

League of Women Voters Montana

Policies and Procedures (January, 2025)

POLICY ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (Adopted April 2019)

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity. (This is the language from the LWVUS website)

POLICY ON NONPARTISAN: (adopted December 1993; modified April 2019)

Purpose: the purpose of the League's non-partisan policy is to protect the credibility of the League of Women Voters of Montana as an organization that does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. Only to the extent that the public and elected officials are convinced of the League's genuine impartiality towards candidates for elective office will the League be able to render effective voter service activities and gain a wider base of support for its positions on governmental issues.

The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. However, it shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate.

Recognizing that the League experience uniquely equips members for public life and wishing to encourage members to utilize their knowledge and abilities, non-board members are urged to participate fully in party activities (on an individual basis). Board members' activities must be limited to preserve the League's nonpartisan position.

Public notices released by the League announcing the resignation of a board member to run for political office should be carefully worded to avoid the appearance of endorsing the resigning board member's candidacy.

Campaign contributions: The president, the advocacy/legislative action chair and the voter service chair should refrain from attending fundraising events and making contributions to the campaigns of candidates for any federal or statewide office or to political parties or other entities contributing to such federal or state candidates during their term of office on the state board because highly visible leaders must embody the principle of nonpartisanship.

Board members shall not chair or administer fundraising or political campaigns, chair campaign events or work in a significant way in the campaign of a candidate.

Social and Other Media: The president, the advocacy/legislative action chair and the voter service chair shall not indicate her/his political affiliations or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, including social networking sites or other public venues

A board member may serve on any public advisory board, commission, committee or coalition; however, that board member does not represent the League unless officially designated as a League representative by the League board.

A board member may not speak or in any way work against a League position. The political activities of a spouse or relative of a board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the board member.

POLICY ON COALITION GUIDELINES (adopted September 1992; modified April 2019)

The following guidelines will be considered when the League decides whether or not to join a coalition:

1. The coalition's major issues should mesh with League positions, though there need not be a League position on every issue with which the coalition is concerned. The aims of the coalition must not conflict with League positions.
2. The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with the adopted Advocacy Agenda or Citizen Education priorities, or the goals should be ones the League expects to work in the future to achieve.
3. The coalition's activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve the League's organization, advocacy or education goals.
4. The members of the coalition should be organizations with which the League can work effectively. The League should have confidence in the leadership of the coalition and may serve in a leadership capacity.
5. Expenditures for work with the coalition (including staff and volunteer time, as well as cash and in-kind donation expenses) should be worth the investment.
6. The representative in a coalition shall be a state board member.
7. Joining a coalition should be a state board decision.

8. The League must be able to withhold its name and involvement in certain actions (such as candidate endorsement) and yet still remain a coalition member if it wishes.
9. The League will not participate in coalitions in which the primary purpose is to endorse or oppose candidates or political parties.

POLICY ON STATE STUDIES (adopted 2002)

Choosing the Issue

League program originates with its members. The process insures member participation in choosing program, and after consideration of alternatives the board recommends a program to the annual meeting or the convention for a vote. When making the choice the board considers these questions:

- Does it fall within League Principles?
- Does the League already have positions that can be applied?
- Is government action needed and possible?
- How much member interest has been expressed?
- Is now the crucial time?
- Do political realities permit effective action?
- Is this the appropriate level of the League?
- Will the League's involvement make a unique impact?
- Is there funding for educational activities?
- Will the League have allies?

Issues are worded succinctly, identifying the problem and the scope of the study, that is, carefully thinking through and then putting into words what League members need to learn if they are to reach the goal – a new position. The scope needs to be a size which corresponds to the resources available and the time frame. The wording may be amended at the annual meeting or convention, provided the intent is not changed. Only studies submitted by the deadline may be considered.

Guidelines for a Study Resource Committee

Leagues plan and coordinate program in various ways, usually through one or more committees appointed by the board. Each study committee should outline all projected activities for board approval. Once plans have been approved, the committee continues its work, reporting to the board for guidance and further decisions as needed. The study resource committee:

- Agrees on overall goals and time, money, and resources available.
- Gathers information on the issue and carries out additional research if necessary.

- Designs programs and activities to get information to members and the public, arranging for meetings, TV and radio shows, go-see tours, and other activities.
- Formulates consensus questions for member agreement and outlines possible decision-making methods for the board's review and approval.
- Suggests and participates in actions once a position is reached.
- Evaluates the effectiveness of the committee's efforts.

