



Legislative Interview Kit 2021-2022

****Legislative Interview Reports Due February 28, 2022****

Introduction

Every year, the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC) encourages local League members to interview their state legislators or staff. Legislative interviews are a powerful tool - increasing League visibility, gathering information, and raising awareness among California's state representatives about our interest in policies they are considering.

Get a Head Start

We're getting preparatory material out to you now so that you can start scheduling interviews and coordinating with other Leagues in your Assembly and State Senate districts. We also encourage you to begin brainstorming the question about an important local issue that your League will ask your representatives. By **Wednesday, December 1**, we will release an updated version of this kit that includes questions.¹

Legislative interviews are an opportunity for legislators to share their priorities with local Leagues and develop an understanding of League positions and priorities. Local Leagues discover plans for state legislation that may impact their communities. Furthermore, the state League learns more about legislators and the interests of local Leagues, gaining information useful in planning statewide advocacy and education.

Use interviews to become better acquainted with your legislators and their staff. It's a chance to emphasize that while the League never supports or opposes candidates or parties, we are a political organization, and after thorough study and consensus we take positions on issues.

While some Leagues may prefer to meet their legislators and/or staff in person, most will opt for online meetings. Although this isn't the same as face-to-face interviews, our hope is that using an online platform will give you more flexibility and make the process easier for all involved, including by simplifying scheduling, note taking, and sharing of resources.

¹ The three main questions this cycle will be related to water, mental health, and redistricting. As always, we will also ask you to explore the personal priorities of the legislators and ask an optional question related to local concerns.

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Making Democracy Work: An Equity Lens

The League of Women Voters of California applies an “equity lens” by analyzing what we do from the perspective of how it impacts underrepresented individuals and communities. Legislative interviews offer an excellent opportunity to develop representative League leadership and add rich, diverse perspectives to your work.

In that spirit, we encourage you to front end diversity, equity and inclusion in legislative interviews by proactively reaching out and including League members and and potential members who are young, Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, have disabilities, are in the [LGBTQI+ community](#), or otherwise underrepresented.

The Legislative Interview Process

Advance work by League interview team members is essential to success. This is a short-term project that includes preparation, the interview, and wrap-up. It’s advisable to hold a few organizing meetings for your team, especially if it includes people who are new to the process.

1. **Schedule the interview.** This can take time so start early!

- While some Leagues may prefer to meet their legislators and/or staff in person, it’s fine to conduct these interviews through Zoom or some other online platform.
- If a legislative district encompasses **multiple League districts** please coordinate your visit among the relevant local Leagues. The [Local League Legislative Directory](#) lists all of the local Leagues in each district (legislators will be updated post-cavass). If you wish to schedule separate interviews because you have different issues to discuss with a particular legislator, feel free to do so.

It is critical that you keep all other Leagues in the district informed if you choose to schedule a separate interview.

- While it is important to try to get an appointment with the legislator, it may be difficult to schedule. Cultivating a relationship with the district director or other staff involved in legislation (as opposed to constituent services) can also be very valuable. If a meeting with the legislator is not possible then ask to meet with staff who have a substantive role in legislation.

2. **Assemble your interview team.** Teams of three to five members are ideal.

- Coordinators should try to include at least one person with a long-term League background, someone with a history of working with the legislator,

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someone well versed in the relevant issues, new and young members, and people from underrepresented groups to develop representative League leadership and add diverse perspectives.

- Check [the FAQs](#) for recommended meeting roles and responsibilities.
3. **Prepare the team.** Hold advance meetings to go over interview roles and the questions and topics to be covered.
 4. **Prepare materials.** There are a number of substantive materials we offer associated with each question and [general resources](#) provided for your team's use. You can also develop a set of materials to [send to the legislator's office](#) either ahead of time or afterwards.
 5. **The interview.** Read over [interview etiquette tips](#) and the [FAQs](#) for detailed recommendations.
 6. **Wrap-up and report back**
 - Review reports to be sent to the LWVC and presented to your membership. This should happen as soon as possible after the interview.
 - Please fill out the online **Legislative Interview Report Form by February 28, 2022**. This makes it easier for us to compile and analyze your responses effectively. **The form will be available on December 1 along with the questions.** Please let us know if you need help using the online report form by emailing Andrew Muse-Fisher at amusefisher@lwvc.org.

Interview Etiquette Tips

- ★ Be prepared. Study the background materials and the substance of the topics covered in the interview questions.
- ★ Follow your assigned role on the interview team and make space for underrepresented voices among your teammates.
- ★ Opinions expressed should be only those of the League, not of individuals.
- ★ Do not overstay your welcome - stick to the time allotted for the meeting.
- ★ **Secure the legislator's permission and specific conditions under which you may print any part of the interview in a VOTER or other newsletter. If you plan on recording the meeting, make sure you get the legislator's permission to do so.**

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FAQS for the Legislative Interview Process

Should we send the questions we plan to ask beforehand?

Our recommendation is **not to share the actual interview questions with your legislator in advance**. We believe there's a clear benefit in legislators' unrehearsed responses. The purposes of an in-person interview are to look the representative or their staff in the eye, hear their tone of voice, and get a sense of their interest in an issue. In addition, this gives the legislator an opportunity to interact with our local League members and develop or further an ongoing relationship. A preformed statement of positions that could simply be mailed to us fails to accomplish these goals.

Please feel free to share the issue areas (water, mental health, and redistricting) with the representative in advance so that they may broadly prepare themselves for your questions. Tell them that the specific questions asked by your interview committee will come from those issue areas.

How do we divide up roles?

Here are some ideas about roles and responsibilities derived from prior experience.

