

President's Counselor

Revised 2016

*League of Women Voters of Texas
League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund*



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Dear League Leader:

Congratulations! You are now president of a very highly respected organization—the League of Women Voters! As you approach your presidency you are about to embark on one of the most exciting volunteer jobs you will ever have. Your presidency will present as many opportunities for personal growth as you desire. Your term will offer challenges, but it will also provide immense satisfaction as you see that one person can really make a difference.

To be elected local League president is an honor, but the position could hardly be called honorary. As you assume your office, you undoubtedly want to do your job well. The President's Counselor provides an overview of what a local League president needs to know, and it introduces you to other places to turn for help.

Thriving local Leagues have presidents who are leaders first, then managers. Leadership styles vary among presidents, but successful League leaders have the following in common:

- a belief in the mission of the League of Women Voters.
- an understanding of the League and its work.
- a willingness to serve League members and the public.
- a willingness to work as a team.
- a desire to learn.
- a willingness to ask for help.

Guidelines for managing your job are included in this document and in the appendices. *The President's Checklist*, Appendix A, is a valuable guide to help you throughout your term of office. Other appendices which are referred to throughout this document are helpful for you and other board members.

Use this information to orient yourself to your position and as a reference when questions occur during your term. May it help you to chart a course for a League presidency that brings success to both you and your League.

Elaine M Wiant
President, LWV-Texas

RESOURCES

LWV (also referred to as LWVUS) Most national publications are now online at www.lwv.org. Click on League Management at the top right, then click on Policies & Publications.

Two particularly useful national publications are:

- **Impact on Issues** (revised every two years, after LWVUS convention) lists the national program, much of which local Leagues can use to lobby local government.
- **League Basics** contains essential policy and organizational information applicable to every local and state League.

Visit the site's blog (lwv.org – click on Blog), “friend” the national organization on Facebook (League of Women Voters of the U.S.) or follow it on Twitter (twitter handle @LWV).

LWV-Texas Find all current state publications at www.lwvtexas.org Under For League Members, click on Publications. State publications include the following and more:

- **President's Counselor**
- **Program Perspectives** (revised every two years, after state convention) contains all the state League positions, many of which can be used to take action before local government bodies. (found under the heading Positions)
- **Handbook & Directory** (revised as necessary) contains much important information
- **Policies & Procedures Manual** for Local Leagues Boards are LWV- Texas policy statements that have been developed to assist Leagues in implementing bylaws
- **Fundamentals for Local League Boards** is a state League publication that provides job descriptions for each typical League portfolio.
- **Local League TEF Projects**
- **Money Matters Made Easier: A Guide for Local League Treasurers**
- **Recording Present History: Guidelines for Local League Secretaries**
- **League Program: Study to Action in Ten Steps**
- **Guide to Voters Guides for Local Leagues**

UNDERSTANDING THE LEAGUE AND ITS MISSION

Every president should be able to articulate the mission statement in order to define the League to prospective members, contributors, politicians, and the media:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active involvement in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy

Nonpartisan means that the League never supports or opposes candidates or political parties.

The League, a good government organization, takes **political action (advocacy) only on those issues which members have chosen for study and on which they have reached member agreement**. The League is multi-issued, with positions in the general areas of government, social policy, natural resources, and international relations. Few League members agree personally on every League position, however; all members hold in common the League Principles which are the basis for the adoption of League program. The Principles are stated in *Program Perspectives* (lwwtexas.org).

The League undertakes a variety of voter services and citizen education activities that inform citizens about voting and governmental issues in a nonpartisan, educational fashion. The League has a reputation with government officials for “doing its homework” because we study an issue, and examine its pros and con before we attempt to reach member agreement on needed governmental changes. **Although local Leagues may take action based on local, state, or national positions, they do so only at their own local government level.**

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LEAGUE AND ITS WORK

The Three Level Structure of the League

To understand the League means to know how the three levels (national, state, and local) function as well as to recognize there are laws, bylaws, policies, and procedures that govern organizations. The three level structure brings us strength in all our areas of work. As a local League president, you join the presidents of the Texas Leagues and state Member at Large (MAL) Units and more than 800 state and local Leagues nationwide to provide a League presence throughout Texas and the nation.

Speaking With One Voice

One of the strengths of the League is speaking with one voice. A local League carries out the mission of the League within the boundaries it designated when it became a League. **Local Leagues that share governmental jurisdictions with other local Leagues, such as two Leagues who share elected officials, must plan together and keep each other informed of activities where the work of one would affect the other.** The *League Handbook & Directory* lists which Leagues share counties and/or elected officials.

Because of our belief in the power of the individual in a democracy, **the League structure is grassroots-based.** Members have the power to change the bylaws, approve the budget, choose officers and directors, and adopt items for study that may lead to positions. They exercise this power locally at the annual meeting, statewide at biennial LWV-Texas conventions, and nationally at biennial LWVUS Conventions. The most important thing for the president and the board to remember about League structure is that **the member is the League.** No president or board at any level should get so involved in running the League that the member gets lost. (See lwtexas.org for the state publication, *Policies & Procedures*, which includes record and document retention guidelines.)

