

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
HUMBOLDT COUNTY

POLICIES
AND
PROCEDURES
2013-2014

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League of Women Voters of Humboldt County
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

MISSION STATEMENT

Adopted by the board: November 2, 2009

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

NONPARTISAN POLICY

Adopted by the board: August 12, 1996. Readopted by the board: July 25, 1998; July 24, 1999; July 29, 2000; June 30, 2001; July 20, 2002; July 12, 2003; Sept. 7, 2004; July 24, 2005; November 2, 2009, August 2, 2010, June 25, 2011, June 30, 2012 and July 28, 2013.

The LWVHC shall not support or oppose any political party or candidate. The LWVHC Board, as well as each Board member has the responsibility to maintain the nonpartisanship of the organization.

A Board member shall not run for or hold an elective position.

A Board member shall not speak in public against a League position.

The President, the Voter Service Director, the Public Relations Chair and the Action Directors shall not take an active, visible role in, or make a financial contribution to, any political candidate's campaign, or to any political party. They are not allowed to attend any fundraising function of any individual candidate.

Other Board members shall not undertake any action, which will cause them to be identified publicly as supporting any candidate for elective office or any political party. They may attend political, but not partisan functions. They may make donations to candidates, providing their names are not published as contributors or endorsers.

The political activities of a spouse or relative of a Board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of a Board member.

A person resigning from the Board for political reasons will have to remain off the Board for at least three months following that political activity.

Questions about specific situations should be presented to the full Board for interpretation and resolution.

DIVERSITY POLICY

The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County (LWVHC), in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to membership nor participation in the LWVHC on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, economic status, or political affiliation. LWVHC recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. LWVHC affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of the community in its membership, Board and programs.

GENERAL POLICY

For the duration of a Board term, a Board member needs to remain aware of League positions and speak only in favor of these positions. She or he should not jeopardize League function or credibility by any seeming dissent.

A Board member has the option to remain silent, but she or he does not have the option to undermine the overall LWV effort. The LWVHC and other Leagues enjoy a reputation for integrity which is the direct result of our own respect for League principles and positions.

In all public meetings or interviews, it is advisable to use tact, to be direct and factual. A Board member never assumes what the Board decision "might" be or "would probably" be. To the greatest extent possible such meetings or interviews are to be attended with another League member. Only under extreme or extraordinary circumstances is it permissible to attend interviews or public meetings where a Board member is to speak without another League member in attendance.

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE LEAGUE?

In theory, it is the President who represents a League before the public, official agencies, and other LWV bodies. All letters and statements are signed by/in the name of the President and prepared with her or his knowledge and Board concurrence.

In practice, letters and statements are often prepared by the Chair most conversant with the subject material and signed in the following manner:

Jane M. Doe, President
League of Women Voters of Humboldt County

Betty J. Smith
(Title and Portfolio)

Public statements are prepared in the same manner with sufficient copies made for all members of the agency or body to be addressed. Additional copies for the press are desirable.

However, public statements may be presented by the Action Chair or portfolio holder, a former Chair in the same category, or a resource committee member knowledgeable in the subject matter to be presented. It is desirable for any speaker presenting a League statement to have sufficient background in the subject under discussion to be able to handle questions arising from the presentation. However, it is definitely preferable to admit to limited knowledge and a willingness to carry further questions back to the League Board than to compromise League credibility with an ill-informed or inadequate reply.

Under all circumstances, the portfolio holder must be informed of all statements and letters which affect her or his portfolio.

All statements and letters need Board approval prior to mailing or presentation. If time prevents a full Board hearing, such communications are to be presented for approval to the Executive Committee and reported on at the next regular Board meeting.

Previously approved statements with or without an explanatory cover letter may be cleared through the Executive Committee by telephone or e-mail.

Telephone or e-mail approval by the Executive Committee is also permitted on 'Calls to Action' from the LWVC and 'Action Alerts' from LWVUS.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

A conflict of interest exists whenever the interests of the League as stated in the League principles and positions clash with a Board member's interests. Potential conflicts might arise from: a) certain employment duties, b)

lobbying, c) representing employers, d) acting as liaisons, e) acting as a negotiator, f) situations where undue influence may be exerted on other League members because of the employment title or portfolio of the Board members, g) private litigation undertaken against a public agency or elected official.

