

Basic Board Training Workshop

Conducting board training can be a stimulating and satisfying experience. Relax and be enthusiastic about the League. Encourage board members to participate actively and welcome individual comments and suggestions. Don't hesitate to make and/or support alternative or nontraditional suggestions on procedures, operations and problems. Times change and League methods change. Belief in the League and excitement about the work of the League will transfer itself to board members. Enjoy this chance to meet with the local League's board.

BOARD TRAINING:

- gives board members a better understanding of League organization and of the relationship among national, state, regional, and local levels
- helps new as well as experienced board members by reviewing procedures
- inspires a renewed enthusiasm and eagerness for League activities
- provides the state board with current, firsthand knowledge of the status of local Leagues and encourages better communication between local Leagues and the state board
- provides leadership training
- encourages boards to set priorities and develop long range plans
- educates boards in local program planning, study, consensus, and action
- helps with member recruitment, involvement, and retention

BOARD TRAINING OUTLINE

I. Who Are We/The Business We Are In

- A. Mission Statement

II. Relationships of Local League to Other Levels of League

- A. Grassroots Organization
 - This philosophy is different from other organizations
 - Local Leagues are the basic unit of the organization
- B. Levels of League: functions of various levels
 1. LWVUS and LWVNYS
 2. Inter-League organization, if applicable

III. Board Operations

- A. Nonpartisan Policy
- B. Role of Board Members
 1. Total Board Responsibility: what it means
 2. Portfolio Responsibilities: job descriptions, managing portfolios
 3. The President: manager
 4. The Board as a Team
- C. Local League Finance
 1. Budget Oversight and Financial Policies: reimbursement policy
 2. Per Member Payments
 3. Education Fund

4. Fund raising: Hard money and tax-deductible contributions
- D. Other Local League Policies
Does the League have a Policy Handbook?

IV. Board Tools/Resources

- A. Board members binder/files: checklist
- B. *In League*: its purpose; what it contains
- C. Communication and services from various levels
 1. President's mailing/ Listserves/Web resources
 2. Directories/handbooks: LWVUS *President's Packet*;
 3. Positions folders/Action resources
 4. Other resource publications: e.g., Road to the Voting Booth, Off Board Specialists Manual

This section provides background information for references and material which may be covered in the board training. It is based on the previous sample outline. Putting material on an easel pad or using handouts will avoid the need to go into detail on many items and can save time.

Allow adequate time and opportunities for questions but avoid getting sidetracked with too many details.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION BASED ON OUTLINE

I. Who Are We/The Business We Are In

- A. Mission Statement Does the local League have its own?

II. Relationships Of Local League To Other Levels Of League

- A. Grassroots Organization

This philosophy is different from other organizations. Local Leagues are the basic unit of the organization.

- B. Levels of League: functions of various levels

1. Functions:

Program: study, consensus (concurrence), issues for emphasis—done at all levels Action: legislative priorities, issues for emphasis, testifying and lobbying legislators, requests for action by local Leagues and members—done at all levels. Voters Service/Citizen Education: voter registration, candidate debates, issue forums, voter guides, pros and cons on ballot measures—done by various levels

2. Funding:

Dues: local level members pay dues to support the local League Per member payment (PMP): local Leagues pay PMP to other levels; amount of PMP is determined by vote of delegates to conventions. Fundraising, grants, publications and product sales done by all levels.

Payment for services, e.g., contracts with registrars of voters, conducting elections for community groups is sometimes done by local Leagues

3. Convention/Councils/Annual Meetings: (see "Conventions—Councils—Annual Meetings")

- Opportunity for decision making by delegates and members
- Budget adoption (Convention/Council/Annual meeting)
- Bylaws amendment or revision (Convention/Annual meeting)
- Program adoption(Convention/Annual meeting)
- Election of officers and directors (Convention/Annual meeting)
- Training workshops (Convention and Council)

III. Board Operations

- A. Nonpartisan Policy:

Review what nonpartisan policy means: The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

All Leagues must have a nonpartisan policy. Each local League board formulates and adopts its own policy to implement the overall nonpartisan policy of the League of Women Voters. Include items such as board members who want to run for office, attend political fundraisers, work on candidate campaigns. Determine sensitive positions, especially that of president and voters service director. The local League board should review and approve the policy each year. Board members need to understand how the nonpartisan policy applies to them. This is a good time to discuss the difference between action and voters service/citizen education.

