interest with the League; however, that person must make clear that she/he does not represent the League unless officially designated by the board as the League representative

Off-Board Directors/Nominating Committee

These members may engage in political activity since they are not voting members of the board.

NOTE: If there is doubt about the appropriateness of an activity, the board member should ask for a decision from the board. The political activities of a spouse or relative are considered separate and distinct from those of a board member.

5. MONEY MATTERS

Budget

A budget committee must be appointed by the Board of Directors at least two months prior to the annual meeting to prepare a budget for the ensuing year. The treasurer is not eligible to serve as chair of the budget committee. The proposed budget is submitted to the board for review. The proposed budget must be sent to all members one month before the annual meeting.

Financial Administration

Fiscal Year: Runs from July 1 of each year through June 30 of the following year.

Dues: Dues are payable by July 1. The amount of the dues is established by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at the annual meeting.

General Fund: The cash of the general fund of the LWVFC's Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 501 (c) (4) organization is deposited in one or more checking and/or savings accounts. The total balance of these accounts (plus the balance of the local Education Fund) must always total at least 25 percent of the annual budget.

Education Fund: This is an IRC 501 (c) (3) organization. Donation checks are sent directly to an account held by LWVEF, an LWVUS field support department. Donations made to this account are tax deductible. Withdrawal from this account to reimburse the LWVFC General Fund must follow the guidelines provided by LWVUS to meet the requirements of the tax code. Generally, these withdrawals are for voter service, educational activities, and/or a percentage of per-member payments made annually to LWVUS, LWV-VA, and LWNCA.

Scholarship Fund: This is an IRC 501 (c) (3) organization. The monies are held in a savings account that is managed by LWVFC. Donations made to this account are tax deductible.

Reports: The balance of all funds must be reported in the treasurer's report. Statements should be presented to the board at its regular meetings and an annual report should be presented at the annual meeting. It is recommended that the quarterly reports should be cumulative. For example, the last report of the year (12-month report) should cover the period of July 1 through June 30.

Deposits: Donors should be formally thanked by a board member.

Expenses: Board members must submit vouchers and receipts to the treasurer when requesting reimbursement. They have a spending limit of \$100 without approval of the president or treasurer for discretionary items. All expenses should be accounted for whether submitted for reimbursement or considered a donation. This aids in the tracking of the current budget and preparation of future budgets.

Taxes: IRS Form 990-N (e-Postcard) must be filed for the LWVFC 501 (c) (4) accounts after the end of the fiscal year and before the deadline of November 15. LWVFC's Employer Identification Number (EIN) is 54-6044319.

Form 990-N (e-Postcard) must be filed for the LWVFC Scholarship Fund 501 (c) (3) savings account after the end of the fiscal year and before the deadline of November 15. LWVFC's Scholarship Fund EIN is 56-2318922.

The Education Fund is managed by the LWVUS so it files the tax returns. No filing is submitted by LWVFC for this fund.

Commonwealth of Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) Annual Report and annual registration fee must be paid by the end of January. The annual report may be submitted electronically through SCCeFile.

Financial Review: The records of the treasurer should be reviewed in alternate years.

Contracts/Projects

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

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

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

Fundraising

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

Having sufficient funds to carry out programs is vital to the mission of the League. Because a high percentage of member dues goes to regional, state, and national Leagues, it is imperative that additional money be raised to fund local activities. Fundraising activities can also be effective means of involving members beyond the board and giving them a sense of ownership in League programs. Fundraising may consist of no more than composing and sending out a letter soliciting contributions, an effort that may only involve board members in the drafting and approval of the letter, or may involve a major event with multiple components, such as a raffle and a silent auction. The board will determine what fundraising activities LWVFC will undertake from year to year.

6. MEMBERSHIP

The membership year is July 1 – June 30. New members who join the League after January 31 are entitled to membership from the time of payment of the full dues amount until June 30 of the following year. Dues paid by current members at or after the annual meeting will be for the full amount established for the next fiscal year and will lapse June 30 of the following year. Dues reminders should be sent by the membership chair(s) in August and September, and otherwise as needed.

Meetings

A time to discuss local, state, and national issues is essential to attaining League goals. General meetings shall be organized by the board in compliance with the bylaws.

An annual meeting shall be held in compliance with the bylaws. Following the annual meeting, a report will be made to the membership in the *LWVFC E-Bulletin*. The secretary shall take minutes of the annual meeting. The minutes will be given within thirty (30) days to a reading committee selected by the president that will recommend their approval to the board.

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

7. COMMUNICATIONS

Representing the League

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

Guidelines for representing the League:

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

Correspondence

The preferred method of communication is email. All persons/portfolios whose work relates to the email should be copied. The entire board does not need to be copied unless the topic will come up for board discussion.

The LWVFC E-Bulletin

The LWVFC publishes a monthly e-bulletin for the purpose of keeping the membership informed of local events, programming, and activities as well as national or regional happenings within the regional, state, and national Leagues. The president or the president's designee has the primary responsibility for creating content and may opt to include submissions from other officers, committee chairs, and/or board members.

The communications chair is responsible for assembling the content into the LWVFC template and maintaining the associated membership mailing list within the distribution software used (such as Constant Contact).

News Media and External Communication

The same or a substantially similar graphic format should be used for all publications and presentations of the League, whether in print or digital form.

Any content sharing, whether in print or on digital platforms, such as Facebook, Short Message Service (SMS) or text message, Twitter, etc., should be approved in advance by the president.