Whenever a conflict of interest exists the affected Board member shall so state and not participate in the deliberations and decision making by the Board on the item causing the conflict of interest. It is possible that in the event of such conflict the Board may request the Board member to function in an off-Board capacity for a period of time, or the Board member may be asked to withdraw from the Board activity for the duration of the conflict.

ANNOUNCEMENTS POLICY

Only League announcements are to be made at LWVHC meetings. The LWVHC mission statement will be announced at the start of all League meetings.

VOTER (Monthly Newsletter) POLICY

Materials submitted by other organizations will not be published in the VOTER. VOTER materials will be limited to content relating to our positions, studies, and general League information. The President and Voter Coordinator shall edit the VOTER and follow general editing procedures.

CONVENTIONS, PRESIDENTS' COUNCIL, AND WORKSHOP POLICIES

❖ LWVUS Convention:

The LWVHC is responsible for the following expenses for the President or one Board member:

- Convention registration;
- Convention banquet;
- Travel – least costly, most reasonable;
- Housing – least costly, most reasonable;
- Food may be reimbursed up to \$40 per day upon presentation of receipts.

If the LWVHC President is unable to attend, the Board must approve the delegate. It is understood that the delegate must prepare a concise convention report to be printed in the VOTER.

❖ LWVC Convention:

The LWVHC is responsible for the following expenses for the President or one Board member:

- Convention registration;
- Convention banquet;
- Travel – least costly, most reasonable;
- Housing – least costly, most reasonable;
- Food may be reimbursed up to \$40 per day upon presentation of receipts.

The LWVHC may be responsible for convention registration and housing for additional eligible delegates.

❖ LWVC Leadership Council:

The LWVHC is responsible for the following expenses for the President or eligible delegate:

- Registration;
- Travel – least costly, most reasonable;
- Housing – least costly, most reasonable;
- Food may be reimbursed up to \$40 per day upon presentation of receipts.

❖ Workshops:

The LWVHC will be responsible for the following expenses:

- Registration – any attendee;

Housing – President or designee and one member.

LWVHC AWARD POLICY

Name of Award: Outstanding League Member Award

Frequency: To be awarded by the Board annually and when appropriate at the Annual Meeting

Criteria:

- ❖ LWVHC Member
- ❖ League participation/dedication
- ❖ Not currently a candidate for public office
- ❖ Not currently an elected official
- ❖ Not currently a Board member
- ❖ Outstanding contribution to the League

Award: Appropriate individual gift under \$50, and a Certificate of Appreciation

FINANCE PROCEDURES

The Treasurer shall make monthly reports on the total assets and liabilities of the LWVHC and on the balance of each portfolio account.

Since the budget and accounting system are developed so that each portfolio has its own budget and account the following procedures need to be followed:

- ❖ Monies can only be reassigned from one portfolio to another, or from reserves to a portfolio, upon the authorization by the Board (majority vote).
- ❖ The Treasurer can make reimbursements from LWVHC assets only upon proper submission of vouchers.
- ❖ Only the portfolio holder can authorize expenditures from the assigned portfolio budget. If a committee member or other Board member incurs expenses for that portfolio, the expenditures have to be reported and be reimbursed through the portfolio holder. In this way, the portfolio holder can better manage the financial resources of his or her portfolio.
- ❖ If there is a vacancy in a portfolio, the Board should clearly designate who is to carry out certain portfolio activities, so that the Treasurer can reimburse those individuals out of the vacant portfolio account.

DUES ASSISTANCE POLICY

Recognizing that members may not be able to meet the full cost of dues, and that the services and/or participation of a member can be as valuable as monetary contributions, the Board may offer a membership through full or partial dues assistance. The dues assistance will be for one year in an amount to be determined by the Board. The criteria for granting will be financial need, anticipated participation of the member in the organization, and the available budgeted funds for dues assistance. The application form will provide an opportunity for the applicant to express areas of interest. The application form is attached.

The Board will decide how to allocate the budgeted funds for dues assistance (e.g., providing 4 full \$60 or 8 partial memberships for budgeted \$240, etc.) If sufficient money is not available from the budget to fund a membership, the Board may decide if and how to cover the expenditure (e.g., donation from members, fund raiser, transfer of other budgeted funds).

Any member/potential member may apply for a dues assisted membership by filling out an application. The Membership Chair should recommend an amount to the Board after conferring with the applicant. The

application will be considered by the Board or the Executive Committee (if the Board will not meet within one month's time of the receipt of the application).