Team Leader

- **Make the appointment.** Contact the legislator's local district office. Be persistent. **Ask for an hour, but accept less if necessary.** If you cannot get a meeting with the legislator, ask to meet with the district director. They are often extremely well versed about everything going on in a district and in the legislature. At the very least, make sure that your visit is scheduled with someone involved in legislation and not solely in constituent services. Your visit will still be noted and remembered.
- **Confirm.** Send the legislator and staff a message confirming the appointment, mentioning the topics you will discuss. **(Do not send a copy of the "Questions," "Background," or the "Legislative Interview Report Form" sections of this kit that will be available on December 1.)**
- **Set a team prep meeting.** Brief the members of the team on interview etiquette, determine the role each member will take, and discuss each participant's responsibilities as an interview team member. If your team includes members of historically underrepresented communities, please ensure that other members step back to provide an opportunity for that voice and perspective to be heard.
- **Make introductions.** Lead off the introductions at the start of the interview and invite League members to introduce themselves.
- **Watch the clock.** Pace the interview and tactfully keep everyone (including the legislator) on the subject. You will know in advance how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, and allot an appropriate amount of time to each question.
- **Send a thank you.** Write a follow-up thank you after the interview. A thank you note gives you an opportunity to underscore points made at the interview, answer

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any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication you may have referred to during the course of the interview.

Researcher

- **Background.** Brief the other members of the interview team on the legislator's relationship with the League and his/her voting record. What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the legislature?
- **Check legislator's League membership.** Is the legislator a member of your League or another League in the district? If they aren't a member, then the interview team should ask the legislator to join the League.
- **Check bill history.** Check the [LWVC Bill Status Reports](#) for the past few cycles for information about bill(s) your legislator authored and the League either supported or opposed. You can dig even deeper by checking the legislator's history using [California's legislative information site](#). You may want to take a moment to express the League's appreciation or disappointment about a particular bill on which the state League took a position, and briefly state the League's position.
- **Keep a digital research file.** The information you develop should become part of an ongoing file about each legislator.

Background Briefer

- **Team briefing.** Inform team members as to League positions and history on the interview question topics.
- **Team discussion.** Lead a discussion with team members about the background information on question topics and the substance of the interview questions.
- **Legislator briefing.** If your legislator is new or does not know the League well, plan to spend some time talking about the mission of the League and briefly explain the difference between the League's advocacy and education roles. Describe how we take positions on issues.

Recorder

- **Document.**
 - ✓ Have the interview questions in front of you.
 - ✓ Make note of bills or policy objectives mentioned by the legislator.
 - ✓ Make note of requests for information or League materials from the legislator.
 - ✓ Write up the material from your notes promptly.
- **Debrief.** Conduct a debriefing with team members shortly after the interview.
- **Report.** Complete the online report form by **February 28, 2022** (available December 1). Responses received by this date will be the most useful for action on League priorities.

What materials should I provide?

Before or after your interview we recommend sending an email attaching or linking to materials.

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- **Membership information** from each local League represented. Ask the legislator and staff members present to join!
- **League publications.** Send links to publications that are appropriate and relevant. You can send the League's [Action Positions and Policies](#) as a way to help elucidate the areas in which we work. And you might include publications like a local Facts for Voters and copies of local League newsletters.
- **[Voter's Edge](#).** Tell the legislators about [Voter's Edge](#) and ask them to spread the word. Voter's Edge is our unbiased online elections guide covering federal, state, and local races in California. With over 2 million users each in the 2018 and 2020 elections, the site allows candidates to reach voters with direct, unfiltered messages and in-depth information about priorities *at no cost*. Voters access a full, personalized ballot by address, learn about candidates and issues, get clear explanations of ballot measures and find out who's funding them, and check where, when, and how to vote. Check [here](#) for more info and links to flyers. You can also order [Voter's Edge bookmarks](#) and send them as a post-meeting thank you!

Are there resources to help our team prepare?

You'll find resources related to the substance of the questions linked to throughout the "Background" sections associated with each question and sometimes a few more listed at the end. Here are some general resources.

[District maps](#) from the California Citizens Redistricting Commission

Find your:

- [Legislators](#)
- [Assembly Districts](#)
- [Senate Districts](#)

[Local League Legislative Directory](#). Please let us know if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues. Legislators' names will be updated post-canvass.

[League Leader Contacts](#). Please contact amusefisher@lwvc.org if you need the password.

[LWVC Bill Status Reports](#). Information about bills on which the LWVC has taken a position and recommends action.

[LWVC Advocacy Resource Directory](#). A comprehensive set of resources organized by issue area and type of organization with a short description of the nature of each resource.

[LegInfo](#). California's comprehensive online site for legislation and law. Scroll down the homepage to click through to "other resources" for more useful information.

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[California Legislative Analyst's Office](#). The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has provided fiscal and policy advice to the Legislature for 75 years. It is known for its fiscal and programmatic expertise and nonpartisan analyses of the state budget. In addition, the office estimates the fiscal effect on the state and local government of all proposed initiatives (prior to circulation) and prepares analyses of all measures that qualify for the statewide ballot.

Legislative Scorecards. While other organizations' scorecards may not align with League positions and priorities, they do offer good insight and substantive information about legislators and their voting history. Some are [collated by Ballotpedia](#). Here are links to a few we recommend checking.

- ★ [Courage Campaign](#)
- ★ [ACLU](#)
- ★ [Sierra Club California](#)
- ★ [California Chamber of Commerce](#)
- ★ [Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association](#)

Who do I contact with questions?

If you have any questions about the interviews, please contact LWVC Vice President for Advocacy and Program, Gloria Chun Hoo at ghoo@lwvc.org or LWVC Trudy Schafer Fellow for Public Policy, Andrew Muse-Fisher at amusefisher@lwvc.org.