

## Program Planning/Action

The **January 14** Briefing/Open Meeting will discuss Program Planning and Action. What follows is background about the League and how it engages in these activities.

### Action/Advocacy

As a nonpartisan organization, the League of Women Voters does NOT endorse candidates; it advocates for positions. Therefore, when League members or the League's board on behalf of the organization say that I/we will *take action*, we mean that we will *advocate* for or against some *government action*.

League actions may involve:

- Educating the public about the pros and cons of an issue and endorsing a specific response.
- Speaking directly to a legislator. Most recently, LWVChicago provided every member of the City Council and every legislator representing Chicago in the Illinois General Assembly with a copy of its publication on the pros and cons of elected and appointed school boards. This was an effort to educate those who make decisions affecting every school child in the City of Chicago.
- Lobbying. Based on the positions that a League adopts after study and taking consensus of its members, a League will lobby its legislators in support of or against legislation, advocate for funding programs, or submit comments on proposed regulations that will implement a statute.

### The Study and Consensus Process

When members of a League wish to propose a topic for study, proponents prepare a statement that describes the subject of the study, its scope, expected resources (money, skills, members' efforts), and time frame and circulate it to the rest of the League. A local League will debate the merits of the proposed study at its annual meeting and take a formal vote on whether or not to adopt the study.

When a League adopts a study, it forms a committee to research the issue, gathering relevant information from reliable sources. As a result of this process, the committee develops a series of consensus questions related to aspects of the issue that a governmental body can address.

For example, when LWVChicago participated in updating the LWVUS' position on campaign finance early in 2016, it considered three sets of consensus questions: (1) the goals of campaign finance regulation in terms of democratic values; (2) the extent to which First Amendment protections like free speech and freedom of the press apply to various speakers and activities in the campaign finance context; (3) methods of campaign finance regulation.

From its research, a League study group draws information that is relevant to the consensus questions, taking care to ensure that the information accurately presents various viewpoints and the pros and cons of each. The information is presented to the League's members who discuss and respond to consensus questions. From the responses, the study committee compiles a proposed statement of the consensus of the members. This statement lists for each question whether members agree, disagree, or cannot reach agreement.

The proposed consensus statement is presented at an annual meeting, where members then adopt, amend, or reject it. There is often a lot of revising of questions and statements in the study and consensus process before a League position is developed and the League can take action.

When a non-local League, such as LWVCookCounty, LWVIL, LWVLMR or LWVUS, undertakes a study, the process of reaching consensus is more complicated, and it involves communication at all levels. However, the basic study process is the same: research, formation of questions and study materials, and discussion. It is from this study and consensus process that the League of Women Voters develops its positions.

### Ongoing Review



On a recurring schedule League members review positions to ensure that they remain relevant and to ensure that League members continue to support them. During this review, members decide to retain the position as is, recommend restudy of

some portion of the position, or decide to drop the position. If the position is dropped, a League cannot take action under that position without going through the study and consensus process again.

This year, we will review positions and consider new studies for [LWVIL](#) and [LWVChicago](#). These links will provide the detailed positions of LWVIL and LWVChicago.

**Margaret Herring**