

# **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA**

## **GENERAL POLICY**

*AMENDED JANUARY 24, 1998*  
*AMENDED JANUARY 24, 2009*  
*AMENDED OCTOBER 12, 2013*  
*AMENDED NOVEMBER 26, 2014*  
*AMENDED OCTOBER 31, 2015*  
*AMENDED JANUARY 14, 2017*  
*AMENDED JULY 8, 2017*  
*AMENDED OCTOBER 13, 2018*  
*AMENDED JULY 11, 2020*  
*AMENDED OCTOBER 10, 2020*  
*AMENDED DECEMBER 3, 2022*

**This General Policy is provided for the guidance of members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska (LWVNE) and the state Board of Directors to assist them in carrying out their duties.**

## **REVIEW AND AMENDMENT OF THE GENERAL POLICY**

**This LWVNE General Policy shall be reviewed in even years at a fall state board meeting. Any proposed amendments to the LWVNE General Policy presented at a board meeting shall be voted upon by the state Board of Directors.**

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## **PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES**

### **Purposes**

The purposes of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska are to promote political responsibility through the informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

### **Belief**

LWVNE believes democratic government in the United States depends upon informed and active participation.

### **Nonpartisanship**

LWVNE does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. LWVNE takes action on selected governmental issues and policies in the public interest. LWVNE encourages its members as individuals to actively participate in the political process.

### **Membership**

Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of LWVNE shall be eligible for membership. Persons at least 16 years of age who join the League shall be voting members. All others who join the League shall be associate members.

### **Voter Services**

The purposes of LWVNE Voter Services are to inform the public about registration and voting procedures and to provide factual and unbiased information on issues and candidates. Local Leagues are encouraged to provide voter registration opportunities and report their activities at board meetings and in the Nebraska *VOTER*.

### **Principles**

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes democratic government depends upon informed and active participation and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education, which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international organizations and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

The League is fully committed to ensure compliance – in principle and in practice – with LWVUS' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy.

## **NONPARTISAN POLITICAL POLICY**

The nonpartisan policy protects the good name of the League of Women Voters. Members of the state and local League boards shall adhere carefully to the nonpartisan political policy of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). The purpose of formulating nonpartisan principles is to clarify and establish proper procedures for state and local League officials. Public perception of the League is an important part of this policy.

This policy applies to LWVNE board members but not to their families.

**The Nominating Committee shall apprise all prospective board members of the policy.**

### **A. Nonpartisan Policy**

Specific procedures to implement this policy include:

The president, the action vice president, voter services director and the office administrator shall avoid political activities that may give the appearance of partisanship.

Other state and local board members are encouraged to participate in political activities but must first consult the board if they are in doubt as to whether their activities could compromise the League's nonpartisanship.

A board member shall NOT run for office in a partisan race or accept a partisan appointment.

A state board member may accept appointment to, or run for, a local political office if

- a. the election does not require a party affiliation;
- b. the board of the local League involved gives approval; and
- c. the state League board approves.

### **B. Party Support**

Board members other than those designated in Paragraph A are encouraged to be active in their party affiliation if their activities will not jeopardize the League's nonpartisan policy.

Board members may contribute financially and may maintain contacts with political parties and leaders. Before a board member accepts a high-visibility position in a political party, the board member shall contact the board for review of the assignment. Such party positions may be held after board review and approval. With the exception of the president, board members may attend party conventions as delegates.

### **C. Social and Other Media**

A board member shall not indicate their political affiliations or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, nor on social networking sites or other public venues that also prominently identify the individual as a member of the LWVNE board.

### **D. Membership on Other Boards and Committees**

Members of the LWVNE Board of Directors may serve on Election Boards.

In all instances where the partisan or nonpartisan status of a board, commission or committee is questionable; where the purpose of the commission or board may be in conflict with League position; or where visibility is associated with a specific political activity, the state board should be contacted to determine if the board member can remain on the state board while serving in such capacity.

### **E. Appointment of League Members to Nonpartisan Commissions and Boards**

LWVNE encourages League members, including all members of LWVNE Board of Directors, to apply for positions on government commissions and boards such as the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission and Nebraska Library Commission. LWVNE may recommend League members as appointees to act as informed and active participants in government.

## **F. Additional Clarification**

Board members shall present questions about specific situations to the board when the policies do not resolve the question.

## **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

### **A. Place**

No League meeting shall be held in a place that is known to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation.

