



## **POLICY GUIDE**

Edited as a result of migration to 501(c)(3) group exemption as a subordinate organization of the consolidated League of Women Voters of Texas May of 2018.

### **I. POLITICAL ACTION/ACTIVITY**

As an organization, the League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate for elective office. After careful study and consensus, the League may take action on issues in the public interest.

These guidelines are intended to protect the League's nonpartisan position.

- A. League members are encouraged to work in the political party of their choice. Members are encouraged to attend local governmental meetings and to participate as private citizens. However, members are expected to keep their League activity and their political activity completely separate and distinct. In both partisan and nonpartisan elections, members may not distribute League materials at the same time as material for a candidate or a party.
- B. The President(s), President-Elect, Voters Service Director, and *Voters Guide* Editor will avoid political activities that may give the appearance of partisanship.
- C. Board members are encouraged to participate as volunteers in political activities but should first consult the Board if they are in doubt as to whether their activities would affect the community's perception of the League's nonpartisanship.
- D. A Board member will submit a written resignation prior to announcing candidacy for public office, appointment as Campaign Manager/Treasurer, or paid employment for a political candidate. Resignation from the Board does not mean resignation from the League.
- E. Members in leadership roles at unit and other public meetings have the responsibility to ensure the nonpartisanship of the meeting and its environment. Discussion of candidates should be avoided at all League meetings except in connection with Voters Service activities. No partisan material should be brought to any League function. Material which may not be brought to meetings includes pamphlets, clothing, buttons, tickets, or anything concerning candidates or issues the League is not studying. Only petitions approved by the Board of Directors may be circulated at League meetings.

### **II. WHO SPEAKS FOR THE LEAGUE?**

- A. Only the President(s) or a designated representative may speak for the League. Letters, news releases, speeches, etc. in the name of the League will be approved by the President(s) before release.
- B. Designated representatives of the League may not make binding commitments on major matters without the approval of the Board. When a League member attends a meeting as an official League Observer, the Observer may not speak or comment.
- C. Once the League takes a position on an issue, members may not identify themselves as League members in publicly expressing an opinion that is in opposition to a

League position.

- D. All events involving League participation, whether sponsored or co-sponsored, should be approved by the Board and be publicized fully.

### **III. PUBLICATIONS**

- A. All local League publications and handouts should include our contact information and should be authorized by the Board. When appropriate, the publications should include our nonpartisan statement and a statement that the content does not represent positions of the League of Women Voters.
- B. *Voters Guides* and other copyrighted League material should contain the statement: "Reprinting in part or in whole is not allowed without the written permission of the League of Women Voters of Tarrant County." *Voters Guides* should also include the statement: "The opinions of the candidates are their own and do not represent positions of the League of Women Voters."
- C. The *VOTER*, our newsletter, will be published at least nine times per year and sent to members, friends and community leaders and prospective members and others as needed. The *VOTER* and attachments will be sent electronically when possible.
- D. Summer *VOTER*: A summer edition of the Voter will be issued by September 1 to report to the membership on the annual meeting and State and National Conventions, as applicable.
- E. With Board approval on a case-by-case basis, the Tarrant County *VOTER* may carry announcements for the activities or fund-raising projects of other organizations if they relate directly to League program.
- F. Annual Membership Notification. By September 1 of each year, the membership will be sent: a Membership list, Board of Directors and Committees list, Budget, Program, and any Bylaws changes, Policy Guide changes, and dues changes. The following wording will appear prominently on the membership list: "FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY! USE OF THIS LIST FOR PROFESSIONAL OR BUSINESS PURPOSES IS PROHIBITED. ALL OTHER USES MUST BE AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS."
- G. Web Site. The Executive Committee will make final decisions about content that is published on the LWVTC site and will determine how long it remains online.

### **IV. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

- A. The League's nonpartisan reputation is sufficiently strong to ensure that contributions from office holders and candidates can be accepted without being construed as endorsements of those donors.
- B. Checks will be signed only by the Treasurer, President(s) or President-Elect.

C. A reserve fund of not less than \$2,500 will be maintained in a savings account. Only the President(s), Treasurer or President-Elect will be allowed to withdraw funds upon approval of the Board. In order to update signature cards at the bank that holds the League account(s), the incoming President, President-Elect and Treasurer must, together, deliver a letter of explanation that is printed on the LWV Tarrant County letterhead and signed by the President.

D. The following policies apply to the disbursement of League funds:

1. Budgeted Expenses: The Treasurer is authorized to pay ongoing expenses (rent, telephone, Internet, etc.) without further approval. The President will approve other expenses in excess of \$300. The Office Administrator's time will be approved by the President.

a) Office Administrator use of League debit card: Budgeted expenses costing \$50 or less, with proof of purchase, require no further approval. Those in excess of \$50 will be authorized by the Treasurer prior to purchase.

b) Member Reimbursements: The Treasurer is authorized to reimburse members' claims for budgeted expenses \$300 or less with proof of expenditure. All other member reimbursements require proof of purchase and the President's approval.

2. Non-Budgeted Expenses: The President will authorize payment of all non-budgeted expenses in advance of purchase up to \$500. Purchases in excess of \$500 will be approved in advance of purchase by the Board of Directors. Proof of purchase and President's/Board approval are required for reimbursement or payment.

