

*Your*  
**MEMBER  
HANDBOOK**



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Election Guide: VOTE411.org

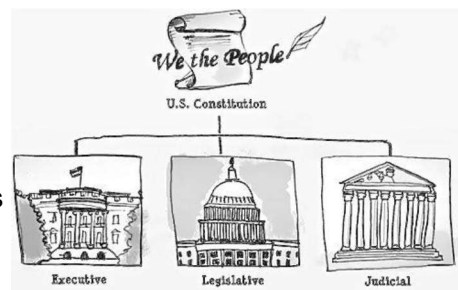
# PRINCIPLES

## *THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BELIEVES...*

...in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

...that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

...that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government 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.



...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.

...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.

...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.

...that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

The principles of the League of Women Voters of the United State have their origin in the League Platform of 1942-1956.

# LEAGUE IN BRIEF

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

**MEMBERSHIP** Membership in the League is open to anyone who subscribes to the purpose and policies of the League. Voting members must be at least eighteen years old and citizens of the United States. Associate memberships are available for those who are under voting age or non-citizens.

Dues are set by the Local Leagues, or by the State League for Members-at-Large. Additional members of a household and students may join for half the usual dues rate.

Local Leagues make annual Per Member Payments (PMP) on behalf of each member to support the activities of the state and national levels of the League. State Leagues pay PMP to LWVUS for Members-at-Large. Donations made by individuals directly to LWVUS are not considered dues.

More than 150,000 members and supporters of the League participate in its activities in every state, as well as in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

## ORGANIZATION

- The structure of the League parallels our representative system of government with local, regional, state and national levels. Learn more about the state level at [LWVColorado.org](http://LWVColorado.org), and about the national level at [LWV.org](http://LWV.org).
- When you join a League, you become a member of all levels that are active where you live.
- Members determine the policies and programs of all levels of the League.

## NONPARTISANSHIP

- The League acts in support of or opposition to selected governmental issues which it has studied.
- The League does not support or oppose candidates, factions or political parties.
- League members, as individuals, are urged to work in the political party of their choice.
- In order to protect the League's nonpartisanship policy, guidelines regarding the political activities of the Board of Directors are reviewed frequently.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION** The League seeks to reflect the diversity of the broader community. There are no barriers to participation in any activity on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital status, military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or socioeconomic status.

**FINANCING** The League is a non-profit organization financed by member dues paid to a Local or State League, contributions from individuals and corporations, and grants made for League projects supported by foundations and governmental entities.

# WHAT WE DO

**STUDY AND ACT** The League of Women Voters is an action group. However, it may take action only on issues which have been extensively studied and on which the members are in substantial agreement. One of the reasons for the political effectiveness of the League is its reputation for thorough study.

Resource committees research the complete facts, the pros and cons, to present to the membership. Small units study and discuss issues so that everyone has an opportunity to express an opinion. The membership reaches a formal position through a process of Study/Discussion/Consensus or Concurrence.

The League and members as individuals take ACTION on advocacy position by:

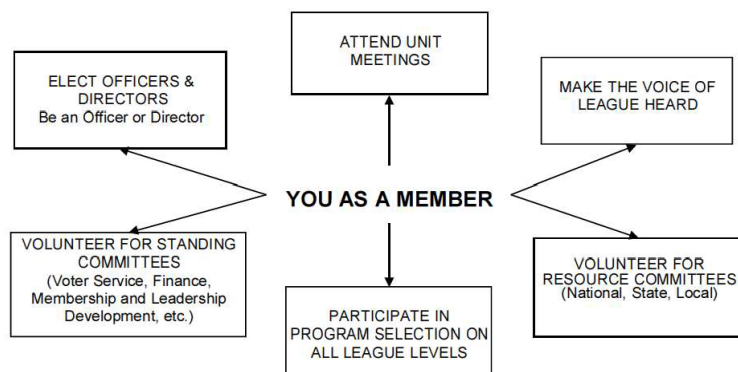
- sponsoring forums for members and the public
- supporting or opposing legislation -- watch your email for Calls to Action
- lobbying and testifying in public hearings
- sharing information through social media, Public News Service, and League publications such as The Voter
- writing letters to editors and officials.

League Boards are responsible for planning and directing action. Apart from group activities, members are encouraged to take individual action on issues, but only a League President or an authorized representative may speak on behalf of the League.

**VOTER SERVICE/CITIZEN INFORMATION** Voter Service is carried out by the Education Fund and includes:

- registering citizens to vote
- presenting information on all sides of issues: forums, ballot issues pamphlets
- encouraging participation in government
- publishing candidate and election guides in print and online. VOTE411.org is a one-stop online election guide developed by the League.

When the League has a position on any issue, separate material is published to promote the League's stand. This is to ensure the distinction between League Action by LWV and Voter Service by the LWV Education Fund.



# WHERE YOU FIT INTO THE LEAGUE

**YOU, THE MEMBER** The League structure is designed to give you every chance to voice your views. Every member is encouraged to study and discuss issues, then make the League's voice heard by helping with community forums and responding to Calls to Action. Volunteer for small or large tasks. Ask questions! We are all learning together.

