

TAKING ACTION IN THE LEAGUE



Prepared by
LWVMI
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HOW PROGRAM IS SELCTED, ADOPTED, AND USED AS A BASIS FOR ACTION

- YOU and MEMBERS of your LWV
Meet to PLAN PROGRAM
- Review current program
 - Consider new/additional topics of concern
- MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS
- To retain, update, restudy or drop positions
 - To adopt any new study

THIS GOES TO

THE BOARD – Local, State, National
Whose members formulate a “recommended program” based on this member input.

THE RECOMMENDED PROGRAM IS SENT TO

THE ANNUAL MEETING / BIENNIAL CONVENTION
Where LWV members decide what the program will be for the next year/biennium.

LWV PROGRAM CAN INCLUDE

NEW STUDY ITEMS

- Require comprehensive study directed by a study committee and shared with members.
- Followed by consensus of members at local leagues meetings.
- The Board combines the sense of all participants to determine the consensus of the LWV. This position statement is then adopted by the LWVMI Board.

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

- Retained as before, or
- Changed according to members’ wishes, or
- Dropped (If a position is dropped by the members, no further action may be taken under it.)

THESE ARE THE BASIS FOR LWV ACTION

Such as

- Legislative action authorized by the Board
- LWV response to Time For Action
- Individual letters by members
- Board approved testimony
- Citizen education

LWVMI TAKING ACTION

League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI) takes action when it is necessary to contact state officials, i.e. Governor, members of the Michigan House of Representatives or Senate, or Directors of state departments.

All LWV action is based on positions arrived at by consensus or concurrence among the membership. Local Leagues may ask LWVMI to take action at the state level by submitting a support/oppose form found on the LWVMI website.

1. The state board has the responsibility to:
 - Evaluate specific legislation against LWV positions and decide whether or not LWVMI will support or oppose it.
 - Decide the kinds of action which will be most effective.
 - Determine the timing of the action.
 - Notify local leagues and state officials.

2. Action is called for when:
 - The state legislation, ballot issue, or ballot proposal is significant for achieving LWV goals.
 - An effective contribution can be made by LWVMI efforts.
Note: LWVMI does not take a stand on every bill, issue or proposal that falls within LWVMI program.

3. Action may involve one or more of the following:
 - Letters and calls to Michigan House of Representatives, Senate members, Governor, or state departments.
 - Testimony before legislative committees or at agency hearings.
 - Press releases, letters to editors, op eds, etc.
 - Contact or work in coalition with other statewide groups for concerned action.
 - Action alerts to our members urging individual action.

4. Local Leagues may advocate on legislation or policy decisions if the LWVMI board has taken a position on legislation or policy decision involving a state official (e.g. State Representative, Secretary of State, Department of Environmental Quality). This is extremely important so that overall state activities are coordinated.

Article X, Section 3 of the LWVMI Bylaws states:

Local LWVs and ILOs may act on state program only in conformity with positions taken by the LWVUS or the LWVMI. Members may act in the name of the LWVMI or the LWVUS only when authorized by the appropriate board.

THE ACTION ALERT PROCESS

An Action Alert is a notice from LWVMI board to all LWV members that action is needed on state legislation, or other position. The Action Alert usually goes to all local LWV members, but occasionally a “limited” Action Alert is issued to a few LWV members whose legislators serve on a particular committee considering a bill of importance to LWVMI or are key legislators on an issue.

LOCAL LWV RESPONSE

A local LWV Board has two responsibilities in responding to an Action Alert:

1. To send an official communication in the name of the local LWV. This response is done only by the president or a designated spokesperson, and it always is signed by that person, in the name of the League.
2. To report to the LWVMI office on any response from a legislator.

If there are reasons why the local LWV board feels it cannot or should not respond to the Action Alert, report these reasons to the state board. Call a state board member to talk about any problems you may have. Sometimes a local LWV board may decide that it is politically unwise to communicate with its legislators in the name of the League. Under such circumstances, individual members’ letters to legislators and editors as well as support from other individuals and groups become doubly important.

If a local LWV board determines that its members do not agree with the LWV position, it may choose not to take action in the name of the League. This decision must be reported to the state board. A local LWV may not take action in opposition to an LWV position, nor may the local LWV board members, since to do so would thwart the efforts of a substantial majority of LWV members in the state. By the nature of the consensus process, which represents a substantial area of agreement by a substantial majority of members in the state, these occasions are rare.