Laws, Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures

Laws. The League is an organization subject to a variety of state and federal laws and, in some cases, local ordinances. Be sure that you and your treasurer keep up with all relevant reports and requirements. Should you ever find yourself in a lawsuit or an IRS audit, you want to have good records of what your local League has done over the years. **Therefore, be sure that your minutes are an accurate record that can be easily understood by someone who reads them a year or two from now.** Develop policies that indicate what records will be kept, who will keep them, and how long records will be kept.

Local Leagues are currently classified as 501(c)(4) organizations by the IRS - **tax-exempt but not eligible to solicit tax-deductible contributions.** Dues notices and solicitations for contributions must state that dues and contributions to your League are **not deductible** as charitable contributions.

Consult the *League Handbook & Directory* for an introduction on how to fund local projects by using the LWV-Texas Education Fund, a 501 (c)(3) organization. **Only contributions to the Education Fund are eligible for a tax deduction as a charitable contribution.**

Some local Leagues do not use the LWV-Texas Education Fund but, instead, manage their own education fund accounts. Donations to these locally managed funds are also tax deductible. Find out your Employer Identification Number (EIN). If you have a political action committee (PAC), make sure reports are filed as required or you will be fined.

Although LWVUS and LWV-Texas use memos and publications to help you learn what tax reports to file and what other disclosures you must make according to state and federal law, the basic responsibility is yours. The LWV-Texas publication, *Money Matters Made Easier: Handbook for Local League Treasurers in Texas*, is a must for understanding pertinent information on handling dues, donations and reports.

Bylaws. One of your first presidential duties is reading your local League bylaws, the official rules that govern your League. They contain necessary information such as the following:

- when directors and officers take office and their terms of office
- how many additional directors the board can appoint
- how the nominating and budget committees must be constituted and how they work
- what powers the board, president, and specific board members have—and don't have

- your fiscal year
- the time period during which the annual meeting must be held
- procedures for adopting local program
- procedures for amending the bylaws

Bylaws can only be changed by members at the local League Annual Meeting or (in the case of state and national bylaws) by delegates at the state or national Conventions. Therefore, bylaws should be so basic that they do not require frequent changes. Local League bylaws should be in compliance with the state or national League bylaws.

Policies. Each local League board should have a policy guide that lays out more specific rules for carrying out bylaws. Local League boards should have the authority to revise policy in light of changing circumstances. Each new board should appoint a committee to review the policy guide and suggest necessary changes for board approval. Because policy is for the board, the policy committee is usually composed of board members. Items that might need to be in a policy guide are:

- nonpartisanship policy
- diversity policy
- the president as official spokesperson for the League
- what records will be kept, who will keep them and for how long
- fiscal matters, such as: amount of dues, who can sign checks and contracts, frequency and types of financial reports, board members' fiscal responsibility, what to do when budget is inadequate, responsibility for fund development, reimbursement for board expenses, reserve fund, bids, insurance
- a conflict of interest policy prohibiting paid staff from serving on the board or board members being paid for board work
- fees for publications and events
- copyrighting local League publications
- use of advertising in *Voters Guides*, *Voters* and other publications (see *Policies and Procedures: A Manual for State and Local League Boards*)
- inclusion of candidates and jurisdictions in candidates forums and *Voter Guides*
- policies for clearing testimony or Action Alert responses
- use of gender-neutral language in League publications
- if you have paid staff, an Equal Opportunity policy and a personnel policy (or Personnel Manual) that addresses hiring, firing, salary, evaluation, duties, time off, etc.

Procedures. Because democracy is based on governing with the consent of the governed, the League uses **consensus as a decision-making process**. Consensus means substantial agreement among members representative of the membership as a whole. *League Program: Study to Action in Ten Steps* provides detailed information on consensus building after study to develop positions from which to take action.

Although many board decisions can be made by common consent, official decisions of importance should follow parliamentary procedure. **The minutes should record not only the decisions made on significant items but also whether they were made by common consent/general agreement or by motions and voting.**

The Work of the League

The work of the League falls into four major categories:

- Voter service and program (study and action) are the essence of what the League does;
- Membership and fund development make the first two possible.

As president, you have overall responsibility for your League and need to be sure sufficient attention is given to all aspects of the League—which includes membership and fund development along with the publicity needed to be sure the community knows about your League and its activities.

Voters Service. Voters Service work is always educational and nonpartisan. LWV-Texas has materials that provide guidance for publishing *Voters Guides*, holding voter registration drives and candidates forums.

Program. In the League, “**program**” refers to both study and action and is carried out according to procedures laid out in the bylaws and policy guide to ensure that members have the opportunity to choose items for study and participate in member agreement processes. For instance, the local League board:

- responds to member agreement generated during program planning by recommending local program items to members for adoption at annual meeting
- approves consensus questions for local studies before submitting them to members
- evaluates the results of consensus from local, state, or national studies and from program planning at all three levels to determine whether agreement has been reached
- approves the position statement that results from member agreement in local studies and the consensus report sent after state and national studies and program planning
- develops and carries out policies designed to be sure that action taken locally is based on member understanding and agreement.

League Program: the Basics (Appendix B) provides basic information about League program that presidents may find useful to share with board members.