## **LEAGUE PROGRAM IS MADE UP OF THE ISSUES YOU AND OTHER MEMBERS ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT**

- members choose governmental issues for concerted study and action. At annual program-planning meetings, you will review existing positions and consider new studies on the local, regional, state and national levels. The resulting proposals are submitted to the Board serving at the appropriate level. Individual members may also submit proposals.
- the Board considers all proposals and then presents a recommended program for consideration at the annual meeting or convention. Final decisions on state and national programs are made at biennial conventions by delegates from each Local League.
- a recommended program item requires a majority vote for adoption. A non-recommended item may also be placed before the delegates; it usually requires a larger vote for adoption.

## **LEADERSHIP BY THE MEMBERS**

- **BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM**

Members or their delegates on each level of the League organization elect a Board of Directors or Administrative Team to manage the activities of the League. The structure of a Board or Team is provided for in the organizational bylaws.

- **RESOURCE COMMITTEES**

Resource committees provide the program groundwork in the League. As a member of a committee, you research background information and the current status of an issue, identify problems to be addressed, and present the results to all members for discussion, consensus and possible action. In large Leagues, where there are a number of discussion units, the material may be presented to representatives from each unit at a briefing session.

- **STANDING COMMITTEES**

There may also be ongoing committees for other areas of League work, such as Voter Service, Membership, Budget, Development, Communication, Publicity and Arrangements. All are vital to the success of the League and would welcome your participation.

- **MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

All members participate in welcoming new members and developing the leadership abilities of themselves and other members. Guided by national Shur Fellows, state coaches share best practices with local Leagues for growth and vitality.

## WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER

**NATIONAL** The League began in 1920 as a “mighty political experiment” designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters. It encouraged them to use their new power to participate in shaping public policy. The League helped to pass major initiatives such as Social Security, the United Nations (LWVUS has official observer status), the Voting Rights Act, and the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2002. Studies conducted by League members nationwide can be found in the LWVUS Clearinghouse ([clearinghouse.lwv.org](http://clearinghouse.lwv.org)).

**STATE** The Colorado Women Citizens League was organized in 1929. The name was changed in 1940 to the League of Women Voters of Colorado. Rooted in the movement for women’s suffrage, which was adopted for Colorado women in 1893, the League has supported voting rights, jury service for women and the Equal Rights Amendment as included in the state constitution. The League has helped to pass laws to protect children, a system of merit appointment of judges, more equitable redistricting of the General Assembly and other reforms of state government.

**LOCAL** Local Leagues have spearheaded improvements in the structure and efficiency of municipal and county governments, and have worked on such issues as public schools, housing, health services, sanitation, tax reform and local planning.

## ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

**OBSERVERS** Leagues may send observers to meetings of governmental bodies to evaluate and report on the proceedings. Observers do not speak for the League but attend these meetings to listen, learn and make factual reports. The League’s reputation as a civic watchdog has been earned by the Observer program.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS** All members can share League news through personal contacts and social media. Many also volunteer for coordinated efforts to spread Voter Service information and results of League studies and action using websites and social media, public service announcements and programs on the radio or television, educational brochures and pamphlets, banners and advertisements, statements given to governmental bodies, and speeches by League members.

**PUBLICATIONS** Information about local, regional, state and national issues is prepared by the League of Women Voters and made available online and or in print. League publications are the result of thorough research and are nonpartisan. When funding is underwritten by corporations, foundations or individuals, League publications are available at moderate cost or distributed free of charge.

**LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE** Volunteer lobbyists and the Staff Lobbyist meet during the legislative session to evaluate proposed bills and decide whether to oppose or support them, based on established League positions. They write the Legislative Letter, lobby in the legislature, and issue Calls to Action to all members.

# LEAGUE LINGO

**ACTION:** the means used for giving information about and urging support for League Positions

**BRIEFING:** meeting at which a Resource Committee briefs non-committee members so they may be Discussion Leaders at unit meetings

**CALL TO ACTION:** request from a board for a specific action on an issue or position

**CONCURRENCE:** substantial agreement of the members on a position previously adopted by another League

**CONSENSUS:** substantial agreement of the members developed through study and discussion

**EDUCATION FUND:** 501(c)(3) arm of league with focus on Voter Service

**ITEM/ISSUE:** any specific topic included in the Program: local, regional, state or national

**LAC:** Legislative Action Committee -- advocates for League positions in the legislature

**LWV:** League of Women Voters

**MAL:** Member-at-Large -- a member who is not enrolled in a local league

**MLD:** Membership and Leadership Development -- coaches share best practices to increase membership and develop leaders

**PMP:** Per Member Payment -- amount of money paid to LWVUS & LWVCO on behalf of each member

**POSITION:** body of opinion expressed in consensus upon which action can be taken

**PROGRAM:** local regional state and national governmental issues suggested by members and adopted for study and action

**STATE LEAGUE UNIT (SLU):** a State League-organized group of members in an area where there is no Local League

**UNIT:** a small discussion group which meets regularly to discuss and evaluate League Program

**VOTE411.ORG:** online election guide developed by the League

**VOTER:** newsletters issues by local, regional and state Boards (some Local Leagues use other names)

**VOTER SERVICE:** voter registration drives, candidate forums, voter guides, VOTE411.org and education issue forums