### **B. Speakers**

If a request for a League speaker is made by an organization that is known to discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation, it shall be up to the discretion of the LWVNE president or the action vice president, after discussion with the board, to determine if such speaking engagement presents an opportunity for education, or should be declined.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)**

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation, and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS**

- A.** At the expiration of a term of office or upon resignation, each board member should make sure that important documents related to that portfolio are up to date on the shared Google drive for the incoming director. In cases when digital files are not adequate, such as legal requirements to retain the treasurer's financial records for a period of years or a supply of printed brochures, banners, etc., these materials should be physically delivered to the incoming director. Arrangements should be made for materials of historic value to be delivered to appropriate archives.
- B.** Each board member shall hold a briefing meeting with the successor to the office. The meeting may be by telephone, email or in person. The outgoing board member in conjunction with the office administrator shall inform the successor about the state League's shared Google drive and make sure that the new board member has access to it.
- C.** Each board member should submit a written report of activities prior to regularly scheduled state board meetings. Each board member shall submit a written annual report for the annual meeting.
- D.** Board members should forward a copy of pertinent correspondence electronically to the League office at [office@lwnbraska.org](mailto:office@lwnbraska.org).
- E.** Board members should periodically read and update their volunteer descriptions.

- F. Unexcused absences from two consecutive board meetings or three unexcused absences from board meetings in a biennium shall be considered a resignation from the board. The president shall notify the board member in writing of each unexcused absence.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

- A. Board members may serve on non-League advisory boards except in cases where serving on the advisory board and the LWVNE Board of Directors at the same time may result in a conflict of interest. Spouses and other family members may serve in any governmental capacity without affecting the status of the board member.
- B. Board members may not lobby legislators, other than their own and speaking for themselves only, if in opposition to a League position.
- C. If a conflict of interest problem arises from employment and/or volunteer activities, the board should be notified.
- D. Board members may not accept stipends or grants for League projects while sitting on the policy-making board of the organization that is responsible for administering the grant.

### **STATE BOARD MEETINGS**

#### **A. Regularity**

Regularly scheduled board meetings shall be held. In the event of a meeting cancellation, all board members shall be notified of the cancellation and the re-scheduled meeting date.

All regular board meeting dates shall be set when the year's calendar is made and the schedule shall be posted on the League website and in the *Nebraska Voter*.

Local Leagues are encouraged to list the dates for the state board meetings on their local calendars.

#### **B. Agenda**

The president is responsible for a written agenda to be sent prior to board meetings. It should include information on proposals for discussion and decisions to be made at that board meeting.

#### **C. Agenda and Report Guidelines**

Requests to make a presentation at a board meeting or to place an item on the agenda shall be made to the state president promptly after the agenda draft is received and a minimum of eight calendar days prior to the board meeting unless there is an urgent issue to be addressed, at which time the president and office administrator shall be notified as soon as possible. Reports for a board meeting should be received at least five days before the meeting.

#### **D. Review of Minutes**

The president shall appoint readers to review the minutes draft and report back to the secretary within two weeks of receiving the draft.

#### **E. Distribution of Minutes**

Minutes of each board meeting shall be sent to all board members, local League presidents and members-at-large within 30 days after a meeting and placed on the shared Google drive. The January board minutes shall be available one week before the legislative priority board meeting.

- F. **Retention (Holding) of Minutes** State board minutes shall be saved on the shared Google drive and shall be available to anyone on request. State board minutes shall be printed and saved annually in a folder and sent to History Nebraska every five years.

## **G. Summary and Communications**

Items of general interest from state board meetings shall be included in the ensuing *Nebraska VOTER* via individual articles and/or reports presented by officers and directors. Items of special interest or of an emergency nature shall be circulated to all members as soon as possible via email.

## **H. Open Meeting Policy**

All LWWNE Board of Directors meetings are open to the public.

## **I. Local League Representatives**

Local League representatives to the state board are members of the board and shall have the same duties and responsibilities as others on the state board.

## **J. Additional Attendees at Board Meetings**

A standing invitation is extended to the chair and members of the Nominating Committee, coordinators, study committee chairs, members-at-large and local League presidents. All League members are encouraged to attend board meetings.

## **STATE BOARD EXPENSES**

### **A. General Expenses**

Board members shall submit vouchers with receipts for expenses, either for reimbursement or as a contribution. Expenses incurred pursuant to their duties shall be reimbursed within the financial capabilities of the state League. The voucher is available on the shared Google drive.

### **B. Convention/Council Expenses**

Expenses of state League delegates to national conventions and national councils shall be reimbursed within the financial capabilities of the state League.

## **ACTION**

### **A. Authorization**

The LWWNE president and/or action vice president are authorized to take League action on League priority bills in the legislature in accordance with League position and policy and when the need arises. The president and/or action vice president shall report all legislative action to the board at the next board meeting or in an email before the next board meeting.

### **B. Local Action on State Positions**

Local Leagues may take action on the local level under a state position. Local League presidents shall give prior notice to the state League president or action vice president of any local League action that pertains to a state position.

