



## **Convention/Council Manual**

Updated 2013 and 2024

**League of Women Voters of Virginia**

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## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

The League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWV-VA) Conventions historically have been 1-1/2-day long meetings held in late April (after the 20th) or early May in odd-numbered years. In 2013, the state Convention was moved to the first weekend in June to be more in line with how other states are organized and to move it closer to the end of the fiscal year. Plans for the state Convention are made by the state board in cooperation with the host local League. The Convention considers and adopts Program; elects officers, directors, and the nominating committee; adopts a budget for the following year; and transacts such other business as may be presented. Each local League is entitled to delegates as outlined in the current LWV-VA Bylaws (Article VII).

Councils are held at the same time in even-numbered years at which each local League is represented by the president (or her alternate) and one delegate. Council gives guidance to the state board on Program and methods of work and transacts such other business as may be presented. The Council is authorized to change the program only in the event of an emergency, if the procedures outlined in the bylaws are followed. The state board usually meets the day preceding the Convention or Council.

Before going to a two-year budget process in the mid 1990s, Council was having an overnight affair in order to provide enough time to consider and approve the yearly budget. Since that time, Council has evolved into a luncheon-only meeting or half a day virtual meeting, becoming an overnighter only for the board and a few delegates who have a long distance to travel and prefer to stay overnight. It has remained a luncheon-only meeting or virtual meeting even though LWV- VA has returned to an annual budget.

This manual outlines the responsibilities of the state board, state office\*, host League, and Convention and local League arrangements chairs for formulating and executing the plans for a successful Convention/Council. Both Convention and Council planners may use this manual, since the major difference between the two meetings is the number of delegates attending and the accommodations needed. This booklet is intended to be used as a guide; local conditions may necessitate some alterations. A Convention packet supplements the manual with samples of the various forms and reports used.

\*State office is used interchangeably with state president and/or executive director.

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## I. CONVENTION/COUNCIL SCHEDULE

The following tasks should be accomplished during the suggested months preceding the next Convention/Council. If a Council is virtual, the State President will appoint a Board member to assist with arrangements.

Immediately following Convention/Council:

- Board decides on the date and site of the next event and appoints a state Convention/Council chair (which can be the State Event Coordinator).

August-September:

- Convention/Council chair reports to the state board on appointment of local League arrangement chair(s)—if any—and the formation of a Convention Committee. This committee is comprised of members from all parts of the Commonwealth, not just the host league.
- Initial exploration for the hotel takes place.

December-February:

- Progress report from state Convention/Council chair on hotel arrangements.
- Tentative written agreement with the hotel is completed.
- Preliminary Convention budget and potential speaker(s) discussion by state board.
- Request submitted to local Leagues for program suggestions, bylaw changes.
- Issue "First Call" (bylaws deadline at least 3 months; may also be published in the winter *Voter*).
- Tentative PMP sent to local Leagues.
- Speakers invited by the Convention Committee.

March:

- Return deadline of suggested program/bylaw changes from local Leagues (2 weeks before board meeting).
- State board approves proposed program, budget, and bylaw changes and accepts the nominating committee report.
- Board decides on a tentative agenda, workshops (if any), speaker(s), participants (delegates, observers, visitors, and guests), and approves registration and banquet fees.

April:

- Proposed state budget and program (if any) sent to local Leagues (6 weeks before Convention/council date).
- Information on registration fee, number of delegates allowed each League, workshops, schedule, and local League publications/wares sales sent to local Leagues.
- Annual reports due from state board members.
- Issue "Final Call" (bylaws require 30 days before Convention/Council, but 6 weeks is preferable). Include Convention schedule, workshop agendas, speaker(s), registration and banquet fees, a map to site, and if not previously sent, delegate/visitor/observer & hotel registration forms.
- Final contract with the hotel is executed.

May:

- Deadline for return of registration forms (should be two to three weeks prior to Convention/Council).
- Workbook posted to members only website; password for members only website sent to delegates after registration received.