Member Development. The League, like any organization, cannot carry out its mission without members. **Member recruitment, involvement, and retention** should be given the same, if not more, emphasis as voter service and program.

The bylaws of all three levels of the League list membership requirements. Keeping your local League membership list current by following directions and meeting deadlines is essential for a well-run League. Be sure to update the LWVUS database with new members so they can be put on the mailing lists.

Members are the League, and they are all important, no matter how much or how little time they commit to the organization. Times have changed and so must the League. Studies show that more people are volunteering than ever before but, because they have limited time and energy, they are volunteering differently than they did twenty-five years ago. They want their volunteer opportunities broken down into manageable pieces—a few hours here and a few hours there.

They are more willing to assume shared responsibilities, such as co-chairing a committee or event. Leagues that provide opportunities of this type are rewarded with dedicated members who are increasingly involved in the organization. *Dividing Typical League Activities into Small Tasks* (Appendix C) suggests many small tasks to make it easier to involve members at a level of commitment they can handle.

Most members join the League because someone has asked them to join—they respond to the personal touch. Encourage your board members to distribute membership brochures liberally and “Ask, ask, ask!” Retaining members is easier than recruiting members, so focus on renewals by:

- sending out timely renewal forms.
- following up with e-mail reminders.
- making telephone calls a few weeks after the dues deadline to those who have not yet renewed.

Fund Development. Very few League members like to raise money; this is not why they joined the League. Yet, without money, there would be no League. **Dues income alone cannot support the work of your League.** The traditional League finance drive remains popular because it gives your community a chance to support your work and is cheaper and easier to run than most event-type fund raisers. A few basics to remember:

- Fund raising is *not* a one-person job. The whole board should play some role in raising money and members should be recruited to help. Appoint a committee to help with fund development.
- The money is there if you ask for it—really!
- If you are not a born “asker,” you can acquire the necessary skills.
- People give to people; emphasize the personal touch.
- You, yourself, are a very effective fundraiser - just because you are the president.
- Your members love the League, so don’t be afraid to ask them for a donation.

An annual budget is necessary to provide the League board guidance for spending funds. The President appoints a Budget Committee to develop an annual budget, (for the board to approve and the members adopt at the annual meeting). The budget reflects in financial terms the Board’s priorities and goals. More information is available in *Money Matters Made Easier: A Guide for Local League Treasurer*.

Public Relations. Public relations is important. **Without visibility, you won’t attract members, raise money, or engage the community** in attending forums, debates, workshops, or other League events. An enthusiastic PR director is worth seeking, but, if you are unable to recruit one, split the work among several people.

WILLINGNESS TO SERVE LEAGUE MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC

All good leaders are willing to serve those they lead. **Serving members means getting to know them.** As president, use your best people skills: greet people at meetings, try to remember their names, and communicate with them through your local League VOTER. Never forget that the board's first duty is to administer the League as an expression of the collective will of its members.

Serving the public is more than just sponsoring debates and publishing voting information; **it is also about knowing your community and its needs**, especially those areas where the League can be most effective.

A DESIRE TO LEARN...AND SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS

No matter what talents you bring to the presidency—and they will be considerable—you will have more to learn about leading and managing this unique organization. How? **Arrange for leadership training**, read your mail and e-mail, consult League files, read state and national League publications, and attend League training, leadership workshops, and state and/or national Conventions. Share what you learn with your board and committees and, ultimately, with your members.

Board Meetings. Well-organized, efficiently run board meetings play an important role in determining the effectiveness of the leaders in the League. Board meetings are for making plans and monitoring progress. At a good meeting everyone has a chance to participate, but the work is accomplished in a reasonable time frame. People have busy schedules and other obligations and need to feel that their time is important. Always set a time for the meeting to begin and finish and have an agenda that allows for all the business that needs to be covered. If you set a date and put the board meetings on the local League calendar, people are more likely to attend. If you run the meeting well, board members will want to participate, do a good job, and have an enjoyable experience - and the organization will thrive. See *Guidelines for running an Efficient Board Meeting*, Appendix D.

Regional Workshops. Every other summer (when there is no state Convention), LWV-Texas holds regional workshops for all local League leaders. This meeting brings together leaders from local Leagues and MAL units with state board members to provide opportunities to gain information and to network. Watch for information in the spring: plan to attend and bring board members and emerging leaders. Regional workshops can also be a valuable way to engage new members.

Leadership Training. LWV-Texas has experienced people available to train local League leaders and members. To arrange leadership training, email the state office. A training session can be planned to meet the unique needs of your local League.

Leadership training can help build a team, set goals, and establish priorities as well as provide understanding of specific needs. Although training is available at any time, the value of taking

time for leadership training at the start of your term cannot be overestimated. The state League has a variety of means of helping you. Please reach out.

LWV-Texas Action News! You and the local League officers whose names and e-mail addresses have been submitted annually will be receiving a monthly e-mail from LWV-Texas containing information that you and your board need to know, invitations to state League events, and forms you need to return. Share this information with your board and members as needed. You can also send state office the e-mail addresses of any board members that you wish to receive *Action News!* and they will be added to the list. You will also receive other e-mail communications from the state board, as needed. Please read the material that you receive and pass it on to the appropriate board or committee member. *Action News!* is currently sent to all members the month after each state board meeting and at other times as appropriate.