Materials prepared for League members should focus on the information needed to make decisions as informed citizens. Sometimes a bibliography accompanied by a fact sheet with provocative questions may be all that is needed. The committee should consult with community leaders, exchange views with the public, and hold forums. Cassettes, films, cable television, and debates are ways to encourage participation.

Reaching Agreement

Before the League can take action, members must agree in broad terms on the issue studied. The board chooses the method to be used in reaching agreement. Regardless of the method used, it is essential that members have an opportunity to become informed before being asked to make decisions.

The study resource committee frames consensus questions for the board to review and approve. During the study these questions form the framework for member discussion. They help guide the study and focus members on the points that will ultimately be parts of the League's position.

Consensus is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion. The consensus reached in this 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.

Questionnaires, telephone polls, and other techniques may be used to solicit the views of each member directly.

Concurrence is the act of agreeing with an existing statement or position. League boards can concur with recommendations of a resource committee or with positions reached by another League. As a general rule, background materials are provided to League members in the concurrence process.

Formulating League Positions

In a local League, determining member agreement is the responsibility of the local board. It is an interpretive process whereby the board evaluates the reports of member thinking and determines the broad areas of agreement and disagreement. For a local issue, the local board

then formulates a position that expresses the League's views. (State and national boards do the same for state and national issues). Positions need to be worded in terms broad enough to enable the League to initiate, support, or oppose a variety of legislative and executive proposals over a period of time.

After adoption a local League position is announced to members and the community, and the board can begin taking action on the position immediately. A local League's consensus on a state or national issue does not constitute a final League position. A local consensus should not be publicized until the state or national board announces its position to members and the public and then only if the local consensus agrees with the adoption of the position.

POLICY ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST (Adopted April 2019)

No board member, staff or committee member may participate in any decision-making process when he or she has a financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, personally or through a member of his or her immediate family, which may be seen as a conflict of interest with the interests or concerns of the League of Women Voters. This prohibition is absolute, even if the person with the potential conflict of interest believes he or she can be fair and objective despite the conflict. The conflict of interest policy shall be reviewed at the first meeting of duly elected directors, annually with all staff and each new person appointed to the board of directors and by committees in appropriate circumstances.

Definition: A potential conflict of interest may exist under the following circumstances:

- a. Where there is a parallel and/or conflict between the board responsibilities and private or public employment, there is an appearance that the board member is advancing his or her personal interests by virtue of his or her position on the board; or
- b. Where a board member or a member of his immediate family, has allegiance to another organization or entity and there is an appearance that there is a conflict of interest; or
- c. Where there is a financial, private or personal interest, direct or indirect, that is incompatible with the proper discharge of League responsibilities or that would impair independence of judgment.

Procedures:

- a. Any potential conflict must be disclosed to the board, the committee or a committee designated by the board. When there is doubt as to whether a potential conflict exists, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the board, the committee or a committee designated by the board, excluding the person with the potential conflict.
- b. The person with the potential conflict may participate in discussion and/or provide written information regarding the matter, but may not participate in the decision making process. The person with the potential conflict must excuse himself or herself from the room during the final vote.
- c. The minutes must reflect the disclosure of a potential conflict of interest and that the interested person was not present during the final vote.

POLICY ON CONFERENCE AND TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT (Adopted April 2019)

For events that LWVMT Board members are expected to attend or for which they serve as delegates (LWVMT Convention, LWVUS Conference or Council), the cost of registration, travel and lodging (based on double occupancy) are eligible for reimbursement at the percentage allowed by the Board and by the source of funds in the budget for that activity, to the extent there is budget available, and the board has pre-approved their attendance.

All reimbursements are subject to availability of allowable funds in the appropriate budget line.

Procedures:

1. Attendance at LWVMT Convention and Retreat: per member reimbursement amounts and source of funds shall be established when the budget for the event is adopted by the state board.
2. LWV US Council and Convention: Delegates selected by the LWV MT to represent the state League may request reimbursement for up to half of the expenses for attending Council (Council fee and transportation costs) and/or Convention (transportation costs, lodging and convention fee), according to the source of funds budgeted in the state budget (education funds or 501(c)(4) funds), pro-rated by the percentage of the agenda that qualifies as educational. Scholarships for the remaining half may be available if the delegate demonstrates inability to participate otherwise because of economic limitations.
3. Mileage reimbursement for travel in-state to board meetings is eligible for reimbursement, subject to the amount budgeted, at the rate used by the IRS for calculating mileage rate for charitable organizations, which at this writing (January 2019) was \$.14 per mile.
4. All delegates to state and national meetings that are not routine board meetings are responsible to report back to the LWVMT Board of Directors.