NEW LWV OR UNIT-AT-LARGE RESPONSE

New LWVs and Units-At-Large often do not have members who have participated in studies which were carried out in the past. The boards of such LWVs have a special responsibility to become familiar with LWV position and the background on that position before taking action on a specific issue. Call a state board member or the appropriate item chair if you have questions.

MEMBER RESPONSE

A LWV member always acts as an individual in response to Action Alert, communicating with legislators as a responsible and informed citizen without reference to LWV membership. A member expresses personal opinions and views on the issues and gives reasons for them. Board members – and individual LWV members when they are representing the LWV—may not publicly express views in opposition to the LWV position.

EFFECTIVE LWV ACTION IS TRULY DEPENDENT ON THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER.

LWVMI ADVOCACY POLICY

SETTING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The LWVMI board adopts annually a set of legislative priorities to guide its advocacy work in the Michigan Legislature. The goals are:

- to enhance the League's effectiveness by concentrating resources on priority issues.
- to build the League's credibility and visibility by projecting a focused and consistent image.
- to ensure that the League has sufficient issue and political expertise to act knowledgeably.
- to enable the League to manage resources effectively.

In setting legislative priorities, the board considers the following:

- Opportunities for the League to make an impact.
- LWVMI strategic plan.
- Member interest.
- Resources available to manage effectively.

The board regularly reviews the legislative priorities and is prepared to make adjustments should new opportunities for effective action emerge.

Requests from Local Leagues for Permission to Act at the State Level

All action at the state level must be authorized by the LWVMI board. This includes any effort aimed at influencing the decision on a state issue, such as communicating with an elected or appointed official, joining a coalition, taking part in a press conference or rally, or writing a letter-to-the-editor. A local League wishing to work in this way must consult with the LWVMI about the intended action.

The process is designed to help make League action as effective as possible, to ensure that the League speaks with one voice, and to coordinate and reinforce the League's advocacy messages. LWVMI board will review the action request to determine that it is consistent with League positions.

Requests for permission to urge other Leagues/members to act on a state issue

The LWVMI has sole responsibility for contacting local Leagues and League members about state issues.

Requests for Endorsement of Initiatives Sponsored by Other Organizations

If the issue is state wide in scope, the LWVMI is the appropriate level to endorse the initiative. If the LWVMI declines to endorse the initiative, endorsement by local Leagues will not be appropriate.

The LWVMI will endorse such an initiative if:

- the action will further a current LWVMI advocacy priority, and/or
- LWVMI endorsement would enhance an important relationship with the organization making the request,
- resource demands associated with the endorsement are compatible with efforts to achieve current LWVMI advocacy goals, and
- in evaluating the impact of the endorsement on League resources, the LWVMI feels the implications for the state office, the LWVMI board and local Leagues is worth it.

LOCAL LWV ADVOCACY

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL LEAGUES TO TAKE ACTION

1. Advocacy at the local level using a local position.

Local Leagues can take positions on local issues and contact their local officials on issues that the local League has a position.

2. Advocacy at the local level using a state position.

If local Leagues want to contact a locally elected official, i.e. the mayor, county commissioner or school board members, state positions may be used. However, local governmental units cannot act where state legislation is required. Of course, voter service can be done on any ballot question or any community issue.

These positions of LWVMI may have application for local level advocacy:

Children and Youth	Libraries
Education	Prisons
Election Laws	Social Services
Great Lakes Ecosystem	Solid Waste Management
Health Care	

In addition, the Taxation and Budgeting positions might be used, particularly if no local study has been done. In the absence of a local school financing position, local Leagues can neither support or oppose local millage questions.

The state, and LWVUS, Land Use positions can be used to support the concepts that planning should be done and that citizens should participate in the planning process. In order to comment on the details of a local plan, however, a local study must be done first.

Intergovernmental Relations within Michigan does not take the place of a local or area study for advocating at the local level.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

IN DECIDING TO ADVOCATE, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Does the contemplated advocacy fall within the state positions? Is it consistent with the intent of the position? Is it a means of implementing the position?
2. Are the local members informed and in general agreement? If they are not informed, can the information be presented and their reaction assessed within the time available?
3. How effective will the League and this advocacy be?
4. Is the advocacy strictly local? If other governmental units beyond your LWV's boundary or other LWVs are affected, see League Basics (www.lwv.org) guidelines on advocacy involving more than one governmental unit and League.
5. Does this local advocacy activity fall within the priorities of this local League?

IN MONITORING

Monitoring (or observing) can be done in any area, but it is strongly recommended that it be done within the area of LWV program. This helps to keep members current, may be useful in proposing new studies, and strengthens the existing program through member interest and data collection.