3. Electronic Authorization/Approvals: The President may signify authorization/approval by email.

4. Alternate Authorizing/Approving Authority: During periods of absence/illness, the President may designate a Board Officer to authorize/approve expenditures in her/his absence. The authorization will be in writing and maintained with Board Minutes records.

E. The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County may carry liability, fire and theft insurance.

F. Local Board members will not accept payment by honoraria, salaries or stipends for services rendered to the local League.

G. Officers and directors of LWV-TC shall complete a conflict-of-interest statement annually.

1. Members of the local board shall not receive compensation, such as salaries or stipends, for services rendered, nor shall they sell professional services or products to the League deemed necessary to carry out the mission of the organization.

2. The executive administrator shall not be a member of the local board. (It is considered inappropriate for those earning a salary or fee to be a part of the decision making body that hires, fires, and determines salary and benefits.)

3. In any matter in which a local board member or the member's family has a substantial financial interest, the board member shall refrain from participating in the discussion prior to a vote, refrain from attempting to influence the outcome of a vote, and abstain from voting.

4. In the interest of openness and transparency, all board members, staff, and issue chairs shall sign an annual disclosure form and include current employment, current service on other boards of directors, and/or family or business relationships with voting or nonvoting LWV-TC directors or employees, whether or not deemed a conflict of interest.

## **V. PUBLIC COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES**

The Board will make all appointments of League representatives to public Boards or Commissions and to other organizations.

## **VI. CANDIDATE FORUMS**

A. Board approval is required for all Candidate Forums organized or co-sponsored by LWVTC or any unit of LWVTC. These forums will meet provisions of the LWV-Texas Policies and Procedures Section 1.7 (1) and the LWV-Texas Guide to Candidate Forums.

B. The President's concurrence is required for an LWVTC member to serve as a moderator for another organization's candidate forum. The following will apply:

1. To merit the President's concurrence, the member must have had training from an experienced LWVTC moderator; must have attended at least two forums to observe the process; and must have served as a timekeeper for at least one forum.

2. The sponsoring organization must invite all candidates and conduct the forum generally in compliance with LWV forum nonpartisan procedures.

3. The moderator will advise the forum audience that LWVTC is not a co-sponsor of the forum and takes no position on the procedures used by the organizing sponsor.

## **VII. VIDEOS**

Videos funded by LWVTC are the product of LWVTC and will be managed in accordance with LWV-Texas and LWVUS video policies and procedures.

## **VIII. CONSENSUS**

Consensus evolves from group discussion; however, members who are unable to attend consensus meetings are encouraged to submit written statements of their positions to the appropriate committee chair.

## **IX. BYLAWS COMMITTEE**

A. The Bylaws Committee will consist of three to five members appointed by the Board of Directors. This committee will solicit suggestions for change and review all bylaws suggestions submitted to it in writing by any voting member.

B. The committee will also review the local bylaws annually and submit suggested revisions to the Board. All properly submitted suggestions from members or the committee will be reported by the Board to the membership at an annual meeting with: a recommendation to 1) adopt 2) reject 3) adopt with amendment; or 4) no recommendation.

#### **X. BOARD RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY GUIDE**

The Board will review this Policy Guide annually and may revise it as desired.

#### **XI. TEXAS LWV GUIDELINES FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL LEAGUES IN THE SAME POLITICAL SUBDIVISION**

- A. Leagues considering a study that, if a position is reached, would lead to action before a political entity shared by other local League(s) must notify those Leagues of the possible study in time to allow them to consider whether or not they wish to participate in the study. Ideally, such studies should be jointly considered and jointly adopted.
- B. When two or more Leagues are in the same political subdivision, reciprocal approval is required before taking action before shared governing bodies.

#### **XII. COALITIONS AND COLLABORATIVE EVENTS**

- A. Although the League favors collaboration with other organizations, joining or withdrawing from a coalition or collaborating on an educational forum or other public event must be approved by the LWVTC Board and meet the following guidelines: 1) no admission fee should be charged for an educational forum, although donations may be suggested, and 2) when the League commits to sharing expenses using TEF funds, the League liaison must ensure TEF requirements (particularly related to publicity) are met in order to be reimbursable.
- B. The coalition's major issues should mesh with League positions or be issues of League concern, although there need not be a League position on every issue of coalition concern. The aims of the coalition must be nonpartisan and must not conflict with League positions.
- C. The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with League program and action priorities.
- D. The coalition's activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve the League's organizational, advocacy, or educational goals.
- E. 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.
- F. Expenditures for work with the coalition, including staff and volunteer time as well as cash and in-kind expenses, should be worth the investment.
- G. The League representative to a coalition of which the League is a member must have the prior approval of the League President(s) or designee before making any formal or public statement of League position on a specific issue.

Should the League disagree with the majority opinion of the coalition, a public statement of the League's dissent will be issued.

- H. If the coalition in any way participates in partisan activity, (e.g., supporting or opposing a candidate or party), then the League will withdraw from the coalition.
- I. League participation in a coalition and the representative to the coalition will be approved annually by the LWVTC Board.

#### **XIII. OFFICE AND EMPLOYEE**

If the League is financially able to do so, it may rent an office and hire an office worker. A Board member will be designated to supervise the office worker, and all work should be scheduled through the designated Board member. An annual Performance Review will be conducted by a personnel committee selected by the President with the approval of the Board.

#### **XIV. COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY**

The League of Women Voters of Tarrant County, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in, and commitment to, diversity and pluralism. LWVTC does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or political persuasion.