POLICY ON PROCUREMENT (Adopted April 2019)

The League recognizes that one avenue to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion is through the purchase of goods and services. The League shall seek diverse providers of goods and services and shall endeavor to choose diverse providers when practicable.

POLICY ON ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS (Adopted April 2019)

The League will use online communications (websites and lists) when appropriate to further our mission and to communicate in a broad geographic area to many people, both members and the general public. LWVMT website:

<https://my.lwv.org/montana>

Website Purpose: To promote the mission of the League, attract new members, increase visibility, provide accurate and useful information for both members and nonmembers that is easy to read and consistent with the League's style and image.

The state Webmaster maintains the site, with assistance from designated web administrators from each local League.

Linking Policy:

On action/advocacy pages, the page may link to websites of organizations, coalitions and events that meet one or both of the following criteria:

- i. are in general agreement with the League's positions and strategies
- ii. are appropriate governmental and nongovernmental entities that provide balanced, nonpartisan information

It is the responsibility of the appropriate subject chair or local League administrator who posts the link to keep up to date with the content of the links and to keep the links up to date or inform the webmaster of changes.

On any appropriate page, the LWVMT website may link to "general interest" websites that meet some or all of these criteria, as determined by the Board:

- i. Nonpartisan
- ii. Strategic
- iii. Diverse
- iv. Logical (related to content on the LWVMT website)
- v. Reciprocal (other site agrees to link to LWVMT website)

It is the policy of the LWVMT website to link only to other websites that do not block or hamper a user's ability to return to the LWV site after following a link from our site.

Email lists of membership

Each local League shall maintain a database of names and email addresses of local members. The state Board shall access local League members via the local League President or other individual designated as the Listmaster for each local League. Local Leagues shall post messages from the state board to the local list in a timely fashion as long as the proposed message from the state board meets the following criteria:

- a. messages must be for League business and be identified as such on all postings
- b. Messages must be nonpartisan, not derogatory, noninflammatory and nondiscriminatory.
- c. Messages must be related to the subject line of the message, which should be informative and descriptive of the content to allow members to easily chose to read the message or not.
- d. Messages must include the source of the message, e.g., local president, state president, state Legislative Action chair, etc.
- e. The last item on the message must be the name, affiliation and position of the person posting the message.
- f. List participants are encouraged to make use of the information gained from the message to take action in their own names.
- g. No information on an LWVMT message list may be interpreted to be a request to take official League action unless stated by appropriate person, e.g., state president, or state Legislative Action chair.
- h. The LWVMT will not share, rent, sell, or trade membership lists or personal data with a third party.

Media Outreach:

The League shall maintain a list of statewide media (Television, Newspapers) that includes diverse publications (such as Tribal newsletters, University student newspapers, etc.) as well as mainstream media outlets and shall use this list for press releases and other notifications of state League actions and events.

POLICY ON FUNDRAISING (Adopted April 2019)

- a. State and Local fundraising efforts should be coordinated and not conflicting.
- b. Fundraising records must be kept regarding the purpose of the fundraising, sources of contributions, and expenditures from the raised funds. If fundraising is done for electioneering communications on ballot issues or to pay a lobbyist, such fundraising shall comply with the Montana campaign finance reporting requirements.
- c. Requests to keep a donation anonymous should be honored, except as required by Montana and federal law.

POLICY ON MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (Adopted April 2019)

- a. The League recognizes that well-informed diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. The League further recognizes that one role of the League is to empower people with knowledge of how to conduct fair meetings and how to be involved with citizen participation in government. The League is committed to diversity and pluralism in its membership, on its board of directors, and in all of its projects and activities. This commitment means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of religion, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, origin, socioeconomic status or disability.
- b. In order to determine how diverse League membership is, the League will request voluntary information from each member to disclose their diversity dimensions using a survey form. The state League has the responsibility to collect, collate and report diversity information so gathered to the local Leagues.
- c. Knowledge of League process, League policies, and League priorities are necessary to advance as a leader in the League. Electronic resources are available to enable new members become familiar with League principles and practices, a necessary requirement for effectively advancing League goals. Adherence to League process, policies and positions is fundamental to leadership in the League.

POLICY ON ADVOCACY (Adopted April 2019)

Board members may not lobby for a position in opposition to or in conflict with a national or state League position. If a conflict arises due to a position the state League has taken on a ballot measure or piece of state legislation and the board member chooses to work in opposition to the League position, he or she must either take a leave of absence until after the election or legislative session, or resign from the board of directors.