The applicant will be informed of the Board's action by written letter sent by the Membership Chair. If a full dues assisted membership is approved, the information on the application will be forwarded to the Treasurer who will then notify the Membership Chair of a new membership. It will be the responsibility of the Membership Chair to inform the Portfolio Chairs and Committee Chairs of the dues assisted membership and coordinate the participation of the recipient based on the areas of interest.

If a partial dues assisted membership is approved, the applicant will be informed of the percentage of dues assistance and the amount of payment needed to complete a full membership. The applicant will be instructed to send the dues payment to the Treasurer, who will then inform the Membership Chair of a new membership. The applicant will be told to expect a call from the committee chair(s) concerning future participation in League activities.

With the granting of the dues assisted membership, the applicant must become an active member of LWVHC.

Applicants may re-apply.

The Board action is considered confidential and membership shall be henceforth considered to be the same as any other.

HUMBOLDT AREA FOUNDATION FUNDS POLICY

BACKGROUND

Humboldt Area Foundation holds an account with funds bequeathed and donated to the League. The history of the account is as follows:

- ❖ In 1999 the League established the Education Fund with HAF. In 2001 Thelma Ingebritsen bequeathed the LWVHC \$20,000 for the League to use at its discretion. The League split the amount of the bequest and deposited one half with the existing HAF Education Fund, and deposited the second half with HAF in a new Membership Development Fund. The names of the accounts have been altered over time, but the purpose of the two accounts were:

Education Fund: for the education of citizens, including voter service.

Membership Fund: for the development and expansion of the League's membership.

- ❖ League members have made tax-deductible donations to each of these Funds.
- ❖ In February 2009 the Board approved the transfer of the Membership Fund into the Education Fund. The funds in the two accounts were combined, and the Membership Fund was eliminated because access to the Membership Fund was encumbered by its stated purpose. Most membership development activities are not strictly separate from advocacy activities, (e.g., Membership Brunch), and HAF is reluctant to release tax-deductible funds for those activities.

Expenditures from the Education Fund are limited to educational purposes only. Portions of the State and National PMP can be paid from the Education Fund, if those portions are identified by State and National Leagues. Annual expenditures from the fund should not be greater than 10 percent of the fund's balance as reported on the December 31st quarter-to-date HAF fund statement, excluding the prior year's income, described above.

Member contributions to the Education Fund, which are tax deductible, should be encouraged.

REQUESTS FOR DONATIONS TO NONPROFIT GROUPS POLICY

The LWVHC does not generally donate money to other groups or individuals. It is our policy only to respond to solicitations from other groups for funds that clearly further the League's goals as stated in our adopted positions. The LWVHC also may make a donation to another group that provides meeting space or similar benefits for our group. All donations must be authorized by the Board.

COMMUNITY ELECTIONS ASSISTANCE POLICY

1. CONTRACT

- a. There will be an MOU or Working Agreement approved by the Board, and signed by both parties.
- b. Each party will have a dated copy with original signatures.
- c. The agreement will delineate the responsibilities of the League as well as those of the organization. It will also include the fees for the election assistance.

2. FEES

- a. All expenses shall be paid by the community organization or reimbursed to the League. Expenses may include, but are not limited to, postage, printing, stationary materials and any legal fees.
- b. A fee, or donation, of at least \$500 shall be made to the League.
- c. If there are more than 150 eligible voters, an additional fee of at least \$.25 per voter will be due.
- d. The fee will range upward from \$500 based on the complexity of the election and the amount of work required from the League.
- e. Considerations for an increased fee include: General Election, Special Election, Runoff Election, Priority Mailings, Voter Data Base, Consultation on Bylaws or Election Ordinance, etc.

3. PREPARATION

- a. Visit physical location to evaluate requirements and needs.
- b. Review Election Ordinance and/or Bylaws.
- c. Review procedures for a tie vote.
- d. Determine time frame.
- e. Determine equipment requirements, such as polling booths and voting box.
- f. Allow for security issues at the polling place.
- g. Assure access to the polling place.
- h. Determine necessary follow-up to the election.

- i. Determine storage and disposal of election materials after the election.

4. PERSONNEL

- a. Determine number of League members needed to prepare information, ballots and mailings.
- b. Determine number of League members needed at the polls.
- c. Coordinate with the Post Office staff if priority mailings required.
- d. Determine distance and travel time required.
- e. Record volunteer hours given.
- f. Provide a training workshop for League participants.

