



Information for the New League Member

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase the public's understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

What Does the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) Do?

Studies

We study key community issues at all levels of government in an unbiased manner. We have program committees that meet to explore a single topic and standing committees that continually follow issues. We ask our members what they want to learn about and encourage them to participate in the study process. We run public forums on topics of interest to the community. The League produces two types of studies: first, informational studies designed to enlighten members about a topic; and second, studies leading to positions from which the League can advocate or take action.

Programs

LWVFA has monthly programs from September to June. Information on the program is contained in each month's *Fairfax VOTER*, which is available on the website at www.lwvfairfax.org. LWVFA meets in neighborhood units throughout the Fairfax area. Each unit generally meets on a designated day or evening during the second week of each month to explore issues affecting our communities and families. Members can choose unit meetings at a time and location convenient to them. New members are encouraged to attend any convenient monthly meeting since it is easier to participate in a group discussion. Members who do not participate in units are encouraged to respond to the discussion questions directly by sending responses to the Unit Director.

At least once a year, LWVFA holds a general meeting and an annual business meeting for all members. All meetings are open to the public.

Voter Services

In Virginia, there is a federal, state, or local election every year; so, annually the LWVFA:

- Holds candidate forums and "Meet and Greet" programs.
- Produces the following publications:

- **What's on the Ballot:** A list of all the candidates, bond issues, and constitutional amendments on the November ballot that we hand out to the public in the fall and available on our website.
- **Vote 411:** Questions posed by the League are answered by candidates and published online prior to the November election.
- **Facts for Voters:** A booklet listing our national, state, and local officials and important public offices, which is published each January and distributed through libraries and other public spaces. It is also available on our website.

Voter Registration

We hold voter registration events in high schools, college campuses, and New Citizen events. In addition, we provide opportunities for voter registration and voter education at multiple community events throughout Fairfax County and Fairfax City.

Action and Advocacy

The League acts only after study and member agreement on an issue, which is called “taking a position.” To act locally, there must be a League position on the issue at the local, NCA, state, or national level. Using these positions, we:

- Testify before our elected officials.
- Contact public officials regarding pending legislation or public policy decisions.
- Write news releases and editorials.
- Send action alerts to our members requesting that they take action as **individuals**, based on a League position.

Only the co-presidents or their designee is authorized to speak for the League. However, we encourage all members to contact their public officials as **individuals**, whether or not they agree with a League position.

LWVFA has seats on a variety of Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) boards and commissions; members are appointed to serve on these. Interested members are encouraged to contact the office at league@lww-fairfax.org.

LWVFA encourages members to become part of our Observer Corps and attend Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meetings, School Board meetings, etc., and report to the LWVFA Board.

Fundraising

Fundraising supports our Voters Service activities and publications. LWVFA receives donations for running condominium and community elections, and we rely on our members to volunteer for these. In addition, we often receive donations from members and units. Corporate donations are solicited as well.

There are two separate entities that make up LWVFA and monies can be donated to either. LWVFA's Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) educational organization; donations to it are tax-deductible. Education fund activities include citizen education and voter services. The General Fund is a 501(c)(4) organization, and its funds can be used for activities, such as lobbying, that are meant to influence legislation. Lobbying is an attempt to influence

legislation, ballot questions, or budget proposals by transmitting a point of view to elected officials or their staff or urging the public to act.

Who Can Join the League?

Anyone, 16 years old or older, may become a member of the League of Women Voters.

How is the League Organized?

In the United States, the needs of individual citizens are served by national, state, regional and local levels of governments. These levels of government are separate but interdependent. The League of Women Voters (LWV) is similarly organized. Each level of the LWV, which is governed by its own elected volunteer board, interacts with its corresponding level of government.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), headquartered in Washington, D.C., addresses concerns at the federal government level, and keeps in touch with the membership through the internet. Their website is www.lwv.org.

The League of Women Voters of Virginia (LWV-VA) is comprised of local Leagues within Virginia and addresses concerns at the state government level. The LWV-VA periodically publishes the *Virginia Voter*, an electronic newsletter. Their website is www.lwv-va.org.