B. Role of Board Members

Use brochure as a handout or put material on an easel pad.

1. Total Board Responsibility

The board as a whole guides the League and carries out overall planning and decision making. Membership, public relations, and finance are everyone's responsibility. Be a board member first, a portfolio holder second.

2. Portfolio Responsibilities

Job descriptions

Point out that each local League should develop its own with details.

3. The President

- President is a CEO, a manager—should not do jobs because others won't
- Establish a chain of command
- Board members can report to vice presidents/others rather than the president—establish at the beginning of the League year

4. The Board As a Team

Does the League have an organization chart? If so, ask to have it distributed or posted on an easel pad so that all board members can see it.

Each member should know how that office/portfolio relates to the others.

C. Local League Finance

1. Budget Oversight and Financial Policy

- Each board member should be familiar with income such as dues, fundraising (know how much needs to be raised for the year)
- Each board member needs to be familiar with expenditures such as per member payments (PMP), etc.
- Each board should adopt a written financial policy covering matters such as approval of expenditures, use of vouchers, budget process.
- Each board member should know the portfolio budget; policies; submit vouchers promptly to the treasurer; account for all expenses even if intended as a donation to the League.
- League treasurer should prepare a voucher form and have available at all meetings.
- There are requirements for filing tax forms with the Internal Revenue Service.

2. Per Member Payments - Support the various levels of the League.

- PMPs are billed by the LWVUS or the state League and must be paid at least quarterly.
- An ILO may bill and ask for payment on an annual basis since the amount is generally low.
- PMPs must be paid by the local Leagues; lose voting rights at conventions if not paid.
- A portion of PMP may be paid with education fund (EF) money.

3. Education Fund

LWVUS Education Fund (LWVEF), Your state League's Education Fund is tax deductible money which can be used for voters service/citizen education projects and a portion of per member payments (PMP).

4. Fundraising: Hard money and tax-deductible contributions

- Hard money = non-tax-deductible money. Contributions to the general fund of the League are not tax-deductible.
- Contributions to the Education Fund are tax-deductible and must not be deposited in the general fund accounts of the local League. Use Your state's EF or LWVUS to hold EF money for projects.
- Leagues need hard money for day-to-day operations of the League.

D. Other Local League Policies

Nonpartisan policy and financial policy will have been discussed previously. Remind board of need to formulate and adopt these policies, if not done previously. Review other League policies and answer questions.

Examples of policies which Leagues should have are:

- Nonpartisan policy
- Financial policy
- Voters service policy, including policy for candidate forums
- Action policy
- VOTER policy
- Diversity policy
- Joining coalitions
- Web site policy

E. Board Tools and Resources

1. Board members binder/files: checklist
2. *League Basics*: its purpose; what it contains
3. Communication and services from your state League and LWVUS various levels
4. Website
5. State League Reports

Emphasize the ease of communication and distribution of information by electronic means and the importance of having board members online.

Remind the board about responsibility for filling out forms from LWVUS and state League, government agencies, and returning them promptly, especially board information forms, tax forms.

Discuss response to Calls to Action

Closing

Remember, volunteer work has to be fun. Otherwise, who would do it?

- Plan meetings, events, and activities that are enjoyable as well as effective—and have a good time doing it!
- Don't be afraid to dream!

LOCAL LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Role of the Board

- Serves as the local League's governing body
- Makes policy decisions and maintains them
- Administers the budget
- Organizes the activities of the local League
- Maintains the nonpartisan reputation of the League

Total Board Responsibility means:

- The board as a whole guides the League
- The board carries out overall planning and decision making
- Members make decisions together. All members participate in discussions and support decisions once they are made by the board (even if they disagree)
- Membership, public relations, and finance are everyone's responsibility
- The board represents and interprets the League in the community
- Each individual is a board member first, portfolio holder (specific chair) second Individual Board Members
- Attend and participate in all board meetings (on time, prepared)
- Assist in overall planning and decision making
- Support and attend League meetings and activities
- Inform themselves on League positions, policies, and practices; read mailings
- Maintain the League's nonpartisan political activity policy
- Explain and promote the League in the community
- Assist fundraising activity
- Promote membership
- Attend state and regional League meetings
- Carry out individual portfolio assignments
- Keep the board informed about activities of the portfolio. Bring plans/action proposals to the board for discussion and for board approval
- Know portfolio budget allowance and anticipate needs;
- Promote League members' involvement. Form committees and delegate tasks
- Meet deadlines: VOTER, publicity, reports to state and national offices
- Maintain board notebooks, records and portfolio files
- Prepare an annual report of portfolio activities
- Train successors and pass on files
- Ask for help when needed

CHECKUP FOR LOCAL LEAGUES

How is your local League? Is it the picture of health? Is it having minor aches and pains? Or is it showing signs of falling apart at the seams?