The Files. As president, taking a few hours early on to skim your files will pay off as your term progresses. You will either find where things are or decide you need to reorganize. You may be able to cull outdated materials and send some to archives.

The president needs two kinds of files: those you will use routinely, and those that are primarily of historical value. In the historical file go items more than a year or two old that provide a record of what your League has done over the years: minutes, VOTERS, publications, testimony, program studies, and consensus reports. Keep state and national publications on current program items and still current how-to publications.

The files the president will refer to routinely include the following items, which should be available at board meetings:

Local items to keep in files:

- Board, committee and membership lists with names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers
- Budget adopted at annual meeting
- Program adopted at annual meeting
- Bylaws, most recent version, and policy guide
- Minutes, beginning with the annual meeting minutes
- Treasurer's reports, beginning with annual meeting
- Calendar for year, adopted early in League year
- Local *VOTERS*
- Local publications catalogue

LWV-Texas items—most current edition:

- LWV-Texas *Action News!*
- *Texas VOTER* (sent periodically to every League member in Texas)
- *We Support* (short version of current state program, published in fall after Convention)

LWVUS items – most current edition:

- *League Update* (bi-weekly newsletter from the President)

State and National Conventions, National Council, State-wide Conferences, Lobby Day and Events. Your participation in state and national events is important to the governance of your League; they feature training in leadership and managerial skills and provide an opportunity to network with other League leaders. LWV-Texas holds state convention in the spring of even-numbered years (when the legislature does not meet) and a Lobby Day during each legislative session (odd-numbered years). LWV-Texas Regional Workshops are held every other summer (odd-numbered years) to provide leadership and managerial training, updates from the state League and the opportunity for networking among local League presidents and other leaders.

LWVUS holds national Convention in June of even-numbered years and Council in odd-numbered years. Council is primarily aimed at state League leaders, but local leaders are sometimes invited. Participation in these events not only helps you learn how to do your League job more easily but also gives you inspiration, motivation, and consolation that come with sharing your suggestions and concerns with your peers around the country.

Annual Meetings. Local Leagues' annual meetings are as important to local Leagues and members as Convention is to the state and national Leagues. At the end of the fiscal year – usually in April or May - each local League holds an annual meeting to elect officers, change bylaws, and adopt program and a new budget. Minutes of the local League's annual meeting, with attachments, are to be sent to the state office as soon as possible. *Planning and Conducting the Annual Meeting*, Appendix E, includes guidelines that will facilitate planning. *Steps to A Successful Succession*, Appendix F, will be helpful for newly elected presidents.

WILLINGNESS TO ASK FOR HELP

Three places you should turn to for help on a routine basis are the state League, your board, and your members.

How the State Board Can Help. The chair of the Services to Local Leagues Committee (SLL), members of SLL or other state board members will contact you periodically during the year to keep in touch and to learn about the successes of your local League and challenges you are facing. They offer reminders of deadlines and seek to answer questions or concerns of local Leagues. Please feel free to initiate a contact, particularly through the chair or a member of SLL. In 2012, LWV-Texas joined LWVUS and other states in the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) initiative. This program trains local League leaders and supports them through a network of state and national volunteer coaches. This initiative has helped produce growing Leagues. From time to time all of us in leadership positions need impartial advice, a morale boost, or a reminder that volunteerism is worthwhile.

All members of the state board are available to serve the needs of you, the President, and your members. **If you email the the state office**, they will put you in touch with the appropriate person. They are delighted to hear from you or any member.

Help is Available From Your Own Board. The president is not only a leader but also a manager. If you manage your job by doing it all yourself, you will burn out quickly, and you will leave behind no experienced board members to replace you.

To make maximum use of the talents on your board, take time at the start of your term to examine your board structure. Is it designed to achieve your goals? If you feel that your board structure is not working well, discuss your concerns with a state board member. LWVUS has publications on a *Management Team model*, and the *ABCs of Streamlining* the board structure. (www.lwv.org – League Management, Manage Your League, Management Team Model).

No matter how your board is organized, split the work among the vice presidents and stay in touch with them frequently. The president should work very closely with the secretary and the treasurer. If you have a president-elect, it's also important to keep that person involved with your learning process and business decisions being made to lessen the learning curve when she/he becomes president. Be sure that minutes provide an official record of the actions and activities of your League. Know how the treasurer's books are kept and what is happening with the money of your League. If your League has an education fund, be sure you understand how it functions.

Getting Help from Members. Most people who belong to the League want to do something to support its work. Their problem is lack of time, not lack of interest. As the manager of your League, encourage your board members and committee chairs to compartmentalize the jobs attached to a project and ask several people each to take a small task rather than asking one person to take it all. A coordinator is needed when you divide projects into several jobs, but you can find one more easily when you tell them they won't have to do all the work alone. Just about every member of the League would do at least one two-hour job a year—if asked! See *Dividing Typical League Activities into Small Tasks*, Appendix C, for examples,

Involving members pays off not only because it splits the workload more equitably but also because it develops new leaders in the process.