Local Leagues in the Washington Area have combined to form an Inter-League Organization (ILO), the League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (LWVNCA) to address issues that cross the jurisdictional lines of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Their website is www.lwvnca.org.

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) focuses on Fairfax County and the cities and towns that fall within Fairfax County's boundaries: Fairfax City, Clifton, Herndon, and Vienna. It communicates with its members through the *Fairfax VOTER* ten months a year, ENews, Facebook, and Twitter.

LWVFA's contact information is:

LWVFA
4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale VA 22003
703-658-9150 www.lwv-fairfax.org
E-mail: league@lwv-fairfax.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/lwvfairfax

Membership in LWVFA results in simultaneous membership in all League levels. A portion of a member's dues is sent to each League level; this is called PMP (per-member-payment.) Only a small percentage remains with LWVFA. LWVFA activities are primarily supported through fundraising.

League Positions on Issues

LWVUS' positions are called *Impact on Issues* and can be found on the website at <http://www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition>. These positions fall into the categories of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy. LWV-VA and LWNCA positions can be found on their respective websites. LWVFA's positions, called *Here We Stand*, can be found under the **For Members** section of our website.

How Are Positions Developed?

There are four major steps:

- The League selects an issue to be studied.
- The League studies the issue in a non-partisan, unbiased and objective manner.
- Members come to agreement about the issue using either consensus or concurrence.
- Based upon the result of the consensus or concurrence, a position is adopted.

The process for developing positions begins with the selection and adoption of the program. Ideas for new study issues start at the "grassroots" level, reflecting a particular interest of an individual member or a unit. Some evolve from a community concern. Members may express preferences on already existing positions and recommend new study items. This is done at LWVFA's annual meeting. Both local and national topics are considered in even numbered years, and both regional and state topics are considered in odd numbered years.

When proposing a program item for study that might lead to a position, the following criteria should be considered: Can the issue be resolved by government action? At what level? Does the League already have a position at any level that could address the specific issue? Can the League's involvement make a difference? Is there enough enthusiasm for the topic? Do we have the resources to work on it?

Once a program item is adopted at the annual meeting, a program committee/team made up of interested members is organized to study the topic selected. This group is responsible for pulling the information together and examining all sides of the issue so that the information presented to members will be balanced and objective.

The program committee/team devises 'questions for discussion' outlines. Members then answer the questions from which program, consensus and/or concurrence reports are made.

***Consensus** is agreement among a substantial number, **not just a simple majority**, of members, reached after study and group discussion. It is the "sense of the meeting." Consensus does not require unanimity. The presence of disagreement may be noted as a minority opinion, but this does not imply taking a vote.*

***Concurrence** is the act of agreeing with, or concurring with, a position reached by another League, or LWVFA study committee, task force, or board. Concurrence is achieved by member agreement.*

The program team/committee, after considering the consensus or concurrence reports, recommends the exact wording, in broad terms, of the position. The Board then makes any change it thinks appropriate, and this becomes LWVFA's position. After the local Board has

formulated a position, it is announced to the members in the *Fairfax Voter* and the board can begin taking action on it immediately.

Once a position is established, action encompasses everything that is done, through the political process, in support of League positions. It may include providing information to the public and building public opinion, lobbying, testifying at public hearings, issuing media releases, writing letters to editors and officials, or even marching on “city hall.”

All positions must be re-adopted by members at annual meetings in order to retain official status. Upon approval by the membership, the position becomes part of *Here We Stand*, LWVFA’s local positions. These positions determine the League’s advocacy agenda.

LWV-VA, LWFVNCA, and LWVUS program items are handled similarly. LWVFA recommendations are sent to the appropriate level of League to be acted upon by delegates at the respective conventions.

Board Meetings

All members are welcome to observe the Board anytime. Meetings are usually held the third Wednesday morning of the month via Zoom or at the Packard Center, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale.

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