5. Develop and use a “Community Elections Assistance Manual.”

PARTICIPATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS POLICY

Approved by the board October 6, 2008

The LWVHC may participate with other organizations in several ways. However that participation is structured, the following must apply:

1. Participation must support the LWVHC mission statement.
2. Nonpartisanship shall not be compromised in any way.
3. Association with any other group(s) must not compromise the reputation of the League.
4. The mission statement(s) of the other organization(s) shall not conflict with the League’s mission statement.
5. The LWVHC will not participate in any activity where candidates or parties are endorsed.
6. All Voter Service activities will conform to League Voter Service guidelines.
7. The League’s participation will be determined to be either Education or Advocacy; appropriate guidelines will be followed for each.
8. The LWVHC may withdraw from any type of participation with any other group at any time.
9. The Board shall make the final decision regarding any participation with another group, considering the following guidelines in each individual case.

Participation in Public Meetings

- 1. Providing Moderators and Facilitators:**
 - a. The structure of the event ensures fairness and balance.

- b. The event is not organized to promote an issue that conflicts with League positions or principles.
2. Participation in an Event planned by another group:
 - a. All points covered in 1. a) through b).
 - b. The issue is timely and important to the community.
 - c. The participation of the LWVHC with a specific topic or sponsor is at the discretion of the current Board.
 - d. Any educational event will present balanced representation of all major viewpoints.
 - e. Any financial commitment is approved by the Board.
 - f. Members of LWVHC are interested and willing to do the necessary work.
 3. Sponsorship of Events initiated by the League or by another group:
 - a. All points covered in 2. a) through f).
 - b. A representative of the LWVHC is involved in the planning and decision-making.
 - c. Any co-sponsoring groups must not endorse candidates or issues before the event or activity.
 - d. The LWVHC must approve significant changes in plans and must approve written materials before their release.
 - e. The LWVHC may withdraw from participation and/or sponsorship at any time.
 - f. The Board approves listing the LWVHC as a sponsor and allocates any necessary funds.

Guidelines for joining a coalition or an association

An *action coalition* will be defined as a temporary alliance that brings together organizations for joint action toward a limited and well-defined goal. An *association* may be a long-term, continuing relationship to support efforts related to a major goal. The LWVHC Board must approve participation prior to LWVHC joining any coalition/association (C/A). In addition to the criteria 1 – 9 at the beginning of this policy, the following criteria and ground rules must be considered before approval by the Board.

1. Criteria:
 - a. The major issues of the C/A shall mesh with LWVHC positions or be issues of LWVHC concern.
 - b. The aims of the C/A shall not conflict with any League positions.
 - c. The C/A must be with organizations with which the League can work effectively.
 - d. The LWVHC has positions, experience, abilities and interests that make joining appropriate.
 - e. The LWVHC must have confidence in the leadership of the C/A.
 - f. The C/A has adequate financing for its success.

- g. The LWVHC members are interested and willing to do the necessary work.
- h. The C/A shall bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to reach League goals.
- i. The C/A shall not support or oppose any candidate or political party. If the C/A participates in any partisan activity, the LWVHC shall withdraw immediately.
- j. The LWVHC Board shall review participation in any C/A during its annual retreat.

2. Ground Rules:

- a. All members of the C/A shall agree to established ground rules so that all parties know what they may and may not do in the name of the C/A.
- b. The C/A will define the parameters of the issue or issues.
- c. The C/A will agree on specific strategies.
- d. The entire C/A will approve any person(s) who speak(s) for the C/A.
- e. Member organizations must have the opportunity to edit and approve any distributed materials.
- f. The LWVHC shall be responsible for only those expenses approved by the LWVHC Board.
- g. The League member representing the Board with any C/A shall be appointed by the Board.
- h. The LWVHC representative must have Board approval for any statement of a League position on a specific issue.
- i. If the LWVHC Board disagrees with the majority opinion of the C/A, a public statement of the League's dissension shall be issued.

Representing the LWVHC on Community Advisory Boards and Commissions

1. The Board shall evaluate the qualifications of potential League representatives based on his or her:
 - a. Understanding of the LWVHC's mission, policies, positions, and protocols.
 - b. Understanding of League principles of "good" government (open, accountable, responsive, etc.).
 - c. Specialized knowledge and/or interest in the group's purpose.
 - d. Ability and willingness to attend meetings and to do the necessary work.
 - e. Willingness to report regularly to the Board and the membership through the VOTER and the annual meeting.
2. The Board shall review and approve such representation annually or when the appointment expires.