CONCLUSION

Being president of your local League can be an exciting adventure and a constant learning experience. During your presidency, you will have the opportunity to learn how to:

- Help your board develop a vision for your League
- Set goals to achieve this vision and make plans to implement these goals throughout the year
- Turn your board into a productive and inspired team
- Form committees and divide up the work and responsibilities while developing future leaders
- Work with other community leaders

- Meet the needs of your diverse membership
- Work with the media
- Discover and use resources, especially those available from your state and national Leagues
- Motivate others to support the League with their time and money
- Inspire others to join this important organization
- Still have a little life of your own outside of the League

When your term as president ends, you will realize that you have been having the time of your life, but there is still so much that you want to accomplish. How about a second term?

APPENDIX A: PRESIDENT'S CHECKLIST

Note: LWV-Texas prefers that all materials be sent to state office by e-mail:
lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org State publications are available at www.lwvtexas.org – under For League Members, click on Publications.

- Fill appointed board positions after consulting bylaws, policies & board.
- **Email state office of local League board members, positions, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers quickly after your annual meeting.**
- Schedule leadership training.
- Equip each board member with necessary tools:
 - Remind them to obtain files from predecessor
 - Provide the name of state board counterparts listed in the *League Handbook & Directory*
 - Provide job descriptions (see *Fundamentals for Local League Boards*)
- Schedule calendar planning (local League's annual calendar should include dates for general and unit meetings, annual meeting, board meetings, and items dictated by state and national activities). LWV-Texas posts an online calendar (www.lwvtexas.org – click For League Members, Calendar-Local League) which includes most deadlines, election-related items, convention and state-wide meetings, etc. (see the *League Handbook & Directory* for more ideas)
- Appoint board members to nominating committee, with board approval.
- Appoint policy review committee.
- Appoint committees and chairs, with board input.
- Determine response to state and national Action Alerts.
- Determine who is responsible for sending items listed in the “Essential Checklist—What to Sent to Whom” section of the *League Handbook & Directory*.
- Determine who will send PMP payments to state and national offices.
- Determine who will update the membership database with membership changes to national office.
- Appoint bylaws committee.
- Appoint budget committee.
- Arrange for program planning.
- Consult *The Annual Meeting* (Appendix E) on planning and conducting annual meeting
- Make plans for state and national Convention; notify state/national who your delegates will be.

After Annual Meeting

- Send electronically to state office the following:
 - Updated list of board members with contact information (particularly phone/email)
 - Budget. Program, Bylaws
- Annual meeting minutes
- Current local studies and positions
- Review financial matters with treasurer and former president, review president's file
- Change signature cards, if needed

APPENDIX B: LEAGUE PROGRAM: THE BASICS

- “Program” in the League means study and action.
- Local Leagues study issues that can be addressed by local governmental entities, such as cities, counties, and school districts. LWV-Texas studies issues that can be addressed by the state of Texas. LWVUS studies issues that federal government can address.
- Studies must be factual and must examine the pros and cons of various solutions.
- Consensus questions must provide options, not lead members toward preconceived conclusions.
- The League must have a position before it can take action.
- League positions result from member study and agreement.
- Once a position has been reached after study by LWV-Texas or LWVUS, the position becomes part of the program for all local Leagues, whether they participated in the study or agree with the results.
- Leagues never lobby in the name of the League in opposition to a League position.
- Local Leagues use positions resulting from local study and consensus, and applicable state and national positions, to lobby local governmental entities.
- Only in rare instances and with clearance from the appropriate level of League do local Leagues use local positions to lobby state or national governmental entities.
- The League speaks with one voice when we speak before a governmental entity. Local Leagues coordinate action with other affected Leagues, such as Leagues in the same county when the action is before county government.
- The League speaks with one voice in the legislature and before state agencies and officials, with such action managed by the state board. Local Leagues first clear with the state board any action they want to take, based on state or national positions, before a state governmental agency, official, or the legislature UNLESS the state board has asked them to take this action. The same procedure applies to LWVUS and action before federal governmental entities.
- The state League sends mandatory Action Alerts seeking an official local League response when such lobbying is essential to success. You don’t need to clear such responses with the state board. All Leagues should respond, copying the response to the state League office. Each local League should have a system in place that allows immediate response to Action Alerts.

APPENDIX C: DIVIDING TYPICAL LEAGUE ACTIVITIES INTO SMALL TASKS

The suggestions that follow are offered to inspire your creative thoughts about how to divide up the work of the League among a greater number of members. These lists do not contain everything you need to do for a project nor are the items in chronological order.

Many of the tasks can be done in an hour or two. Some can be done at home alone. Some provide social contact. Others tap skills such as research, writing, or editing. In other words, they appeal to a variety of people.

Unless a member has said that he or she cannot do anything at all for the League this year, consider asking each member to take on one of these jobs for a specific event at least once this year.

The key to getting members to serve on committees is defining the job clearly: what you want, when it must be done, how long it will take, what help is available. Most people will accept one-shot jobs or tasks that are defined. Fewer people will take on an open-ended job, but more will do so if they know additional help is available.

