

# Program in the League of Women Voters *Program Planning* Is Where It Starts

LWV Michigan is grateful to the LWV Texas for the development of this presentation.  
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# League of Women Voters

- A nonpartisan political organization
- A living laboratory of democracy, organized on three levels like the government itself
- Purposes are same in all LWV bylaws: *To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues.*
- Mission: *Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.*
- A grassroots organization

Two Kinds of  
League Work

Voters Service

Program

*Both are nonpartisan, 3-level,  
grassroots*

# Voters Service

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Voter registration

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Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) campaigns

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Candidates forums

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Guides to elected officials

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Vote411

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And other activities that inform voters and help citizens get involved in elections and the overall democratic process.

Program in  
League =  
Study and  
Action

Not just the topic for the next meeting

The **positions** on which we **act** are derived from **study** of topics chosen during **Program Planning** and any resulting **member agreement**

# Program Carries Out Mission and Principles

*The League* is nonpartisan, 3-level, and grassroots

*Program* is nonpartisan, 3-level, and grassroots

*Program Planning* is nonpartisan, 3-level, and grassroots

Study and action help to carry out our purposes and mission

Program is based on Principles of good government we hold in common

# League Principles

(key phrases here)

## ***In brief, we believe in***

- representative government, individual liberties, balance of powers
- citizen's right to know, adequate notice, open meetings, open records
- the right to vote, free public education, equal opportunity, no discrimination
- efficient and economical government responsive to the will of the people, equitable and flexible taxation, conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, a sound economy, domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems
- cooperation with other nations, the promotion of world peace.

## **Action** in the League

**Action** is our effort to bring about governmental change based on **positions** we derive through member study and agreement.

## Study and Action Occur at Three Levels

- **Local** Leagues study local issues that may be addressed by **local** government.
- **State** Leagues study issues that may be addressed by **state** government.
- Leagues across the county study **national** issues that need to be addressed by the federal government.
- Some state positions also can be used locally and some national positions used at all levels. But local positions cannot be used to lobby the state or federal government.

## The Study Process

Study identifies the issues related to the problem, gathers facts needed to understand them, considers options for governmental change to address the problem, and looks at the pros and cons of those options -- in an unbiased, balanced way.

Members then try to reach agreement on the actions needed to resolve the problems. They often do, but not always.

# Member Agreement Is the Intended Outcome of a Study

Traditionally, Leagues try to reach member agreement by **consensus**: a sense of the group, not a census/vote count.

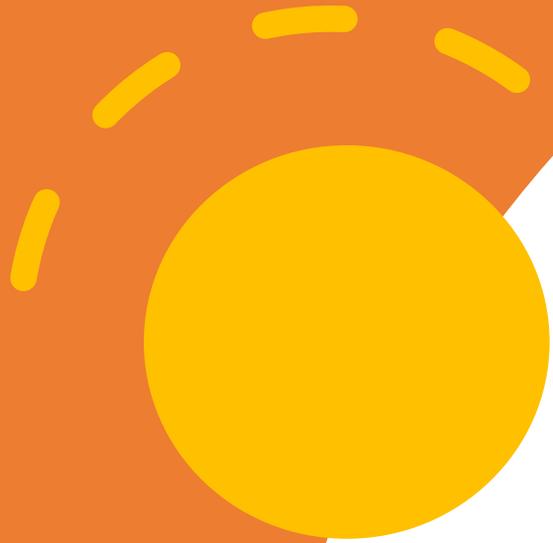
But if the issues are fairly simple and member agreement likely, members may be asked to **concur** with a proposed position statement in a yes-no vote.

Concurrence may be attempted at the end of the study or on the floor of state or national convention.

