

Observer Corps are a structured way for individuals to exercise their right to know. They provide a valuable service to the community. They help ensure that citizens are aware of the decisions that impact their lives, and they promote government transparency and accountability. An observer is an individual who attends a governmental meeting, notes what happens at the meeting, and reports back to the League and through the League to the community. By attending public meetings of local governmental bodies/agencies, observers learn more about what their government is doing. They learn about the issues facing their community and are empowered to take action, if warranted. They also learn how issues are being addressed. Observers keep elected and appointed officials on notice; they let them know that someone is watching what decisions are being made and how they are being made. They help ensure that the issues facing their community are being handled “in the sunshine,” in the open. Ideally, observers are monitoring both the issues being discussed as well as the process by which they are being discussed. While not every item up for discussion will relate to a League’s priorities, ensuring that the meeting is being conducted in an open and acceptable way is critical to all of the League’s efforts and the health of our democracy. Observer programs are not vehicles for individuals to work personal or partisan agendas. Observers generally do not “act” on issues in these meetings unless serving as a designated spokesperson for the League; observers should not provide commentary or testimony on issues on behalf of the League. Instead, observers attend meetings to gather information. Through the process, their presence encourages better, more transparent government.