The League shall endeavor to analyze actions and impacts of actions on the diversity of people in the Montana electorate, and reflect these impacts in deciding which issues to take action on and in formulating testimony on those issues.

Policy and Procedures on Actions

- Any employed lobbyist or League member lobbying on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Montana must adhere to the League's conflict of interest and nonpartisan policies.
- Unless authorized to serve as the League spokesperson, board members and any other League members must be scrupulous in avoiding the impression that they represent the League.

- As the League's principal spokesperson, the president may not lobby for another organization.
- Members of the board of directors may not lobby for a position in opposition to or in conflict with a national or state League position. (See also Policy on Advocacy above)
- General League members may testify before committees on any subject, provided they do not identify themselves as representing the League unless authorized to do so by the president or state action chair.
- League members responding to calls for action from the League may lobby as individuals on their own behalf.

Speaking for the League: The president is the spokesperson for the League of Women Voters of Montana.

- The president may delegate this responsibility to other members by reason of special expertise, qualification or appropriateness.
- Letters to legislators and state officials, letters to the editor and press releases written on behalf of the state League concerning state action must be approved by and signed in the name of the president and/or the state action chair.

General points of upcoming testimony must be cleared with the president or the action chair before testimony and other public statements are given.

POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF MAL UNITS (Adopted January, 2025)

Have a minimum of 5 dues-paying members who have been meeting regularly, at least once/month, for at least 6 months

Have a local leader who meets the qualifications to be a League spokesperson (i.e., no political contributions, isn't involved in political party, recognizes importance and role of speaking for the League, not for themselves)

Core leadership team have completed League basics orientation (to be defined by the Board) and have observed multiple board meetings of an established League

All members have reviewed and have agreed to support the Bylaws of LWV MT, and of LWV US.

All members have reviewed and agreed to support or not take actions to oppose the positions of the LWW MT and LWV US (Impact on Issues).

Group has good working relationship with supervising League member from established League appointed by LWV MT to provide mentorship and supervision – supervisor recommends recognition. A mentor would attend all meetings of the MAL unit.

MAL units can apply to LWV MT for 501 c 3 education funds for local events and projects, subject to same rules as local Leagues. Applications must be submitted before committing to the event. Limit of \$200 per year.

One of the first events that a local group would plan and implement is a “Introduction to the LWV” public event to open the group to potential new members

Two areas in which local groups can operate:

Voter Services - voter registration and candidate forums for local official elections

Local Education Programs/Forums on local issues (planned under the supervision of their mentor)

Other requirements or guidelines needed for a group of members to become a MAL unit:

Once a group has been established and functioning well for a minimum of one year, the MAL group could apply to have its dues set aside for their use, subject to mentor and state League approval.

Relevant Sections of the LWV MT Bylaws concerning Members at Large (MAL) and MAL Units as of September, 2024:

Section 2. Types of Membership.

- a. Voting Members: Persons at least 16 years of age who join the League shall be voting members of local Leagues, state Leagues and of the LWVUS; 1) individuals who live within an area of a local League may join the League or any other local League; 2) those individuals who reside outside the area of any local League may join a local League or shall be state members-at-large (MAL); 3) individuals who become state members-at-large shall pay dues and shall be subject to state bylaws; 4) those who make a lump-sum life membership payment to LWVUS shall be paid life members and those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more, shall be life members excused from the payment of dues.

ARTICLE VI RECOGNITION OF LOCAL LEAGUES AND MALS

Section 2. State Member-at-Large Units.

- a. State Member-at-Large (MAL) Units are those groups which have been recognized by LWVMT.

- b. The Board of Directors of LWVMT has the responsibility for the establishment of and recognition of MAL Units. For this purpose the Board may organize a group in a community in which no League exists and shall grant recognition provided the group meets recognition standards as adopted by the State Board. MAL Units may be of three types: 1) a MAL Unit located within a community; 2) an electronic MAL Unit, or eMAL Unit, not confined to any one community; or 3) a Campus MAL Unit located on the campus/campuses of institutions of higher learning. MAL Units may vary widely in their levels of activity. In some cases, they may continue indefinitely as MAL Units. In others, they may serve as the starting point for establishing a new local League in a community.
- c. In the event of recurring failure of a recognized MAL Unit to meet these qualifying standards, the Board of Directors may withdraw recognition. All funds held by the MAL Unit from which recognition has been withdrawn shall be paid to the LWVMT.