June:

- State Convention/Council chair and local League arrangement chair(s) -if any - prepare Convention/Council evaluation and report to the state board.
- State office checks with the reading committee; sends out minutes.

## II. PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

### A. CONVENTION LODGING (For Council, see paragraph 3 of Introduction)

1. Sleeping rooms for approximately 55-65 local League delegates, observers, state board members, staff, visitors, etc. Most of the rooms should have two double beds. There may be some requests for singles. Attendance may vary with scheduled events and travel arrangements.
2. The state board usually meets the day preceding Convention/Council; therefore, sleeping rooms will be needed for the night preceding the event for state board members.
3. In past years, an accumulation of approximately 30 sleeping rooms over the two-night period is necessary in order for the hotel to provide, free of charge, small meeting rooms for Convention.
4. Room arrangements for delegates (including roommates) are the responsibility of the individual local Leagues or the delegates from each local League, who communicate directly with the hotel.

### B. MEETING AND ACTIVITY ROOMS

1. Meeting Room for Plenary sessions: This room should be large enough to seat 55-60 people in "classroom" style with narrow tables. Extra chairs should be available. A speakers' skirted table seating four and a podium with microphone should be provided. If served during the Plenary session, refreshments may be in the foyer/hall outside the meeting room or at the back of the meeting room. Ice water and cups must be available in the Plenary session room and on speakers' table. An additional skirted table for publications or wares at the back of the large meeting room or in the foyer/hall will also be needed.
2. Other activity/workshops rooms: One or two meeting rooms (seating 30 people classroom style) may be needed. The Plenary session room can be counted as one of those rooms. Avoid holding two workshops in one large room. It is possible that the hotel will provide these rooms free of charge. (See # 3, Lodging)
3. Board meeting: A room with table (long or square) with seating for approximately 12 will be needed in the afternoon/evening preceding Convention/Council. It can be one of the small meeting rooms (See # 3, Lodging)
4. Registration space: Skirted table in the hall/foyer outside Plenary session room, with two chairs. "Registration Table" signs and directional signs to functions may also be needed.
5. Luncheon and/or banquet room: Should be large enough to accommodate more than the anticipated delegate attendance. Local League members, workers, and guests may wish to attend, especially if a special program/speaker is planned. Ideally, the luncheon or banquet room should not be the same room where the Plenary sessions are held. However, not all facilities can provide two large rooms.

### C. EQUIPMENT/IT

1. Microphones and speakers: One microphone at the podium at front of room; one floor microphone; and one for banquet/dinner (if a speaker). Equipment should be checked before the beginning of each Plenary (and is usually provided by the hotel for set up and rental fees).
2. Projector/screen/laptop: As needed for PowerPoints, videos, Zoom (if offered).
3. Wi-Fi capability and password for meeting needs and attendees.

4. Zoom connection, laptop on which to connect to Zoom, large room screen (if Zoom participants are to be visible), and means of connecting laptop to screen. Note: The State Board may decide to hold Council via Zoom. Convention should be held in person unless there is a public health issue or other emergency to be considered. A Convention may be hybrid if the Convention Committee can hire a certified IT person to handle voting etc., which is approved by the State Board.

### III. STATE BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

#### A. BOARD MEETING FOLLOWING EACH STATE COUNCIL/CONVENTION

1. The state president contacts the local League to ascertain its willingness to host the Convention/Council and requests that a local League arrangement chair be appointed. The state board selects dates for Convention/Council. The Convention Committee is statewide, not just consisting of members of the local league. A member of the Convention Committee can replace the local League arrangement chair.
2. The board appoints a state Convention chair. If off-board, this person should attend all state board meetings when Convention matters are on the agenda. The Convention chair should have some experience with a state Convention and work well with the state president.