Voter Registration—line up sites, assemble materials, deliver materials to sites, publicize the event, register voters, return the materials to the coordinator, write thank-you notes.

Voters Guides—seek funding, develop distribution plan, draft questions and/or cover letter for board approval, call candidates who don't reply on time, assemble replies, prepare filler material for *Voters Guide*, distribute, write articles advertising availability, handle financing. (If your Voters Guide is still prepared in hard copy - type or print, mail candidate questionnaires, stuff envelopes, proofread, arrange for printing, proofread printer's copy, pick up from printer)

Your Elected Officials—seek funding, develop distribution plan, design format, collect information (can divide by government entity), verify information, type, edit, proofread, arrange for printing, take to printer, proofread printer's copy, pick up from printer, distribute.

VOTER—compile list of desired articles, remind writers of deadlines, write, edit, type, proofread, lay out copy, arrange for printing, proofread printer's copy, seek funding, develop distribution plan, distribute, write thank you notes.

Fund Development—collect and compile list of prospects, draft letter, edit, type, print labels, draft or edit brochure, arrange for printing, stamp, label and/or stuff envelopes, personalize letters, mail letters, buy stamps, receive contributions, deposit money, keep records of contributions, make phone calls, make visits, write thank you notes, write VOTER articles, develop publicity plan, research grant possibilities, write grant proposals, plan and carry out special events.

Membership Development—invite a friend, plan recruitment events (arrange for room, write and distribute publicity, arrange refreshments, buy paper goods, make phone calls, set up room), mail materials to prospects, develop prospect list, design and print invitations, send invitations, develop, distribute, receive and/or tally interest sheets, serve on telephone tree, prepare message for telephone tree, drive members to meetings, design, produce and/or distribute nametags, send due notices, remind members of dues by phone, keep official membership records, keep LWV-Texas and LWVUS notified of membership changes, design, produce and/or distribute handbook.

APPENDIX D: RUNNING AN EFFICIENT BOARD MEETING

Efficiently run board meetings play a disproportionately important role in determining the effectiveness of the leaders in an organization. Good meetings, where everyone has a chance to participate, and the work is accomplished in the time allowed, mean a lot to people who have busy schedules. Presidents have many opportunities to make board meetings enjoyable experiences. If you run the meeting well, people feel good, and they want to participate, they do a good job, and the organization thrives.

At Your First Board Meeting talk about the meetings themselves and the norms for behavior, such as these:

- Board members commit to start and end on time (meaning that if someone is not there, you will start without them, and they may not disrupt the meeting to catch up when they arrive).
- Board members commit to coming to the meetings prepared for plenary work and avoid doing committee work in plenary sessions.
- Board members commit to length of the meetings. (2 hours monthly for a board meeting is probably average).
- Board members commit to a year's worth of board meeting dates that are acceptable to board members (During Calendar Planning, dates are set ahead and placed on the League calendar, so that board members will not miss these important meetings).

Keep Board Members Informed Between Meetings—and Inform Yourself

- Distribute mail in a timely fashion. E-mail makes this easy, but you have to actually do it!
- E-mail or telephone board members to check their progress in their areas of responsibility.
- Attend committee meetings when possible, and request a report on those you can't attend.
- Attend state and national meetings and report back to the board.

Prepare for Board Meetings

- Catch up on your League reading.
- Talk to your vice presidents and other key board members to see what they anticipate bringing to the board meeting; they should check with those working with them.
- Anticipate what will happen at the meeting in order to plan an accurate agenda.

Prepare an Agenda and Distribute It to the Board the Week Before the Meeting

- Note items from your contacts that need board discussion or action.
- Check the bylaws for impending deadlines needing board attention.
- Check your local League's annual calendar.
- Check the LWV-Texas calendar at lwvtexas.org; click on LWV-Texas Local Leagues.
- Check for LWVUS calendar deadlines.
- Check last month's minutes for unfinished business.
- Review minutes from a comparable time period last year to see if any items are pertinent.
- Time your agenda so people know how much time they have and so you can move them along if they exceed time limits.

- Begin with minutes and treasurer's report; then vary the order of reports from month to month so the same people are not always last.
- If you find the board doing committee work during plenary, consider starting with 30 minutes of committee time to improve the quality of what comes to plenary.
- Determine how to share news that does not require board discussion, such as thank you notes, conference invitations, etc. Some suggestions are:
 - use a consent agenda
 - send a preboard memo with the agenda to board members
 - clip the items to a clip board and pass around during the meeting
 - limit announcing such items which takes up valuable time better spent discussing more important issues
- If you are a chair of the local League Education Fund as well as president of a League, please make sure that the meetings of the two organizations are absolutely separate: separate agendas, minutes, budgets, treasurer's reports, with any educational work to be funded by the education fund discussed in detail during that meeting.

Preboard: Consider whether a preboard mailing sent with the agenda would help your meetings flow more smoothly. A preboard can contain background on items that will require a lot of discussion, such as draft consensus questions. The preboard can also contain announcements, invitations, correspondence, and the items that do not really need discussion. The president can write it, but it is preferable that all board members with something useful to submit do so. It can be e-mailed as is; it does not make any difference if it is not formatted properly since only the board will see it.

