

League observers are an extension of the League into their community.

Observers:

- wear a League pin - if asked explain that they represent LWV (local or regional)

- arrange to be on email list to receive agenda

- listen, observe - especially action items - and take notes

- are discrete and courteous

- know the function of agency

- know the jurisdiction (city, county, region)

- learn the names and titles of agency/board

- know time, place of meeting

- are familiar with the open government laws - Brown act

 - both what is required to be in open sessions and what does not need to be disclosed

For the short report (a paragraph or two) from the observer try to include the following:

- who attends, who is absent from the board

- how is the meeting being conducted

 - announced in advance as required?

 - agenda available 72 hours ahead?

 - agenda followed?

 - does meeting proceed in a professional manner?

 - are agenda items discussed or are decisions reached without discussion (this can happen when board members discuss items beforehand amongst themselves - not allowed by law - see Brown Act for specifics or this could happen whenever board members come prepared to vote and don't have any additional questions)

 - confirm that all action items are posted online

 - is the meeting venue accessible to the public?

 - do agenda items that are voted on relate to League positions/priorities?

In general League observers do not speak at meetings they observe. When comment from the League is needed, another League member will attend or write a letter to the agency head or the chair of the board. There may be an exception to this rule, but the observer should contact their liaison first. Often this may be a point of reminding the agency that not enough time was given to post the agenda or the description of the agenda item was insufficient for the public to know what was being discussed or voted on.

What does your League do with the information gathered?

- Comments to the board being observed to correct a violation of the open government laws.

- A short piece in the local and/or regional voter to educate the League members on what an agency is doing/not doing.

- Comments sometimes lead to significant changes in how an agency runs its meetings or comes to a decision on an issue if the observations lead to League testimony at the agency. If asked by someone attending the meeting why the League representative is there, the best answer is, "The League supports transparency in government. Observing this meeting is one way we support that." League observers also extend the League's visibility to their community.