#### B. EARLY FALL

1. State Convention chair meets with the local League arrangements chair, to jointly tour the facilities and obtain estimated costs. The state Convention chair and treasurer should prepare a proposed Convention budget and set a registration fee for approval at the next state board meeting.
2. The State Convention chair reports to the board.
3. Board discusses tentative Convention agenda, considers, and decides on small group meetings (if any), agenda, procedures, workshops, special events, and speaker(s). The following questions should be asked: Should there be outside speaker(s)? Who should be the speaker(s)? When during the Convention should the speaker(s) be scheduled to speak? If the speaker(s) are to be invited, several alternatives should be selected.
4. State treasurer sends a memorandum detailing voucher procedures to the state Convention chair and the local League arrangements chair.

#### C. FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Everyone planning workshops or special events or making presentations at the Plenary session reports arrangements and equipment needs to the state and local League arrangements chair.
2. State program director sends a reminder to local Leagues regarding procedures for submitting suggested program (emergency only for Council) and bylaw changes. The deadline for return of these proposals should be at least two weeks before the state board meeting at which they are to be approved.
3. State Board picks the “theme” of Convention.
4. The state board holds preliminary budget discussion. If a PMP increase is proposed, notice of such intention should be sent to local Leagues before January (to aid local Leagues in preparing their proposed budget).

#### D. THREE TO FOUR MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. At its winter meeting (either February or March), the state board finalizes:
  - a. The registration fee and deadline (these should be based on Convention budget and recommendations of state treasurer);
  - b. Which off-board chairs are to be delegates, and which are to be observers; which guests to invite; and what expenses are to be covered by state;
  - c. Workshop information to be sent with Final Call;
  - d. The agenda and its timing.
2. Contact local Leagues regarding wares/publications that they may wish to display/sell and remind them to bring currency for change or other means of accepting payment.
3. Board approves the following items, **to be sent to local Leagues six weeks before Convention:**
  - a. Proposed state program
  - b. Proposed state budget
  - c. Proposed bylaws changes
  - d. Nominating committee report, **(to be sent to local Leagues at least 30 days before Convention).**
4. State president appoints the parliamentarian.

#### E. SIX WEEKS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Nominating committee chair submits biographical sketches of nominees to state office.
2. State president appoints board and off-board members to tasks (i.e., resolutions committee, timers, readers, vote counters, credentials committee, etc.)

#### F. AT PRE-CONVENTION STATE BOARD MEETING

1. State president provides the Convention chair with seating arrangements for speakers' table at luncheon or dinner/banquet.
2. The board takes care of last-minute details, such as adjusting the timed agenda.
3. Convention chair reviews the role of board members and assigns tasks.

#### G. AT CONVENTION

1. The state president announces the following appointments: parliamentarian, election chair, credentials chair, three-member resolutions committee, and three-member reading committee for minutes.
2. The state president advises the Convention that observers and visitors are not permitted to vote and do not have the privilege of the floor unless special permission is granted. Off-board state liaisons and chairs, nominees for state board, and members of the budget and nominating committees are considered observers unless they are delegates of their local League or designated delegates by state board.
3. The seated state secretary takes the minutes.
4. The state president thanks the state Convention chair, local League arrangements chair and host League and invites a local League to host the next Convention and/or Council.

#### H. FOLLOWING CONVENTION

The state Convention chair and local League arrangements chair give an evaluation report to the state board along with suggestions for updating this manual; changes to the guidelines will be approved at a fall state board meeting. All materials (i.e., signs, manuals, etc.) are returned to the state office.

### IV. STATE TREASURER RESPONSIBILITIES

#### A. PRE-CONVENTION

1. Assists state Convention chair in developing budget for Convention, including registration and other fees for local League delegates.
2. Collects and deposits registration and other fees on a periodic basis.
3. Coordinates with state Convention and local League arrangements chairs to pay bills that must be handled before the Convention. If requested, provide sufficient petty cash funds to cover minor disbursements before and during Convention. These monies must be accounted for by receipts/vouchers returned to the state treasurer at the close of the Convention. Any bills that do not have to be paid immediately should be forwarded to the state treasurer for payment.

