



# **TAKING ACTION IN THE LEAGUE**

Prepared by LWVMI  
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## 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 program or 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. State positions are available at [www.lwvmi.org](http://www.lwvmi.org) and LWVUS positions are in Impact on Issues at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

1. The LWVMI Board receives recommendations from its Advocacy Committee on what action to take on specific proposed bills. The Advocacy Committee recommends action to the LWVMI Board of Directors. See more information on Advocacy Committee.
2. The LWVMI Board of Directors 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 coordinated action.
  - Action alerts to our members urging individual member action.
  - Litigation
5. Local Leagues and members may contact a state official (for example, a state legislator, Secretary of State, Department of Environmental Quality) to advocate on state legislation or policy decisions **only** if they have been authorized to do so by LWVMI. Action Alerts sent to individual League members by LWVMI constitute the required authorization.

This is extremely important so that League Advocacy activities are coordinated, and the League is able to speak with one voice.

League members who are speaking as League members or on behalf of the League may not publicly express views in opposition to League positions.

*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 LWWUS or the LWVMI. Members may act in the name of the LWVMI or the LWWUS 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. 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.

### Individual Member Response if there is no Action Alert:

Individuals can always advocate as individuals, communicating with legislators as a responsible and informed citizen but they cannot reference LWV membership.

EFFECTIVE LWV ACTION IS TRULY DEPENDENT ON THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER.

## LWVMI ADVOCACY COMMITTEE POLICIES

1. The Advocacy Committee Chair is appointed by the LWVMI Board of Directors. The committee members are recommended and appointed by the Vice President of Advocacy with the approval of the LWVMI Board of Directors.
2. The Advocacy Committee will review legislation and recommend action to the LWVMI Board of Directors. Members and others will use the support/oppose forms on LWVMI's website submitted prior to the meeting.
3. With the approval of the Advocacy Committee chair, members of the Advocacy Committee may attend legislative committees and complete attendance cards representing LWVMI. Following the meeting written reports will be emailed to Advocacy Committee Chair.
4. Members of the Advocacy Committee may help draft testimony or action alerts.
5. Members of the Advocacy Committee may prepare background materials for distribution to local League members after approved by the Advocacy Committee. Authors will be acknowledged in materials. Materials will be distributed to local Leagues by the LWVMI Board of Directors.
6. Testimony will only be presented by President or his/her designee. Advocacy Committee members may help with the preparation of the testimony.
7. Members of the Advocacy Committee may be appointed by the LWVMI Board to represent LWVMI in coalitions or other ad hoc groups. Information about these activities will be shared at the Advocacy Committee meetings.
8. The Advocacy Committee Chair will be responsible for setting meeting dates, preparing an agenda and written minutes of the meeting for the LWVMI Board of Directors.
9. Members of the Advocacy Committee may not do any lobbying, advocating for or against legislation, with members of the state legislature or executive branch, unless designated.
10. The committee will meet monthly prior to the board meeting unless the chair cancels the meeting because there is no business.

2021- 2023 Members of the Advocacy Committee:

Judy Karandjeff     Chair - Election Laws, Women's Issues

Marty Couretas – Gun Violence Prevention

Betsy Cushman – Voting Rights

Tricia Denton – Water/Line 5

Sandy Sorini Elser – Natural Resources/Environment

Carolyn Madden – Criminal Justice

Connie Mitchell – Civil Rights

Maria Woloson - Electoral College/NPV

Chris Zilke – Great Lakes

Sue Smith – Ex Officio

Christina Schlitt – Ex Officio

## 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 statewide 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.

Adopted by LWVMI: 10/6/2011



## 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 with approval by the local League Board of Directors.

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 League 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.

3. Advocacy at the local level using a national position.

National positions are listed on LWV's website as well as published in Impact on Issues. Local Leagues can use these positions to lobby at the local level without permission of LWVUS. However, no advocacy can be done at the national level by a local League unless an Action Alert is received from LWVUS.

## 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](http://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 LWWUS Board and staff will review the action request to determine that it is consistent with League positions and that it will not interfere with LWWUS action on a priority issue. Requests should be sent to [lobbying@lww.org](mailto:lobbying@lww.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.

## **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 LWVs boundary or other LWVs are affected, see League Basics ([www.lwv.org](http://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 STUDYING**

Local Leagues can do studies on local issues only, i.e. a school millage, performance of schools, or use of renewable resources.