



Observer Corps Discussion

- What is a League Observer Corps?
 - Observers attend public meetings to listen, learn, and report back to the League without participating or influencing proceedings.
- Promoting Civic Engagement and Accountability
 - OCs act as the “eyes and ears” of the public, ensuring government accountability.
- ID Government Bodies to Monitor
 - Determine which councils, boards, commissions, or advisory committees to monitor.
 - No two League OCs are alike, just as no two counties are alike.
- Establish a Reporting Mechanism
 - Leagues may use standardized forms or allow observers to only report when there is something of interest/concern.
 - It is important not to make this too onerous.
 - Consider publishing reports in newsletters.



Observer Corps Discussion

- Maintain non-partisanship
 - Observers should remain impartial, not expressing personal opinions or engaging in discussion during meetings. Their primary role is to observe and report; not to advocate or intervene.
- Engage with the Community
 - Share reports with members and the broader community through newsletters, websites, or public forums to inform citizens about local government actions and encourage civic participation.
- Stay Informed on Open Meeting Laws
 - Educate observers about “sunshine laws” that govern public access to government meetings and records, ensuring that observations are conducted within legal frameworks.
- Increase League Visibility and Volunteer Participation
 - By regularly attending public meetings, the OCs keep elected officials aware of the organization's' interests.



Observer Corps Discussion

- LWVNC Observer Corps Periodic Meetings
 - The LWVNC Board will host periodic (monthly or quarterly) Observer Corps meetings to allow observers to share concerns and learn from each other
- Statewide Issues that Unite Leagues: Bottom Up Approach
 - OCs will primarily run at the local level and bring concerns or opportunities for advocacy to their local board. Any issues of concern that bubble up to the level of statewide concern can be discussed at the periodic meetings, or brought to the attention of the state board for the same purpose.



Observer Corps 101

An Overview and Invitation

Leslie Antos

LWVLCF Observer Corps Leader

Government “of the people, by the people, and for the people”

- Our rights to access to government information weren't guaranteed until 100+ years after the Gettysburg Address
 - Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972
 - Sunshine Act of 1976
- The League of Women Voters has championed government transparency since its inception
 - Founding principles include statements on the citizen's right to know

US laws pertaining to public access will only be as good as we demand them to be



Role of an Observer Program

- Ensure citizens are aware of decisions that impact their lives
- Promote government transparency and accountability
- Monitor what issues are being discussed and how they are being discussed

Who Benefits from an Observer Corps?

- **Observers**

- Learn about what is happening in their community
- Aware of how decisions are made and who the decision-makers are

- **Community**

- Has an engaged and empowered nonpartisan group representing all citizens, focused on government transparency

- **League of Women Voters**

- Strengthens ties between the League and local government
- Fosters relationships with other community organizations

Along with Voter Services, Observer Corps is one of the most visible ways to demonstrate the League's nonpartisanship and trustworthiness

What Does the Observer Corps Do?

- Attend meetings as League members
- Monitor process and protocol
- Evaluate meeting content vs LWV priorities or positions
- Share observations and concerns as necessary



LWVLCF Observer Corps – Where Are We?

- New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender Counties
- Boards of Education
- Boards of Elections
- County Commissioners
- City Council (Wilmington)



NEW HANOVER COUNTY
The Model of Good Governance



LWVLCF Observer Corps – Who Are We?

- Characteristics of Observers

- Good listeners
- Interested in local government and community issues
- Able to summarize and interpret proceedings in a fair way

- Current observers

Jana Albritton

Connie Nelson

Kathryn Hedgepeth

Clarice Reber

Sue-Ann Rush

Leslie Antos

Barbara Burrell

Claudia Tidwell

Acting on Observations

- Signs of Possible Concerns for LWVLCF
 - Agenda not available or does not represent meeting discussion
 - Meeting is not adequately accessible to interested citizens
 - Topics or decisions are counter to LWV positions
- Determination of Next Steps
 - Observer, Observer Corps leader and identified Board members review the situation and possible responses
- Examples of Current Issues Being Evaluated
 - Limited notification of openings for interested citizens on Boards, Committees & Commissions in the city of Wilmington
 - Minutes from Pender County Commissioners meetings remain unpublished months after occurring

Observer Corps – Is it for You?

- We have meetings in all three counties that need additional observers
- We have a 30 minute training/orientation session to answer all questions
- Experienced observers can provide OJT and tips
- If you are interested, if you are just exploring, or if you want to volunteer your neighbor please reach out