#### B. AT CONVENTION

1. Provides needed cash for Convention.
2. Sets up a primary account with the hotel for state board expenses.
3. Controls all monies collected at Convention for additional registration fees or fundraising events unless, by mutual agreement with the person in charge of the event, the funds are to be forwarded later.
4. Pays all bills due and payable during or at close of Convention.

#### C. POST-CONVENTION

1. Keeps an account of all receipts and disbursements for the Convention, using basic standard bookkeeping procedures.
2. Presents a final budget analysis to the state Board when the treasurer believes all Convention accounts are settled.

### IV. STATE OFFICE/PRESIDENT/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

#### A. GENERAL

Email copies of all Convention/Council mailings to the state Convention and the local League arrangements chairs.

#### B. FALL FOLLOWING EACH STATE COUNCIL

Emails state Convention chair and local League arrangements chair copies of the Convention manual, Workbook, committee reports (if any), budget, and minutes from the previous Convention.

#### C. THREE MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION

Sends local Leagues "First Call" (bylaws change deadline is 3 months; remind editor to put in *Voter*).



#### D. SIX WEEKS BEFORE CONVENTION

Sends to local Leagues:

1. Proposed Program
2. Proposed bylaw changes
3. Proposed budget
4. Nominating committee report (deadline: 30 days)
5. Number of delegates to which each League is entitled
6. Registration forms for Convention, meals, special events
7. Directions to Convention site, with map (provided by state Convention chair).

#### E. ONE MONTH BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Sends local Leagues "Final Call to Convention," which includes:
  - a. Information on optional workshops, provided by appropriate on/off-board chairs, or others.
  - b. Information on special events.

#### F. THREE TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Makes hotel room reservations for state board members and any guests LWV-VA is paying for (e.g., LWVUS liaison or other board member).
2. Prepares Workbook (see files); one is provided for each delegate and includes:
  - a. Proposed Order of Business
  - b. Convention Rules
  - c. Program Adoption Procedure
  - d. Proposed Budget
  - e. Slate of Nominations
  - f. Proposed Bylaw Amendments
  - g. Proposed Program
  - h. LWV-VA Bylaws
  - i. Basic Parliamentary Procedures
  - j. Committee and Director Reports, if any
  - k. Treasurer's Report, if available.
3. Emails Workbook to parliamentarian.
4. Sends banquet invitations to special guests, e.g., former presidents, area state legislators.
5. Checklist of items provided by state office for Convention:
  - a. Locate, or purchase, timer with bell for timekeeper
  - b. Create and/or reproduce "Motion" forms to be used during Convention
  - c. Create, or locate, signs for microphone attendant (or presiding officer): "Requesting Information," "Point of Order," "Parliamentary Inquiry," "Pro," and "Con."
  - d. Prepare (or monitor preparation of) primary lists of state board attendees, delegates (by local League), volunteer workers, etc.

#### G. AT CONVENTION

Distributes Treasurer's Report and any material not in the workbook.

#### H. POST CONVENTION

1. Prepares minutes submitted by the secretary and sends them to the reading committee.

2. Sends approved minutes to:
  - a) LWVUS: one copy to office, one copy to VA Liaison, one copy to LWVUS nominating committee chair
  - b) LWV-VA secretary
  - c) All new and continuing LWV-VA on/off-board chairs
  - d) Convention parliamentarian
  - e) Each member of Convention reading committee
  - f) Saves sufficient copies of minutes for office use and for directors who will be appointed.
  
3. Prepares state office Convention files to include samples of:
  - a) Workbook
  - b) First Call to Convention
  - c) Final Call to Convention
  - d) Convention budget
  - e) Specifications sheet
  - f) Hotel contract
  - g) Registration forms
  - h) Evaluation from Convention and local arrangements chairs
  - i) Letters of invitation to guests
  - j) Workshop agendas.
  