Grade your League as follows:

Consistently = 3 Frequently = 2 Sometimes = 1 Never = 0

(Individuals need not share their sectional scores. Total scores can be shared as can identifying the areas of weakness.)

I. How is your backbone? (ADMINISTRATION)

A. Are you building leadership?

_____ 1. Do you avoid playing musical chairs within the board? (Do you guard against having people on the board too long?)

_____ 2. Do you resist always calling on the same tired "experienced" people? (Are you reaching out for new blood?)

_____ 3. Are your committees more than committees of one?

_____ 4. Do you take the time to do real training?

_____ 5. Do board members have a clear idea of what is expected of them? (Do they have job descriptions?)

_____ 6. Are board members encouraged to share and delegate part of their workload to others?

_____ 7. Does your nominating committee work year round to identify leadership or talent where needed?

Score: _____

B. Are you developing teamwork?

_____ 1. Are you using the executive committee only in emergencies? (Is the full board involved in the decision-making?)

_____ 2. Are your board members comfortable with one another? (Are members able to avoid getting personal when they disagree?)

_____ 3. Are minority opinions given a fair hearing prior to a board decision?

_____ 4. Once decisions are made, are they accepted even by those who were on the losing side?

_____ 5. Are board members growing in personal fulfillment?

_____ 6. Are board members having fun?

Score: _____

C. Is board time used effectively?

_____ 1. Does the board usually avoid wasting time on details that should be committee decisions instead of board decisions?

_____ 2. Does the board recognize when committee decisions (or member motions) should be

accepted and when they should be questioned further?

_____ 3. Do meetings start and end on schedule?

Score _____

D. Do you have good communications?

_____ 1. Can your members rely on when your VOTER is coming out? (Is it published regularly?)

_____ 2. Does your VOTER keep members in the know? (Is it informative?)

_____ 3. Does your VOTER have a touch of class?

_____ 4. Do you make sure that your VOTER doesn't read like a secret manual of some obscure government agency? (Does your VOTER shun League and government jargon?)

_____ 5. Does the appearance of your VOTER make people want to read it?

_____ 6. Do your minutes tell it like it really was? (Do you have accurate and adequate minutes?)

_____ 7. Do you avoid expecting board members to make decisions with information thrown at them five minutes before the meeting starts? (Are an agenda and background materials mailed out ahead of time?)

_____ 8. Do you have a good system for timely distribution of state and national mailings?

_____ 9. Are your board meetings held regularly so that everyone knows where and when to come?

_____ 10. Are your bylaws up-to-date?

_____ 11. Are your bylaws given to the board and available to the general membership?

Score _____

E. Do you have good financial management?

_____ 1. Is there enough money in the till to get things done? (Do you have an adequate budget?)

_____ 2. Are your dues realistic?

_____ 3. Do you pay your PMPs promptly?

_____ 4. Do you hold a finance drive? (Do you solicit funds from the community you serve?)

_____ 5. Are your members given the opportunity to contribute to League over and above their dues?)

Score _____

F. Do you hobnob in the League world? (Are you in touch with other Leagues and other levels of League?)

- _____ 1. Do you urge board members to attend training sessions and activities?
- _____ 2. Do you and your board members take the time to read and USE materials from the LWVNYS and the LWVUS?
- _____ 3. Are workshops and conventions something you look forward to and do you attend them?

Score _____

II. How is your heart? (Atmosphere)

- _____ 1. Are all kinds of members encouraged to hang in there? (Do you counteract the "I'm not smart enough feeling?)
- _____ 2. Is your attitude "Let's try " rather than "it won't work"?
- _____ 3. Do your leaders avoid bossing everyone around?
- _____ 4. Do you include "new timers" in all the excited, friendly talk going on among the "old timers?" Are your meetings warm and sociable?
- _____ 5. Do you have someone responsible at meetings for greeting and introducing guests and new members?

