

## Consensus & Concurrence

**Consensus**, or membership understanding and agreement, is the basis of the grassroots character and effectiveness of the League of Women Voters. The League is a study and action organization. Therefore it is important to have a clear expression of member views to determine what action to take. Consensus-taking is a complex procedure at the local, regional, state and national levels; it is puzzling to new members and challenging to experienced leaders.

What is Consensus?

As noted in League Basics (In League), "The American Heritage Dictionary defines consensus as 'collective opinion or concord; general agreement or accord.' In the League, 'consensus' is used (1) interchangeably with 'member agreement' to refer to the overall decision making process . . . by which a League Board determines that there is substantial agreement among members on an issue, and (2) to refer to a specific technique used traditionally in the League to discuss and arrive at conclusions on issues . . ."

"Consensus/group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The 'consensus' reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall 'sense of the group' as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions."

**Concurrence**, the act of agreeing with a statement of position, is one method of determining membership understanding and agreement as a basis for League action.

The use of concurrence on any issue is decided by the appropriate League board on the basis of the nature of the subject, the time available for decision-making and the resources or interest present in the League for research. The Board sets guidelines for the process, particularly those relating to who will be asked to concur, with whom and how. For example, the Board of a local League might ask its members to concur with a position statement arrived at by the League's resource committee or by the Board itself. The request for concurrence could be presented at a meeting or by telephone or by written questionnaire.

**Consensus Discussion to Determine Concurrence with Proposed Healthcare Positions** So, in this case, you are being asked to try to reach general agreement (consensus) with other League members, in a discussion first about whether you concur (agree) with the proposed position on Healthcare and then with the proposed position on Financing of Healthcare. The choice is, in each case, whether as a group you prefer the current position or the new one.