



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS: POLITICAL & NONPARTISAN

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 as a 'mighty political experiment,' and we remain a political powerhouse today, educating on and advocating for a more perfect democracy. The League has been nonpartisan since its founding, never associated with a political party nor supporting or opposing candidates.

Political = associated with politics.

Partisan = associated with a political party; nonpartisan = not associated with a political party.

Advocacy = the active support of an idea or a cause to influence public opinion or public policy.

Advocacy includes civic engagement, public education, and lobbying, all three of which the League undertakes.

If the League is nonpartisan, why do we have positions on issues? Issues are nonpartisan by their nature, though people and parties regularly associate a particular issue with a party platform. LWV positions (stances on an issue) come about only after extensive study and debate, allowing League membership to come to consensus and therefore speak with one voice about an issue. It is important to recognize that while the League's activities to influence public policy are not partisan by default, the public's understanding and perception of partisanship changes throughout history and is directly impacted by current events as well as geographic and regional dynamics. Additionally, those who oppose the reforms and issues the League is working on may claim the League's efforts are partisan to control how the League exercises its influence and power. This does not mean the League should curtail its advocacy or limit the public policy issues it works to influence, but rather be mindful of the external environment when deciding how, when, and with whom to engage in public policy activities.

Nonprofits are legally able to advocate within limits and, in fact, carry a responsibility to advocate for the people it serves. As defined in federal regulations, nonprofits may lobby, i.e. communicating directly or urging the public to communicate, to support or oppose legislation before a legislative body of voters [[26 CFR § 1.501\(c\) \(3\) - 1\(c\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#)]. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows a nonprofit to spend up to 20% of its expenses averaged over a five-year period on lobbying; because the large majority of LWV lobbying is done by volunteers, local Leagues are typically completely compliant with IRS regulations. A great resource on federal and Colorado laws on nonprofit advocacy is [Principles & Practices for Nonprofit Excellence](#), published by the Colorado Nonprofit Association – see page 5.

Further questions? Contact the LWVCO office: info@lwvcolorado.org or 303-863-0437.