Score _____

III. How is your mind? (Program)

- _____ 1. Is your League participating in national and state studies?
- _____ 2. Is your League involved in a local study?
- _____ 3. Are your program planning meetings stimulating for your members rather than avoided by most as boring?
- _____ 4. Are your meetings interesting?
- _____ 5. At consensus meetings do you have a hard time telling which direction the resource people are leaning?
- _____ 6. Does the discussion leader disguise how he/she feels?
- _____ 7. Do you hold dress rehearsals for your program presenters and discussion leaders?

Score _____

IV. How are your muscles? (Action)

Is your action effective?

- _____ 1. Does your League follow your most important decision-making bodies so that you know what is going on? Do you have any observers?
- _____ 2. Does your League testify before local decision-making bodies?
- _____ 3. Do only authorized and knowledgeable persons speak for your League?

_____ 4. Are you focusing your action on a few issues you are following closely instead of spreading your action activities too thin?

_____ 5. Are League members represented on local task forces and your city and county decision making bodies?

_____ 6. Do you join coalitions even if they don't always do things the "League way"?

Are you careful to speak with one voice?

_____ 1. Do you take action only when the consensus or principle is really there?

_____ 2. Do members feel like they are part of the action? (Do you consider member understanding and support?)

_____ 3. Are you careful not to poach on other Leagues' territories without asking first?

_____ 4. Are you careful not to support or oppose statewide legislation on which the state League does not have a position?

Score _____

V. How good is your balance? (Voters Service)

_____ 1. Are you creating new ways to do old things?

_____ 2. Is your public relations director a familiar face to the media in your area?

_____ 3. Are you servicing new members as well as the community?

_____ 4. Do your voters service materials conceal how you really feel personally about those issues/candidates? Are they objective?

_____ 5. Do you have an active speakers bureau?

_____ 6. Are your candidate or issue forums televised?

Score _____

VI. How is your growth?

Are you recruiting new members?

_____ 1. Do you target specific groups for membership recruitment?

_____ 2. Do you hold interesting prospective member meetings?

_____ 3. Does your League provide opportunities for members who work to attend meetings at noon or in the evenings?

_____ 4. Have you tried to encourage businesses to give community service credit for League participation?

_____ 5. Do you provide membership materials at all your League functions?

_____ 6. Do your board members carry membership materials with them so that they can recruit new members when the opportunity arises?

Are you retaining the members you have recruited?

- _____ 1. Do you know why your members joined?
- _____ 2. Does your League try to match new member interests with your ongoing activities?
- _____ 3. Do you make an effort to INVOLVE the new member from the outset?
- _____ 4. Do you use a telephone tree to inform the new member from the outset?
- _____ 5. Do your board members (or other actives) offer rides to new members?
- _____ 6. Do you have an effective system for following up on overdue members?
- _____ 7. Do you know why your drops have not renewed their memberships?

Score _____

NOW ADD UP YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

165-210 Congratulations! You've won a League Fitness Award.

120-164 Your League requires at least a couple of aspirins.

0-51 Your League requires major medical treatment.

SKITS

SKIT 1

ACTION—Letter To Federal Regulatory Commission

LEAGUER NO.1:

East Bay Municipal Utility District has asked our League to write to the Federal Regulatory Commission supporting their efforts to get the commission to support a reliable water supply.

LEAGUER NO.2:

That sounds like a good League project. I'll write the letter today, get our president to sign it and send it off immediately.

Is this OK?

ANSWER:

The local League board should approve all action in the name of the League, unless it is in response to a Call to Action from another level of the League. The president or a designee may draft the letter, but the president should sign it. In this case, because it involves a federal agency and impacts state, regional, and local areas as well, authorization must be obtained from the national, state, and regional Leagues before the local League board can act on sending such a letter.

SKIT 2

BYLAWS—Allowing Consensus To Be Adopted In The Fall

LEAGUER NO. 1:

What can we do? Our study committee on rent control cannot get its consensus questions done in time to be adopted at our annual meeting?

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Yes, and we worked so hard to get the study done before the legislation on rent control came before the City Council so that we wouldn't be doing the study during the public debates.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

The timing of the study was perfect. The mayor told me that rent control would probably be on the November ballot and we need our consensus this year if we want to use our rent control positions for commenting.

Is there any way out of this dilemma?