At the Board Meeting

- Start on time, even if you are the only member in attendance; you cannot vote without a quorum, but you can have reports without one. Once members know the meetings will start on time, they will get there on time.
- Give members the opportunity to adjust and approve the agenda. Once committed to it, they give you the authority to move them from item to item as the schedule demands.
- The president's role is to preside, not to dominate. Give others the chance to talk. Suppress the urge to play a big part in discussion. Presidents do not vote unless there is a tie. (See *Robert's Rules of Order*)
- End the meeting with a recap of who has agreed to do what by when. Take notes so that you can follow up after the meeting to be sure things are going as planned. Ask the Secretary to have the minutes ready to distribute within a week.

Typical Agenda Items

- Administrative matters:
 - Minutes: Additions and corrections. Approved as corrected.
 - Treasurer's report: Previous balance, expenditures, income, current balance, assessment of fiscal soundness. File for professional review or audit.
 - President's report: Key items that will not show up elsewhere, and assessment of state of the League. Keep your report short and curtail the recitation of invitations and correspondence received.

- Organization matters:
 - Membership: current count, including number who have joined since last meeting and how it compares to last year; prospects - plans for recruitment, involvement, retention, and orientation.
 - Units: plans for meetings, assessment of how they are progressing.
 - Finance: plans, goals, prospects, needs, results.
 - *VOTER*: deadlines, assignments, plans.

- Program matters:
 - Reports on studies in progress; action planned and taken, plans for results of meetings on program items; approval of consensus questions, position statements, consensus reports, and program planning consensus.

- Public Relations matters:
 - Voters Service: plans for *Voters Guides*, candidates forums, voter registration drives; questions to be approved.
 - Publications: availability, purchase, publication, distribution.
 - Publicity: plans, results, speakers bureau.
 - Merchandise: tee shirts, cups, pins, totes, etc.

APPENDIX E: THE ANNUAL MEETING

Annual Meeting is the high point of the local League year. Its purpose is business, but the setting is often social. Presidents must ensure that the meeting is planned to allow members to take stock of the previous year and chart the League's course for the next year—and have fun doing so!

A successful Annual Meeting not only determines the direction that the League will take by adopting program, a budget, revising bylaws and electing leaders, but also inspires members to renew their commitment to the League and to take an active part in implementing the plans made.

After reading the tips that follow, develop a time line based on bylaws requirements. Work backwards from the date the board sets for the Annual Meeting. Include:

- activation of budget, bylaws and nominating committees
- proposed program, budget, and bylaws changes, and nominating committee report
- deadlines by which members must be notified of proposed program, budget, and bylaw changes, and must receive the nominating committee report
- publication schedule for Annual Meeting Workbook/*VOTER* in which members are notified of registration deadlines for meals and speaker related deadlines.

The Role of the Bylaws. Because the League is a grassroots based organization, local League bylaws lay out many requirements that relate to the Annual Meeting. Their purpose is to ensure that members are informed about and active in making the key decisions that determine the League's activities for the coming year.

At least four months before the Annual Meeting, presidents should review the bylaws, make a list of what they require, delegate the necessary work, and see that it is completed. While having a speaker at the Annual Meeting is optional, complying with bylaws requirements is not.

Local League bylaws usually address the following related to the Annual Meeting, found in several sections of the bylaws:

- time period in which the meeting must be held, which is based on the fiscal year set in the bylaws
- quorum required to conduct business
- bylaws amendments—procedures, notifications requirements; votes required for passage. Bylaws should be reviewed annually, but there is not always a need for change.
- Program adoption process—procedures and time period by which members suggest ideas to board, which then proposes a program of study and action to the members based on this input; procedures for handling not-recommended items; notification requirements; votes required for passage.
- Budget adoption process—fiscal year; procedures for changing dues; roles of budget committee and board; notification requirements; votes for passage
- Elections—duties and composition of nominating committee; opportunity for nominations from the floor; notification requirements; election procedures; votes required for passage

Informing the Members. League boards use a variety of methods to inform members of the proposed program, budget, any bylaws changes, and the report of the nominating committee. Some satisfy the bylaws requirements for notification by publishing and mailing an Annual Meeting Workbook; some put the required information in their *VOTER*. Allow adequate time for typing, proofing, printing, and mailing. Set realistic time limits for board approval of the proposed program, budget, and any bylaws changes. While the nominating committee usually submits its report to the board as a courtesy, the board takes no action on it.

At the Annual Meeting, bring extra copies of the workbook or *VOTER* article, copy recommendations onto large newsprint sheets, a flip chart or a Power Point presentation to be sure attendees know what is being considered. Use of charts and other visual aids and presentations by a variety of people help hold attention.

To take stock of the past year, some Leagues have each board member make an oral report at the Annual Meeting; most have the president do a summary to save time; and some publish a written report.

Presiding at the Annual Meeting. A realistically timed agenda is essential! Adhering to it faithfully will ensure that maximum time is spent where it matters (program, budget, bylaws changes) and minimum time spent on routine items (minutes, treasurer's report, elections). Giving copies of the agenda to the members helps control use of time.

