

FOR THE NEW AND NOT SO NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Every local League board is a working board. Some boards have dual assignments where one is a board member first and holds a portfolio second. Others are boards that share responsibilities equally and pick up ad hoc assignments as needed. Division of responsibilities lightens the burden on leadership, and allows for the board to share equally in fundraising, member recruitment and attending membership meetings.

If you are a new board member, you may be uncertain about your responsibilities and wonder if you will ever know as much as others seem to know. It will all become clearer shortly; but to hasten this prospect, here are some suggestions to help you...

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

- Carry out your own portfolio assignment.
- Attend all board meetings, coming on time and staying until the end. All board members take part in decision-making - you are needed!
- Participate in policy decisions, and develop an understanding of all parts of League program, policy, and purpose. Prepare for board meetings by reading the agenda material and any pertinent reports suggested for your review between board meetings. This will allow for more intelligent decision-making.
- Safeguard the League's reputation for non-partisanship.

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

- Obtain the files and seek advice on procedure from the preceding chair. Training on a one-to-one basis between outgoing and incoming chairs is vital. Combining new ideas with practices that have worked in the past is a good way to keep the League current yet consistent.
- Study the relevant sections of *League Basics*.
 - <https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/league-basics.pdf>
- Attend board training sessions and as many local, state and national League meetings and conventions as possible.
- Develop a committee, both to assist you and to nurture participation and leadership. Involve your committee by having regular contacts and meetings.
- Report to the board any plans made by your committee. Request authorization, if needed, to carry them out.

- ☐ Plan ahead and meet deadlines.
- ☐ Be aware of the lines of communication and jurisdiction of state, national or other League boards.
- ☐ Keep records and files for your reference and for your successor.
- ☐ Prepare annual report materials as needed.
- ☐ Know if there are funds under your purview. Find out how to be reimbursed for expenses.
- ☐ Attend Membership Meetings and other League programs. Not only will you be a more informed, effective board member but your contributions at these meetings are necessary.
- ☐ Make arrangements to obtain all state and national materials pertinent to your portfolio or interest, including links to online list-serves, discussion groups that receive related materials, as well as the LWV and LWVC Updates.

LEAGUE TOOLS YOU NEED

Basic League tools should be placed in a binder or an online folder that can be referred to at meetings. Suggested basic League tools are:

- ☐ job description
- ☐ local League bylaws
- ☐ local League budget
- ☐ membership list
- ☐ list of your committee members
- ☐ list of board members with their contact info
- ☐ nonpartisan policy and board policies and procedures
- ☐ local League calendar for the year
- ☐ a copy of or link to *League Basics* and your local, state and national action positions
- ☐ LWVC's *How To...* for your portfolio area. <http://archive.lwvc.org/lwvonly/pubs.html>
- ☐ sections of the LWVC UPDATE related to your portfolio area.
- ☐ League management page : <https://my.lwv.org/california/lwvc-members-only/local-league-management>

HOW TO REPORT TO THE BOARD

In advance of the board meeting, notify the President of the subject and time needed for your report on the agenda.

WHAT SHOULD BE REPORTED

- ☐ Progress of ongoing projects
- ☐ Significant decisions a committee has made.
- ☐ Problems encountered in getting a job done that require input from the board.
- ☐ Information on resources that are significant to the League (Is there another organization taking an active role in this area that might be a resources or partner?)
- ☐ Important information from state or national Leagues relating to your job (e.g., LWVUS has entered litigation in California as a friend of the court or LWVC is participating in a statewide coalition on an issue).

WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK FOR A BOARD DECISION?

- When you are going to spend a lot of money or are exceeding the amount allowed in the budget
- When you want to hold an unscheduled public meeting
- When you want to publish something or distribute materials to members or the public
- When you want to make a statement in the League's name
- When you want to make any demand on the League's time, money or reputation
- When you want to establish a policy or solve a problem (which sometimes is best done by involving the board)

HOW DO YOU REPORT?

Be brief.

If the information is extensive, send out a summary with the agenda.

Start the report with what you are going to do ("I'm going to ask the board's approval of a letter to the city council" or "I'm reporting on the committee's progress and some problems we have encountered").

If you want a board decision, state clearly and briefly what led you to your request. Explain why the League should act. Do we have a position and what is it? Do we need a policy? Have we got one already?

MAKE A RECOMMENDATION!

You know more about the possible courses of action than anyone except perhaps the President, and s/he cannot give your report and cannot make any motions. MAKE A MOTION that your recommendation be adopted, so the board will have something to discuss. Remember to keep committee work at committee meetings prior to the board meeting.

Offer pertinent information to the board and be prepared to answer questions.

Accept the board's decision gracefully. Usually they will follow your recommendations fairly closely, but sometimes other policies or procedures dictate another course be taken which you must accept.

Enjoy serving on your local League board!

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