ANSWER:

Decisions on election of officers, budget, and consensus usually must be done at the annual meeting of the membership. However, your bylaws should have a provisions for emergency transactions of business. If your bylaws allow it, you can call a general meeting and give the required notice stated in your bylaws. This is generally about 30 days but varies from League to League.

SKIT 3

FINANCES—Education Fund

LEAGUER NO. 1:

It will be easier to get money for our League if we have a tax-deductible Education Fund for donations. Let's start to suggest tax-deductible donations in our next fund raising letter.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Good idea! As treasurer I'll go down to our bank tomorrow and set up a special fund so we will be ready to deposit funds when checks come in.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Is that all we have to do?

ANSWER:

A League has to set up a special 501 (c) (3) account with the tax authorities in order to have an education fund. This is expensive to do and takes from 6 months to a year to accomplish. Both the STATE LEAGUE and the LWVUS have Ed Fund accounts and local leagues can legally deposit their Ed Fund money in either of these accounts. You get your money back by writing a proposal showing that the money will be used for educational purposes. This is done most often in voter education. Some Ed Fund money may also be used for per member dues payments.

Contact the LWVNYS Executive Director for help in setting up a Grants management Account with the League.

SKIT 4

FINANCES—PMP (Per Member Payment)

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Our first per member payment is due at the end of this month and, if we pay it, we won't have much

money in the League account for other expenses.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

We have our big fund raiser in the fall. Let's wait until that is over and then make our payments for the first three quarters all at one time.

Is this a good idea?

ANSWER:

That is not fair to other Leagues who do pay on time, or to the LWVNYS and the LWVUS which have to pay the bills throughout the year. It would be better to set aside enough money from the fund raiser in one savings account so that the PMP can be paid when it is due every quarter. Also remember that, if you have an Education Fund account, some of that money can be used to pay your PMP. Rules vary for payment of PMP so check with the appropriate level of League. Check with Contact the LWVNYS Executive Director if you are not sure how to use Ed Fund money.

SKIT 5

LEAGUE INSURANCE—What Insurance Covers

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Let's have a holiday party and tie it into a fund raiser for the League.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

We could have punch, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, and a no host bar. That would help raise more money. Also, we could have it at the ABC Hotel. The manager is my sister-in-law and she said she would like to have the hotel help the League. If we have it early in the season they will give us a room for free. The only requirement they have is to insist that their name is on our insurance policy for the event.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

No problem. The LWVNYDS has a policy that covers us for our League office property AND for such an event. Tell your sister-in-law that we can put the hotel name on the policy.

Is this OK?

ANSWER:

Contact the LWVNYS Executive Director.

SKIT 6

LEAGUE POSITIONS—Adopting and Dropping

LEAGUER NO. 1:

The single payer issue has failed so why don't we drop our health care position at our next board meeting.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Good idea. The health study position just clutters our program folder and we might as well get rid of it. After all, we are not going to use it any more. Speaking of positions, the City Council is going to address some ordinances about the homeless at the next meeting. That council meeting is after our board meeting. Why don't we move that we adopt the consensus we reached in our local study about the homeless last month. Then we can speak to the issue at the council meeting.

What do you think about this idea?

ANSWER:

Positions can be added to and dropped only at the annual meeting or convention of the level where they were studied. The health care consensus was a result of a national study and can only be

changed at a LWVUS convention. The local League board may take action on the homeless issue as soon as the board has adopted a position based on the consensus reached by members in the local study. The position must be readopted by local League members at the annual meeting to remain on the program. An additional factor is that health care may be on the ballot in the future, so positions should not be dropped quickly.

A local League may have its own locally adopted health care position and can drop that position, but proper procedures must be followed.

SKIT 7

LEAGUE POSITIONS—Conflict In Positions

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Did you hear that plans are being made to develop a shopping mall half way between our town and our neighbor, Buffalo. Fortunately our founding fathers extended our city boundaries far enough so that the mall will be in our town. It will be a boon to our city budget with the sales tax revenues.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Great! Let us have our League write to our city council supporting the project. Is it OK for the local League to do this?

ANSWER:

First you must check all local and vertical state or national positions to determine that there is no major conflict with the land use, transportation or other positions that you plan to use as the authority to write such a letter. League positions are often in conflict and you must interpret them to suit your local conditions. A League must also contact neighboring Leagues, in this case Buffalo, to see if your action meets with their approval and does not conflict with their positions. They may well object to a League supporting such a development if it means a loss of their tax revenue and increased transportation on their roads. If the Buffalo League objects to your support for the development, then you must apply to the next level of League for a resolution of the conflict. This could be an ILO (inter-League organization), if there is one, or the state League. It may well be that neither League can speak for or against the development.