Adapt the sample agenda to your needs. (e.g. If you have no bylaws revisions, allow only a couple of minutes for the chair to say so; if you anticipate controversial changes, allot adequate time for presentation and discussion.)

Presidents and parliamentarians need a detailed agenda listing the vote the bylaws require for passage (majority, two-thirds majority, three-fifths majority), the person making the presentation, and the time allowed.

Presidents should familiarize themselves with basic parliamentary procedures and the parliamentarian should have a copy of the bylaws and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. The LWVUS online publication *Parliamentary Guidelines* is helpful (search lwv.org).

Smaller Leagues can often conduct the meeting without writing special rules. Bigger Leagues find it helpful to have written rules; a state or national Convention Workbook is a source of appropriate ones. The most commonly used rules limit length of speeches; allow someone to speak more than once only if all others who wish to speak to the item have done so; and alternate pros and cons arguments in debate.

Sample Agenda for Business

Call to Order; quorum present
Welcome and Introductions
Adoption of convention rules, if any
Appointment of parliamentarian, timekeeper, etc.
Minutes of last meeting
Treasurer's Report
Annual Report (usually given by president or key board members)
Report of bylaws committee; discussion; vote (usually comes first in case changes affect subsequent business)
Presentation of proposed program; consideration of non-recommended item; discussion; vote (includes votes to retain or drop current program items as well as to adopt a new study)
Presentation of budget; discussion; vote (usually comes after program discussion in case adopted program requires adjustments to budget)
Report of nominating committee; nominations from floor; election of officers, directors, and off-board nominating committee members
Other items: directions on program study and action; "I Wish the League Would...", awards, etc.
Thank you from previous president (if needed).
Address by new president
Adjournment

The business meeting can precede or follow the social part of the meeting, but the agenda should allow adequate time to conduct business.

Divide the Work. Planning and holding a successful Annual Meeting is not a one-person job. Presidents should assign one knowledgeable person to coordinate it; many Leagues assign this role to the organization vice-president. The bylaws require the board to appoint several committees. In addition, the coordinator should seek members to handle meeting arrangements, speaker arrangements, production of the Workbook or the *VOTER*.

Asking many people to play a role at the Annual Meeting helps to ensure a quorum. Many jobs are short, definable, and easy for a new member. Here's a list of help typically needed:

- President – presides
- Secretary – takes minutes, reads minutes of last Annual Meeting or reports that they were approved by committee and when
- Treasurer – presents report from start of fiscal year to present
- Program Vice-President – presents proposed program
- Other Program people – presents proposed study
- Budget committee chair – presents proposed budget and dues increase
- Bylaws committee chair – presents proposed amendments or reports that bylaws review produced no recommendations for change
- Nominating committee chair – presents proposed slate
- Parliamentarian – advises president
- Timekeeper – times debate or discussion
- Membership chair – collects dues for coming year

- Publications chair – displays and sells League publications and merchandise
- Hospitality helpers – greets members and guests, passes out name tags, collects fees for meals, etc.
- Publicity chair – arranges media coverage, if appropriate

After the Meeting is Over. The board should discuss what worked and didn't work. Leave suggestion for next year in a file with all relevant materials.

A Social Setting. To encourage member participation from year to year, make the Annual Meeting fun to attend. Allow time to discuss business; League members have lots to say! Serve snacks or couple the meeting with lunch, dinner, or brunch. Invite a stimulating speaker if time permits.

About Speakers: Most speakers are happy to be invited over the phone but will want a letter or e-mail to confirm the date, time, place (with directions), time allotted for their speech, topic upon which you have agreed they will speak, size of audience, and contact person. About two weeks before the event, confirm arrangements with the speaker. If you invited an elected official, recognize that other duties may cause a last minute cancellation; have a contingency plan in place.

Most speakers won't expect an honorarium from the League, but clarify that you cannot afford one even though you know they deserve it. If at all possible, offer to pay travel expenses if they must travel any distance. If a meal is involved, ask them to be your guest and arrange for someone or the local League to pick up the tab. Tokens of appreciation are fine, but a thank you letter is a must!

APPENDIX F: STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION

When it is time for a new president to take over, a few simple steps will make the succession a smooth one:

- Encourage the incoming president to attend LWV-Texas Regional Leadership Workshops or the LWV-Texas State Convention.
- Be sure your files are up to date. Pass on files, not piles.
- Familiarize your successor with the filing system and the contents.
- Remind the new president of the importance of the bylaws.
- Provide the president with the *President's Counselor*, indicating highlights.
- Show your successor the most important state and national publications.
- Suggest a working calendar to help him/her know what to do when.
- Make sure the state and national offices are provided the new president's address, e-mail address and phone number. Both national and state are using e-mail to communicate with local Leagues.
- Suggest ways to distribute information to board members.
- Discuss how the League is perceived in the community and how to build on that to work with public officials and the media.
- Clarify that you understand things will be done differently and that you believe the League will gain strength from the change in leadership.
- Share other things that you know will make the job easier.
- Offer to help when asked but remember that, once the new president takes office, you are no longer president.
- Enjoy your new life as a former president, knowing that the talents you have shared have made a difference in the League and the community!