4. Write thank-you letters to parliamentarian, speaker(s), arrangements chair, Convention chair.

## V. STATE CONVENTION CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. SUMMER FOLLOWING CONVENTION/COUNCIL

1. Make sure the local League arrangements chair has all the written guidelines.
2. Coordinates all Convention/Council activities with local arrangements chair such as physical accommodations needed, estimated costs, and plans for special events.
3. Works with the local League arrangements chair to select the site and ensure that the contract states total number of meeting rooms (**and which, if any, of these rooms are free of charge**), dates and times, including the pre-Convention board meeting. (See Item #3 under Physical Arrangements/Lodging)
4. Works with the state treasurer in developing the budget.
5. Works with the Convention Committee to invite speakers once approved by the State Board.

### B. THREE MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Prepare a memo for the next board meeting on meeting plans, including projected costs for rooms, food, and equipment.
2. Recommend parliamentarian to be appointed by the state president.
3. After January LWVUS Membership Count, work with the membership director to determine the number of delegates to which each local League is entitled (as per bylaws).
4. Remind all persons involved of their respective responsibilities as due dates approach (copies of all memos are to be sent to the state office).

### C. TWO WEEKS BEFORE AND UP TO CONVENTION

1. Coordinate with state office names of delegates, workshop attendees, and other registrants in order for preparation of appropriate name badges to be worn during Convention.
2. Coordinate with convention committee the names of volunteers/workers for name badges.
3. Oversee, or compile, primary lists of delegates by local League, volunteer workers, workshop attendees, banquet attendees (with menu choices), and/or other categories of registrants.
4. Make sure banquet/lunch food choices are communicated to the hotel by appropriate deadline(s).

### D. FOLLOWING CONVENTION

1. Prepare an evaluation of the meeting and report to the state board.
2. Arrange for delivery of Convention materials to the state office.

## VI. Convention Committee Responsibilities

A. Decorations/Flowers: 1) at Plenary session: usually on speakers' table, 2) at banquet/dinner: usually on head table and individual tables. Flower table decorations at the banquet normally are not provided by the hotel.

### B. Volunteers

The number of volunteers needed will depend upon the size and configuration of the meeting rooms being used and the location of the rooms inside the hotel. In some cases, volunteers can serve double duty by switching when one job ends and another begins; registration clerks will most likely be finished with registration and thus could become ushers or doorkeepers, if needed. Nominees can be volunteers if they are not delegates.

All floor personnel should wear clearly marked badges, hats, aprons, etc. in order to be quickly identified by participants needing assistance. A floor committee chair can be assigned to coordinate personnel and equipment, or the job can be handled by a member of the Convention Committee.. All volunteers' names should be sent to the state office for name badges to be made for them. All volunteers should report at least 30 minutes before they are needed. Following is a list of jobs to be covered at each Plenary session:

1. **Doorkeepers** (for each door into the meeting room) are responsible for admitting only those persons showing a Convention badge and cautioning late arrivals to be quiet and not disturb the proceedings. After a session has been called to order, doors can be closed. No one is admitted while a vote is being taken.
2. **Ushers** are responsible for distributing and collecting motion slips; running errands; and collecting evaluation sheets and badge holders at the end of the final session.
3. **Timekeepers:** Positioned to face the speaker (delegate) and time them according to the rules adopted at the beginning of the first session. They will need a timing device that can measure seconds, timecards (separate cards with "minutes/seconds remaining"), and a timer bell to signal when time is up (all supplied by the state office).
4. **Microphone attendant** (should have some training in simple parliamentary procedure): Will need a small sign reminding delegates to give name and local League before speaking. Have available

five signs in distinctive colors saying, "Requesting information," "Point of Order," "Parliamentary Inquiry," and "Pro" and "Con." (If there is no floor microphone, another volunteer will assume these duties.)