# Boards Oversee Study and Action

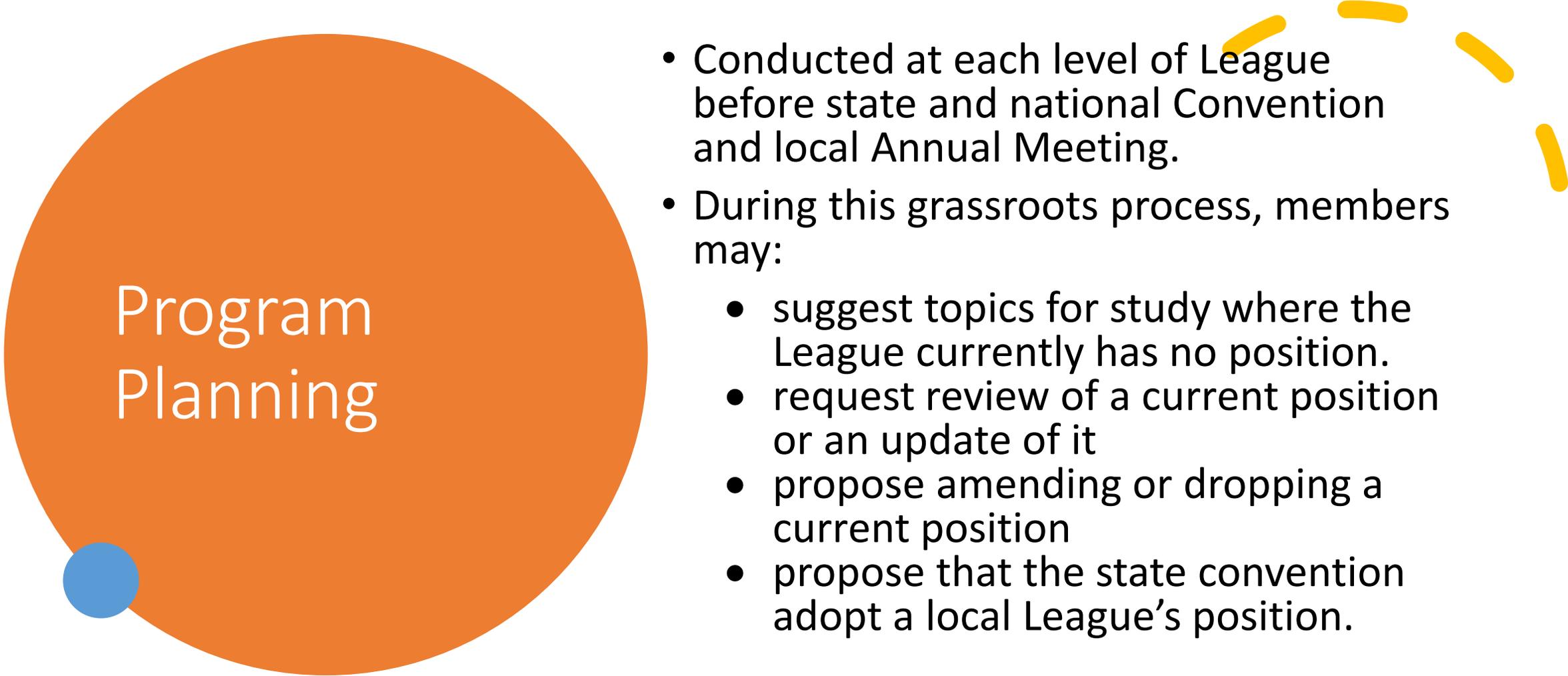
The board of directors at the study's level assesses whether **member agreement** has been reached and issues a statement of the League's new **position**.

The board then manages action on that position. To use a position to lobby for something specific, the board considers whether the League has an applicable position and whether there is **member understanding and agreement** supportive of that action—even 70+ years after the position was adopted.



# Program Planning

## Where League Program Starts



# Program Planning

- Conducted at each level of League before state and national Convention and local Annual Meeting.
- During this grassroots process, members may:
  - suggest topics for study where the League currently has no position.
  - request review of a current position or an update of it
  - propose amending or dropping a current position
  - propose that the state convention adopt a local League's position.



Local League  
Board Submits  
Program  
Planning Report  
Form to LWVMI  
and LWVUS

- Members have the opportunity to participate in process but the board, not individuals, submit report forms. Program Chair looks for areas of agreement and reports them to the local board. The board determines whether there was member agreement and submits report form to the state League for state program planning and LWVUS for national program planning.
- Deadline for form submissions: 3 months before LWVMI or LWVUS Convention



# Convention Delegates Adopt Program

- LWVMI & L WVUS boards examine reports from Leagues across the state or country. Each board develops a **Recommended Program** and provides it to local Leagues to inform their delegates before Program is considered on the floor of Convention.
- State and national League bylaws have provisions for considering **Not-Recommended Items**.
- Convention delegates vote on Recommended Program and any Not-Recommended Items voted consideration.
- The adopted Program guides the League's work for the next biennium.

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Program  
Planning  
Resources

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Available on LWVMI and  
LWVUS websites

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*Leaders Guide to Program  
Planning*

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Report form/survey

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*Leaders Guide* has links to  
positions and other resources

# LWVMI Positions

*Full positions on LWVMI.org*

- *18 positions*

State League positions fall within the general areas of

Government

Natural Resources

Social Policy

# LWVUS Positions

Full positions in *Impact on Issues 2020-2022*

- 149 pages
- 56 existing positions

Brief statement of positions on pages 11-16

National League positions fall within the general categories of

Representative Government

International Relations

Natural Resources

Social Policy

Many Options for  
Conducting  
Program Planning  
in Your League:  
*The Grassroots-O-  
Meter*



# Make Program Planning a Big Deal

Form a committee months ahead to prepare presentation to make at full membership meeting.

Read the Leaders Guide and report form. Read existing positions in detail and identify any needs for new studies, amendments, or drops.

Hold membership meeting to talk about all parts of the report form. Try to reach consensus on answers.

Program Chair reports areas of agreement to local board, which decides what to submit to state or national board.

Takes a lot of time but participants will become knowledgeable and enthused about Program.



## Moderate Effort

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One full membership meeting.

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Send *We Support* ahead of time to members.

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Look at the *current* advocacy priorities. Do they cover what you think the League should be doing?

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Any other burning issues that need attention? Skim the list of positions and see if it fits. Sticky dots an easy way to brainstorm and prioritize if there are a lot of suggestions.

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Board sends in report to state or national board.



## 4 Easier Options

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Program Planning Chair emails or mails *We Support* with the substantive question from the report form and seeks input by email. Board submits form as before.

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OR local board alone discusses the report form and submits it.

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OR the board delegates the discussion to a small committee. The board still submits the report form.

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OR, if your board thinks members are happy with the current action priorities, just answer that substantive question on the report form.

# The Do- Almost- Nothing Option

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Skip Program Planning. Maybe Voters Service is all the community expects from you and all your League can manage.

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**BUT** tell members how they can advocate as individuals by using state and national League mailings and websites as resources.