Retention of Materials/Archives

Materials of historic interest should be submitted annually to the Local History Archives of the Mary Riley Styles Public Library in Falls Church, VA. Board agendas, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes should be submitted by the secretary. The *LWVFC E-Bulletin* should be submitted by the editor. Other documents determined by the board should be submitted by the appropriate board member.

Knowledge of past League activities and the accessibility of past documents are important to the recruitment of board members. Each board member should maintain and pass on those records that will help his or her successor to carry out the responsibilities of that role's portfolio in the most efficient way. This will ensure a seamless a transition of portfolio responsibilities from year to year and person to person.

LWVFC Website**Hosting**

LWVFC contracts with LWV of California to host the <http://lwvfallchurch.org/> website. Website data is hosted on the LWV of California server via the League Easy Web. The memorandum of understanding for the League Easy Web spells out the terms for use and the annual cost. LWV of California provides website templates to aid in putting content on the website plus technical support. More information about the League Easy Web is available at <http://www.lwvnet.org/>.

The memorandum of understanding is available at <http://archive.lwvc.org/lwvonly/lew/mou.pdf>

Domain Name

LWV of California does not provide the LWV Falls Church domain name. This is contracted separately with Canaca Com Inc. and must be renewed annually. The web master and the president are keepers of the login ID and password.

Webmaster

The web master is responsible for posting content and files on the LWVFC website and the LWVFC portion of Vote411.org. Both the web master and the president are keepers of the login ID and password for adding to and updating website content.

Publications

Publications represent LWVFC by providing unbiased, factual educational material offering a well-researched and documented explanation in support of issues, and making LWVFC visible and a valuable asset to the community. Examples of publications include voters' guides and pro/con fact sheets on specific issues.

Logo

The League of Women Voters has a registered logo that should be used on all print correspondence and publications. The LWVFC provides board members with LWV stationary.

Copyright and Reproduction:

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

8. VOTER SERVICE

Voter service activities must be completely nonpartisan, impartial, objective, and unbiased. Voter service activities may include voter registration drives, voters' guides, candidates' forums/debates/events, ballot information, pro/con fact sheets on specific issues, publication of citizen information, responses to citizen inquiries, and other informational and educational activities and assistance. Voters' guides may be published electronically via LWVUS's Vote411.org website, on LWVFC's website, and in print, as appropriate and determined by the board. The voter service chair(s) manages this critical League function.

9. PROGRAM

Informational Studies

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

Studies Leading to New or Revised Positions at the Local Level

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

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

The board then considers suggestions and decides which, if any, should be recommended for adoption by members. Members vote to adopt local program items at LWVFC's annual meeting.

Consensus or Concurrence Study

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

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

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

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

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

- New LWVFC positions shall be reported to the membership.

- Positions shall be dated with the month and year the consensus/concurrence was taken. Positions are posted on the LWVFC's website and in the local library archives.

Program at Other Levels of League

The board shall use its best judgment in evaluating responses from its membership regarding LWVUS, LWV-VA, and LWNCA study items. The board will then send an LWVFC response to the appropriate level of League.

10. ADVOCACY AND ACTION

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

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

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

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

Speaking With One Voice

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

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

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF LEAGUE LINGO (adapted from LWVUS)

There are certain terms that are unique to the League of Women Voters—often dubbed “League Lingo.” Some of these terms are listed here to help new members.

ACTION: Promoting the League's positions on local, regional, state, and national public policy issues to government officials, the media, and the public.

ACTION ALERT: Request from the LWVUS, state, or regional League to take action in support of a League position.

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

ASSOCIATE MEMBER: A non-voting member of the League, such as a person under 18 years of age or a non-citizen.

CONSENSUS: Collective opinion of a substantial number of League members, representative of the membership as a whole, after objective study of an issue.

CONCURRENCE: Agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by a small group of members or by another League.

CONVENTION: A regional, state, or national League meeting held every other year at which delegates elect officers and directors for the biennium, adopt program, make bylaws changes, and adopt a budget, usually for one year. Local Leagues send delegates to regional and state conventions, local and state Leagues send delegates to national convention.

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

EDUCATION FUND: The tax-deductible arm of national, state, and local Leagues, handling funds to be used only for educational purposes, not for action on issues.

LIFE MEMBER: A person who has been a member for 50 years or more. Life members are excused from dues payment and their Leagues pay no per-member payment (PMP) for them.

ILO: Acronym for an Inter-League Organization, formed by local Leagues within a county, metropolitan area, or region to act on issues that are beyond the local League area in scope.

MAL: Acronym for Member-At-Large, a member who resides outside the area of, and is not enrolled in, a local League.

MAL UNIT: A state-recognized group of Members-At-Large, in an area where there is no local League.

PMP: Acronym for Per-Member Payment, the amount of money paid to the LWVUS and the state and regional Leagues on behalf of each member.

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

PRINCIPLES: Governmental standards and policies supported by the League as a whole. They constitute the authorization for adoption of program at all levels.

PROGRAM: Selected governmental issues chosen by members at the local, state and national levels for study and action.

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

UNIT: Groupings of members within large local Leagues to provide more opportunity for discussion. Units may be time-oriented (day, evening, lunch hour), geographically oriented, or both.

VOTERS' GUIDE: Nonpartisan publication giving candidates' qualifications and positions on selected issues.

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

VOTING MEMBERS: All League members who are U.S. citizens and at least 18 years old.

WEEKLY LEADERS UPDATE: A LWVUS electronic mailing to all League board members sent out weekly. It includes information from the national League on Advocacy issues, Membership and League Support, Education Fund projects and grants, and other important items of interest to League leaders.