SKIT 8

NONPARTISAN POLICY—Candidate Speaking At LWV Event

LEAGUER NO. 1:

John Gray has agreed to speak at our annual meeting.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Isn't he running for the Board of Supervisors? Wouldn't that violate our nonpartisan policy of not supporting a candidate? His appearance might seem that we support him.

L

EAGUER NO. 1:

But we are not asking him because he is running for office. We are asking him to talk about hazardous materials which is his area of expertise. We have been trying to get him for the last two years and this is the first time his calendar has allowed him to come to our meeting. I know our members are anxious to hear him.

Who is right?

ANSWER:

The League will have to wait until John Grey is either elected or defeated in the election to have him

as a speaker. It would violate the League's nonpartisan policy. A person is considered a candidate when he or she has announced the candidacy and this status continues through election day.

SKIT 9

NONPARTISAN POLICY—LWV Board Member Working On A Campaign

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I'm so glad the League is involved in this gun control issue. Amy Beeswood, who is heading this in our area, plans to run against our Congressman and she has asked me to work on her campaign!

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I am glad we are involved also, but won't there be a problem with working on a campaign if you are on the League board?

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Gun control is a League issue and it is one of Amy's main planks. I think as long as I'm just working on the gun control aspect of her candidacy that it shouldn't be a problem. Besides, the job I am doing on board isn't really something other people know I'm doing, I'm just the dues treasurer.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I still think we had better check our nonpartisan policy.

What do you think?

ANSWER:

The nonpartisan policy should be checked. Support of a candidate by a League board member implies support of that candidate by the League. In most Leagues the nonpartisan policy applies at least to the most visible board members (president, voters service, action, and similar portfolios). In some Leagues it applies to all board members. A leave of absence documented in the minutes and noted in the VOTER could be a solution.

SKIT 10

NONPARTISAN POLICY—Campaign Worker Moderating An Election Forum

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I hear our League member, Joan Goodspeaker, is going to moderate the debate between our Board of Supervisor candidates. Isn't she working for candidate Smith in his fund raising efforts?

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I hadn't heard that. I do know that she told me she would be putting a sign on her lawn saying "Vote for Smith" and wondered if she should do the moderating because of that. I think I'd better tell her we should get someone else to do the moderating. Who do you think we can get to do it?

LEAGUER NO. 1:

As president you would be a good choice, only isn't that the day you are going to a family wedding out of town? Everyone else in our League would be thought to be a supporter for Smith because he is a former member of our League.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

What will we do?

What would you do?

ANSWER:

This is a local board decision. If the League is in a large city, it should be easy to find another League member not actively working on the campaign. If the League is in a smaller town, it would be possible to ask someone from a neighboring League to do the moderating. Or you could ask someone like a respected member of the community who is not identified with the campaign to help

you out. If the moderator is not a League member, a League board member could explain the League rules and procedures to the audience and then introduce the moderator. (After the meeting, ask the moderator to join the League!)

SKIT 11

NONPARTISAN POLICY—LWV Board Member Running for Office

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Did you hear that Sara, our League program chair, is going to run for Dog Catcher?

LEAGUER NO. 2:

If that is true, won't she have to resign from the board?

LEAGUER NO. 1.:

Will she? We had better check our Local League's nonpartisan policy.

ANSWER:

Most League nonpartisan policies specify that president, voters service chairs, and advocacy chairs keep a very low profile in elections. They specify that board members running for high profile elected positions such as mayor or state or national offices resign from the board while campaigning. Elected offices such as dog catcher, water district boards and the like are not high profile offices and have different restrictions placed upon them by varying local Leagues. Leagues from smaller cities may have to be more circumspect in their policies. The final determination as to whether Sara will have to resign is up to her local League's nonpartisan policy.

SKIT 12

NONPARTISAN POLICY—League Endorsing A Candidate

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Mary Politico, our new League program director, told me that she is going to run for the Water Board. She has been such a good resource for the League on water issues and is so knowledgeable that she will be a great member of the Water Board if she wins.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

We must do everything to ensure that she wins. Let us put an article in the VOTER announcing that she is running and ask League members to help with her campaign. Let us also ask our president to write a letter to the editor of our paper saying that the League strongly supports her candidacy.