Monitoring can be observing plus advocacy. If you are seeking to have an existing law properly and fairly administered, observation of the activities of responsible officials and agencies and gathering of facts must be done carefully.

LWVUS & ACTION

The following must be used if a local League wants to advocate at the national level, i.e. President, members of U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate or members of U.S. departments, i.e. the Department of Treasury.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVING REQUESTS FOR ACTION

The LWVUS board adopts annually a set of legislative priorities to guide its advocacy work in Congress.

The goals are to:

- enhance the League's effectiveness by concentrating resources on priority issues.
- build the League's credibility and visibility by projecting a focused and consistent image.
- ensure that the League has sufficient issue and political expertise to act knowledgeably.
- enable the League to manage resources effectively.

In setting legislative priorities, the LWVUS board considers the following:

- Opportunities for the League to make an impact;
- Program decisions made at convention and/or council;
- Member interest, and
- Resources available to manage effectively.

The board regularly reviews the legislative priorities and is prepared to make adjustments should new opportunities for effective action emerge.

Requests from State/Local Leagues for Permission to Act at the Federal Level

All action at the federal level must be authorized by the LWVUS board. This includes any effort aimed at influencing the decision on a federal issue, such as communicating with an elected or appointed official, joining a coalition, taking part in a press conference or rally, or writing a letter-to-the-editor. A state or local League wishing to work in this way on a federal issue or at the national level must consult with the LWVUS about the intended action.

As part of this consultation process, the state/local League is asked to provide the following information in writing:

- the proposed action and the message to be conveyed;
- the LWVUS position on which the action is based; and
- evidence that the issue is a priority for that state/local League.

Leagues are asked to provide this information on the State and Local League Request Form for Federal Issues which can be found in the [Take Action](#) section of www.lwv.org.

If a local League is requesting permission to contact its U.S. Senator(s), on an issue that has not been the subject of an LWVUS Action Alert, it should also provide evidence that the action has been authorized by its state League. Appropriate LWVUS Board and staff will review the action request to determine that it is consistent with League positions and that it will not interfere with LWVUS action on a priority issue. Requests should be sent to lobbying@lwv.org.

Impact on Issues, page 6.

ACTION WHEN NO LEAGUE POSITION EXISTS

Remember that an LWV can be effective without taking a position.

Education of the public is an important method of taking action in certain situations, for example, when there is no time to arrive at a position or where taking a position would result in divisiveness in the LWV or the community.

Holding public information meetings which present all pertinent information in an impartial manner can be very useful in bringing public opinion to bear on a problem.

Voter service on issues, as well as candidates, across local LWV lines can also be useful where voting is involved. Both should be coordinated, joint efforts.

The state Board will be glad to help with coordinating joint projects.

4/2012



Streamlining Local League Advocacy

How To Make a Difference with a Small Group or a Committee of One

Idea to Action: How To Make a Difference

9 Steps for Small-Group Success

It only takes a few working together to tackle a local issue. Follow these steps (and see the flow chart, next page) to make a difference.

- 1) **Organize** two to three members who want to do something.
- 2) **Identify** a community issue. (See the related guides to “Hot Topics” lunches and planning a community event.)
- 3) **Talk** to others in the community with background on the issue to **learn** what they are doing and to **connect** on common concerns.
- 4) **Determine** which League positions support your approach, and if national or state positions apply locally.
- 5) **Use** the LWVUS “Citizen’s Right to Know” position to promote transparency and accountability (powerful action item).
- 6) **Decide** where your League can make a difference. Is this really a local (city/county) issue, or does it rise to a higher level?
- 7) **Develop** talking points and a plan of action. (Keep it simple: based on data and facts.)
- 8) **Get agreement** from the board.
- 9) **Take action!**

The Power of One

Even one person designated as the advocacy/action coordinator for a local League can accomplish a lot with minimum effort and collaboration with the local League leadership team:

- Respond to state/national action alerts on behalf of your local League. Help with issuing letters-to-the-editor suggestions provided by the state/national League.
- Post state/national action alerts on your local League website or Facebook page and disseminate to others.
- Check the League’s website at www.lwv.org (national) & state sites for action opportunities.
- Let members know how officials voted on action alert legislation.
- Use national templates to submit letters-to-the-editor for the Leagues priority issues, and notable dates, e.g. Women’s Equality Day, etc.
- Write your own letters about current events and link to League positions.
- Research a local ballot issue; provide pro/con arguments for your local voter guide, publicize to the media and other organizations.



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How To Make a Difference with a Small Group or a Committee of One

Idea to Action: How To Make a Difference