5. **Registration Clerks:** Should remain at the registration table until all delegates have arrived.
  - a) They should be familiar with the layout of the hotel and location of events in order to help the attendees.
  - b) Registration should start at least 30 minutes before the first Plenary Session. (Traditionally, registration has started in the morning (8:30 or 9:00 a.m.) before the first Plenary session that begins after lunch.)
  - c) State board members will register at their board meeting.
  - d) Hand out any papers not in the delegate Workbook.
  - e) Check off the registrant's name on the appropriate reference list.
  - f) Give appropriate name badge; delegate badges generally are not transferable.
  - g) Volunteer lists and name badges will also be on the registration table.
  - h) Inquiries about refunds, or if all fees have not been paid, must be referred to the state treasurer.
  - i) Keep all materials until the meeting ends, then turn them over to the state Convention chair.
  - j) Keep accurate records for the credentials report to be given at the beginning of each Plenary session.
  
6. **Credentials:** The state president will announce the name of the credentials chair at the opening Plenary session. The credentials chair obtains the latest figures from the registration clerk(s) immediately before each Plenary session and then reports to the Convention each day the attendance, stating the numbers in categories as follows: delegates/state board members/observers/visitors/workers. This report should also be given in writing to the state secretary.

## **VII. LOCAL LEAGUE ARRANGEMENTS CHAIR (IF ANY) RESPONSIBILITIES**

*If no local arrangements chair, then Convention Committee handles these duties.*

### **A. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Establishes a friendly relationship with hotel personnel and deals directly with the hotel.
2. Keeps the local League president informed on all aspects of the Convention.
3. Consults with the state Convention chair on all decisions regarding arrangements.

### **B. SUMMER FOLLOWING CONVENTION/COUNCIL**

1. Identifies possible Convention sites (see Physical Arrangements section).
2. Obtains room rates and meal costs from several hotels.
3. Arranges with the state Convention chair to tour the prospective facilities together.
4. The state Convention chair selects the Convention site to propose to the state board.

### **C. FOUR MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION**

Gives a tentative schedule, with required facilities, to the hotel as soon as it is available. Schedule can be revised, as necessary. It is important to keep the hotel informed of schedule changes.

#### D. THREE MONTHS BEFORE CONVENTION

1. If a hotel is handling sleeping room reservations, request directions to the Convention site with a map be sent to the state office so it can be included in Final Call.
2. Local League arrangements chair or convention committee confers with the state Convention chair on the number of local volunteers needed. The total number will depend on the size, configuration, and arrangement of the Plenary session room and the other activity rooms at the chosen hotel.

#### E. ONE MONTH BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Obtains a detailed, timed schedule of events for the entire Convention from the state office.
2. Coordinates the schedule with the meeting rooms, equipment, and personnel needed for each time during the Convention. Sends a copy to the state office. Have a copy available at all times during the Convention.
3. Arrange pick-up of signs and equipment from the state office.
4. Supply the state Convention chair and/or state office with names of volunteer workers for name badge preparation.

#### F. DURING THE WEEK BEFORE CONVENTION

1. Confirm with the hotel a detailed, timed agenda that includes all space and equipment needs.
2. Arrange for a microphone attendant, if one is needed, to have some training in simple parliamentary procedure.

#### G. AT CONVENTION

1. Do not leave the hotel until the last delegate has checked out.
2. Try to start out well-rested! Then, stay calm.
3. Check on EVERYTHING. Is registration going smoothly? Is the coffee served when needed? Is the sound system working? Do lights work in the meeting rooms? Is it too hot, too cold? Etc.
4. Be prepared to make quick decisions. Expect emergencies—and don't let them throw you.
5. Keep in mind that you will never be able to please everyone!

#### **6. HAVE A GOOD TIME AND KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR.**

#### H. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING CONVENTION

1. Give Convention materials (signs, evaluation forms, etc.) to the state Convention chair.
2. Send evaluations and recommendations for updating the manual to the state Convention chair and to the state office (may want to meet with the state Convention chair to evaluate the meeting).