



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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FOR THE NEW (and not so new) LEAGUE BOARD MEMBER

It is an honor to serve on a League board but there are no honorary positions.

Each board member has a dual assignment. She/he is a director first and holds a portfolio or specific assignment second.

Since everyone is expected to share equally in fundraising and member recruitment and retention, as well as attending meetings, the burden of running an effective League is lightened.

The local Board works together to set goals, make policy, and develop long range plans.

If you are a new board member, you may be uncertain of your responsibilities and wonder if you will ever know as much as others seem to know.

Here are some suggestions to help you hasten that process.

HERE'S THE SCOOP!

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend all board meetings, be on time, and stay until the end. All board members take part in decision-making. *You are needed!*
- Participate in all policy decisions. Work to develop an understanding of all elements of League. Come prepared for board meetings. Read your agenda material and other reports forwarded to you between meetings. This will allow for more intelligent decision-making.
- Carry out your own portfolio assignment.
- Safeguard the League's reputation for nonpartisanship.

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

- Get the files and advice on procedure from the preceding director. Training on a one-to-one basis between the outgoing and incoming director is vital. While a new director will want to try new methods and will have fresh ideas, it helps to know how things were done in the past, to be given some tips on getting the job done most effectively, and to know the rationale behind past board decisions that affect the portfolio.
- Study the relevant sections of: *League Basics* (LWVUS) as well as your local Board notebook.
- Attend a board training session and as many area, state, and national League meetings as possible (Council, Convention, Regional Workshops, League Leaders Day, etc.).
- Make sure your contact information (including your email address) has been submitted to the state League office and obtain that of your state portfolio director. Use that director as a resource.
- Read reports from the LWVSC Board with special emphasis on those areas relating directly to your portfolio.
- Regularly check the websites for the state League (www.lwvsc.org) and national League (www.lwv.org)
- Subscribe to appropriate state and national listservs.
- Develop a committee to assist you and encourage member participation and leadership. Stay in touch with your committee—use its members.

- Report to the board any plans made by your committee. Request board authorization to carry them out.
- Learn what local, state, and national reports or deadlines pertain to you and plan ahead so you can meet them.
- Keep a record/file for your successor.
- Prepare newsletter, program, and annual report material as needed.
- Get copies of state and national publications and use them.
- Know what funds your portfolio has been budgeted and find out how you are reimbursed for expenses.
- Attend all general membership/unit meetings. You will be a more informed, effective board member and your contributions at these meetings are needed.
- Get help from your president, board members, committees, state board and staff, and the national board and staff when you need it. League leaders all over the country are facing the same problems as you; enjoy the process of trying to solve problems "to promote informed and active participation in government."
- Enjoy serving on your local League board!

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

"Look over your shoulder now and then to be sure someone's following you."— Henry Gilmer

REPORTING TO THE BOARD

Setting the agenda for a board meeting is an extremely difficult task. If you have a report, be sure to let the president know so time will be set aside for you. Send copies of your report to all board members (including your secretary) ahead of time.

WHAT SHOULD BE REPORTED

- Progress in organization of a job or in getting it accomplished;
- All reports or consensus meetings and proposed position statements;
- Decisions reached by a committee, and any action taken so that other board members will be informed if elected officials or others mention the item(s);
- Problems encountered in getting a job done or reactions of members to a project;
- Information on resources that are significant to the League. (e.g., another organization pursuing an issue that the League is working on may be a resource, partner, or cosponsor)
- Important information from state or national Leagues relating to your job (e.g., LWVUS has entered litigation as a friend of the court or LWVSC is participating in a statewide coalition on an issue).

WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK FOR A BOARD DECISION?

- When you are going to spend more money than budgeted;
- When you want to hold a public or membership (not committee) meeting;
- When you want to publish something or distribute materials to members or to 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;
- When you are not sure whether you should ask for a board decision.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE WHEN YOU NEED A BOARD DECISION?

- Be sure your report includes any motions you may plan to make.
- At the beginning of your report, state what you are going to do (e.g., "I'm going to ask the board's approval for a letter to the city council," or "I'm reporting on the committee's progress and some of the problems we have encountered.")
- State clearly and briefly what has led up to your request (e.g., "The Citizens' Master Plan Committee has asked for comments from other organizations at the school board meeting next Wednesday. The report recommends that...").
- Be aware of time! The president has to get through the agenda on time.
- Make a recommendation. Offer relevant information and be prepared to answer questions. Participate in the discussion.
- Accept the board's decision – total board responsibility sometimes dictates another course despite your recommendation.

LEAGUE TOOLS YOU NEED

Our state website www.lwvsc.org and national website www.lwvus.org have many resources. At www.lwvus.org, check under Tools for Leaders. Items are constantly updated and new tools are added regularly. One of most important is *League Basics*, a guide to LWV procedures. The LWVSC website has our current Legislative Priorities, *Agenda for Action* (LWVSC public policy positions), and events calendar.

Be sure to sign up for weekly electronic LWVUS Leaders Updates in the For Members area of the the national website.

You will receive the new *Agenda for Action* following the state League convention and *LWVSC Leaders Directory* (contact information for state League leaders) following annual meetings.

You should also have in hand certain things specific to your League:

- A job description for your board portfolio (assignment)
- Local League bylaws, budget & calendar
- Membership list
- List of your committee members
- Nonpartisan & board policies of your local League.

Welcome to your local League Board of Directors!

Serving is indeed an honor and a job you will love.

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