Is this OK?

ANSWER:

The League never endorses a candidate, even when the person is one of their own. The League should have a nonpartisan policy which would spell out whether Mary Politico can stay on the board while she is running for office and/or if she wins the office. Publicity cannot be given to a candidate in the name of the League in any publication.

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SKIT 13

NONPARTISAN POLICY—Joining A Coalition

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Our League has been asked to join the ABC coalition to save the wetlands. Do you think the board will agree to this?

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I hope so. I heard that the ABC coalition was going to endorse Congressional candidate Tom Goodperson because he agrees with their work.

LEAGUER NO 1:

I'm glad. That will give impetus and publicity to the campaign. Even if we don't cosponsor, we can urge members to take action through our VOTER. I saw a clever poem that ridiculed Bob Badman, Goodperson's opponent in the Congressional race. We could publish that in the VOTER to stimulate the interest of our members.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

We will ask the board to OK these actions.
How should the board decide?

ANSWER:

Careful thought must be given to joining any coalition that endorses candidates. It would be best to work independently of such a coalition. The VOTER should never be used to support or oppose a candidate or to give any implication of support or opposition.

SKIT 14

NONPARTISAN POLICY—Problems With Elections and Timing of Event Cosponsorship

LEAGUER NO. 1:

We are having a special election on September 1 to fill a vacancy in the State Senate which arose when Mary Jones successfully ran for the U.S. Congress in the June primary, thus vacating her seat in the State Senate. John Smith is running for the Senate seat vacated by Mary Jones. There is to be a special meeting about the plans to finance a new library in our town on September 20. John Smith is to be the speaker at this meeting. Our League has been asked to cosponsor the meeting. John Smith chairs the Assembly committee which could help with the funding of the library. Do you think we can cosponsor this meeting?

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Our League has long been a leader in attempting to get a new library. Since this is not a political meeting, and it is going to be held after the election, I think we could cosponsor.

Do you agree?

ANSWER:

The material publicizing this meeting will go out before the election. The League's name as a cosponsor of the meeting could be taken as an endorsement of Mr. Smith. The League cannot announce its cosponsorship until after the election.

SKIT 15

PROBLEMS WITH LWV BOARD—Inflexible Board

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I love the League and what it stands for, but I'm having trouble with the board.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

What kind of problems?

LEAGUER NO. 1:

They are so resistant to change. I suggested an evening or weekend meeting time so that we could attract working people. The reply was that their most loyal workers were older and didn't like to go out at night and they wanted weekends with their families. I suggested that some of the board jobs be broken down so that busy people could contribute without putting in a major time investment.

They said it is easier to do the job themselves without checking with someone to see that the work was done. I suggested that jobs be shared so that people could be trained to go into leadership positions. They said the present board had the time to do the work and the experience to do things well. They are wonderful people. I just wish they were more flexible.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Are there other members on the board who feel as you do? Perhaps you could get together and have more than one voice support these suggestions. Do you know if other Leagues have solved these problems?

What are your suggestions for handling such problems?

ANSWER:

Other levels of League can help. Your RD could come to a training session and emphasize the need for flexibility. You could rewrite the job descriptions, making gradual changes at first to pave the way for bigger changes. Most Leagues that fail do so because they do not find a way to attract and train new members

SKIT 16 PROBLEMS WITH LWV BOARD—Job "Chunking"

LEAGUER NO. 1:

You know I wouldn't mind my job as VOTER editor so much if I didn't have to deal with getting it mailed every month. Once I get it written and laid out, that is it for me. Then it comes back from the printer and I still have the labels and mailing to do.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

Does that take a lot of time?

LEAGUER NO. 1:

No, not really. Our membership person gives me the labels, so it is the kind of work you can do while you are helping the kids with the homework—stick on labels, staple, sort and bundle. You also have to fill out the form for the post office and drive downtown to mail them. It probably takes me two or three hours, max.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I should think that someone who does not have a lot of time to be active might be willing to help out, especially since it can be done mostly at home. Let us call Ann Smith and see if she would do that. Is this a good idea?

ANSWER:

Yes. Your job description does not say that you, personally, have to do every bit of the job. It makes you responsible for getting the job done. Often a helper or a committee is better. You have a backup if you are ill or out of town, and others learn the job so that you are not doing it for decades. Just remember, if you "chunk" jobs, it is up to you to coordinate the ones which fall into your job description. You should also let other board members know who is helping you and what they are doing. This can improve communication and also ensure that helpers get credit for their contributions.

