



OBSERVER CORPS GUIDELINES FOR LWVMI LOCAL LEAGUES

Local Leagues are encouraged to create and use an Observer Corps, following guidance from LWVUS (https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/lwvof_observingyourgovernment.pdf).

Before attending governmental meetings as an observer, each new observer should attend an orientation or training by the local Observer Corps regarding state and local League policies for observing. New observers are encouraged to attend at least one governmental meeting with another observer. More than one observer may observe the same meetings, indefinitely.

The local League president should send a letter to the governmental body before a new observer begins observing that entity on a regular basis as part of an Observer Corps. The letter should introduce the observer and explain the basic principles of the Observer Corps. Example templates can be found from other Observer Corps around Michigan and the U.S. Example/template included.

Additional to letters introducing new observers, local Leagues may want to use other documents used by other Observer Corps, adapted to local needs, including the following:

- Standard forms to be filled out by observers during governmental meetings. These forms can include check lists, as well as space for notes.
- Tracking documents to summarize local League assignments, as well as basic information about when and where observed governmental entities meet. Information can also be included about additional governmental organizations, particularly those that are a high priority for the local League but still needing observers.
- Tracking documents to summarize key issues encountered by observers over time, which might be coded by topic, governmental entity, date, etc.
- Observer Corps newsletters for local League members summarizing relevant issues and information that observers have encountered of particular relevance to other parts of the local League (candidate forum questions, Vote 411 questions, potential advocacy issues, etc.)
- Examples/templates included.

Restrictions. To protect the credibility of the Observer Corps, the local League, and the LWV generally, observers must not actively participate in the substance of the governmental entity they are observing.

- An observer can never be a member of the governmental body they observe. In fact, League members who serve as elected officials should not serve as an observer for any other governmental entity while in office. League members who serve as appointed officials should confer with their local league board before serving as an observer of other governmental entities.
- Observers should not comment as a League member on issues deliberated by the governmental body they observe, particularly during the meetings observed. League comments should be presented by a different League member. Comments as a private citizen could be made at a time and manner separate from any role as observer.
- Observers should function separately from any advocacy efforts made by the local League to the governmental entity being observed.
- Observers should not engage the press about the governmental entity they observe.

Adoption: February 12, 2022