SKIT 17 PROBLEMS WITH LWV BOARD—No President

LEAGUER NO. 1:

It is only September and our new League president has found out that she has to move out of town at the end of the month. The first vice president said that she has just joined the League and took the

vice presidency so that she could learn about the League. She does not feel able to take on the presidency.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

The nominating committee did a good job this year and got us a lot of new people on the board, but no one feels up to taking on the presidency. Elections are coming up and the citizens of our town are expecting us to do our usual election work.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Mary Capable, last year's president would step in, but her husband has his sabbatical at the end of January and they will be gone. How can we keep the League going without a president? How would you handle this?

ANSWER:

Call on your Regional Director. One Regional Director helped a League with this problem by helping the League prioritize its work for the coming year, got three people to take charge of the League for three months each for the coming year (up to the annual meeting) and assigned tasks from the priorities. When no one took charge of a priority, the Regional Director announced that job would not be done. Often, then, someone would volunteer to do the job. This lack of a president is becoming more common. Leagues are solving this problem by running the League by committee, by sharing the presidency and other creative ways. One person should be assigned for a year to receive and distribute mail and to collect phone message. One person also needs to be designated as the "president of record" for legal purposes.

SKIT 18

PROGRAM AND STUDIES—Too Many Issues

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I'm worried about our program for next year. The national and state levels of League voted for so many issues for emphasis at their last conventions that I don't think we can work on them and still do our study on the local schools.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

It is a problem. They are thinking of putting a school bond measure on the ballot in the next presidential election. We really need to do a school study before then so we can take action on the bond measure. I agree that we don't have enough people to do a school study and take care of the issues for emphasis from the state and national Leagues.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

What shall we do?

What would you do?

ANSWER:

Do the work that is of most importance to your community and for which you have people willing to do the work. It is not imperative that you do everything. If no one is willing to take charge of the school study, drop it. Don't agonize over its importance and try to add the job to a person already overburdened. That is the fastest way to burn out and is not good for the League in the long run. The same reasoning is applied to state and national studies. Choose what is best for your local League.

SKIT 19

PROGRAM AND STUDIES—Adopting A Program

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I think there is enough interest in our League to do a study on our local school finances. Let us suggest this at our program planning meeting.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I agree. However, I'm worried that we can't do a study of that magnitude in one year. Let's suggest that during the first year we do a study on the current budget, with informational meetings in the spring. During the second year we can look at the overall picture of financing and come to consensus.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I'm sure our members would want to do a thorough review of the matter and a two-year study sounds good to me.

Is it?

ANSWER:

They are right that a proposal for a new study is done through the program planning process. However League boards are elected on an annual basis and each board must bring the year's program to the annual meeting for adoption. So the study must be broken down to accomplish one goal in a year's time. In this case, the budget can be looked at in one year, and the financing of the schools can be introduced as a study in the next year's program planning.

SKIT 20

SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE—Disagreeing With A League Position

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I was surprised to hear that Jane Doe joined the League of Women Voters. She has been such a strong opponent of campaign finance reform in her teachers' union.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

I talked to her about it and told her that not all League members agree with every position. Most members think that our general purpose of service to voters and education of our communities about government is important enough to overlook the disagreements they have with some of our positions.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

I hope Jane understands that she cannot speak against campaign finance reform now that she is a member.

LEAGUER NO. 2:

That is not true. As Jane Doe she does not lose her freedom to speak. What she should NOT do is say "I am Jane Doe, League of Women Voters member, and I disagree with the League's position on campaign finance reform." She can disagree as "Jane Doe" without mentioning the League.

LEAGUER NO. 1:

Well, I am glad that people don't always agree with us. We come out with a better understanding of the issues and a stronger consensus on our studies when we hear different viewpoints.

What do you think?

ANSWER:

Leagues have a nonpartisan policy which lists the sensitive positions in the League, usually the president, voters service chair, action chair, and any other position highly visible to the community. People holding these positions may not speak out against League policies. A member who does not want to lose this freedom should not accept one of these positions. The strength and reputation of the League has endured for more than 75 years because members have studied issues before reaching a consensus. Once consensus is reached, they then speak with one voice. As League members, they agree to not disagree with League positions. As private citizens they may do so.