### **C. Jurisdictional Boundaries**

A local League may extend its jurisdictional boundaries for advocacy efforts when:

1. A particular action issue on which the local League has been working involves governmental entities immediately beyond the local boundaries;
2. Interviewing, monitoring or other means of gathering information needs to be done outside the local area to adequately address the local issue;
3. Advocacy will be enhanced by presentation of the local League position to the surrounding area;
4. The jurisdictional extension will not be within that of another local League unless the two local Leagues are working cooperatively on the issue; and

5. Clearance has been obtained from the state League president or the action vice president and action is within appropriate League guidelines.

## **LOBBYING POLICY**

**A. Registered Lobbyist.** A registered lobbyist for the League may perform the following functions on behalf of the League:

1. Call out a senator from the session to discuss League priority bills and League positions;
2. Contact senators in person or by telephone, mail, fax or email to discuss League priority bills and League positions; and
3. Testify before a legislative committee.

**B. League Member**

1. With the knowledge and permission of the president or action vice president a member may give testimony before legislative hearings. A written copy of any testimony shall be provided to the president and action vice president before presentation to the legislative committee.
2. When a specific request is made by the president or action vice president, a member may discuss, within a designated time frame, a League position with a state senator face-to-face. During that period of time, a member may call any senator out of the session or may write to or call any member of the executive, judicial or legislative branches to promote the League position.
3. A member may contact their own senator to discuss a League position.
4. League members are encouraged to speak to, email or write any persons in government about any issue they wish, whether or not a League priority, when they are speaking on their own behalf.

## **ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE DAY**

- A.** All League members are encouraged to attend the annual Legislative Day.
- B.** League priorities to be promoted on Legislative Day are determined by the board based on recommendations from the Legislative Day action team. A separate board meeting is scheduled to determine the recommended priority bills.
- C.** When there are sufficient funds, folders about the League and information about its legislative positions and priorities are disseminated to the senators or to their staff members.
- D.** Members meet with senators or members of their staff to promote the League's positions regarding the legislative bills chosen by the state board.

## **RELATIONS WITH LOCAL LEAGUES**

**A. Calendar**

The state League shall assist local Leagues in planning their activities by setting up a League calendar, including deadline guides, as soon as possible after the beginning of the League year.

**B. Per Member Payments for Student Memberships**

LWVNE does not assess PMP for local Leagues' student memberships.



**C. Exchanged Material**

LWVNE encourages local Leagues to share information, resources, publications and ideas with other local Leagues.

**D. Local Leagues Should Send to the LWVNE Office Administrator:**

1. A copy of pertinent correspondence from local board members to national board members or officers.
2. A list of members with updates as they occur.

**RELATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC**

**A. Representation in Other Organizations**

No one may represent the League in any organization except a duly appointed representative from the board. The board will determine the extent of cooperation with other organizations insofar as that cooperation adheres to the principles of the national League.

**B. Statements Made in the Community**

Statements made in the community, including the media, in the name of the state League may be made only by the president or a duly authorized representative. Such statements shall be saved on the shared Google drive.

**C. Disagreement with League Position**

State board members who may not agree with League positions shall not express their disagreement publicly.

**D. Financial Contributions to Other Organizations**

The League does not make financial contributions to other organizations except those working cooperatively in a League program field. Each request for a contribution requires board action. The League does not contribute funds to non 501(c)(3) organizations.

**E. Speaker Requests**

The state board shall reimburse state League speakers for their expenses within the financial capability of the League.

**F. News Releases**

The state League president and action vice president are authorized to release statements to the media regarding League action or League positions.

**AVAILABILITY OF MEMBERSHIP ROSTER**

The roster of state League members generally is not available to any organization or individual outside the League. Response to each request shall be determined by the board.

**COALITION POLICY**

- A. The board shall decide whether to join a coalition.
- B. When the LWVNE joins a coalition, a representative shall be designated by the board to participate in the planning and implementation of coalition activities. The president or action vice president shall provide the coalition with the League representative's contact information.
- C. The League representative, if not a board member, shall become a non-voting member of the state board during the time they are that representative.

- D. The LWVNE president shall notify local League presidents and members-at-large that the League has joined a coalition and shall provide same with the name and contact information for the League representative on the coalition.
- E. A committee of the president, action vice president, and any director of a portfolio involved will decide when to join informal coalitions, or whether to be involved with advocacy work with the state League's coalition partners on specific issues and proposed legislation.
- F. A list of coalition memberships shall be made available on the LWVNE website.

### **CO-SPONSORSHIPS OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

- A. The Board of Directors shall determine if the LWVNE shall sponsor a meeting or event with one or more co-sponsors. The board shall appoint a representative from the League to work with the other co-sponsors to plan and coordinate the joint meeting or event.
- B. The League president shall provide local League presidents and members-at-large with all necessary information regarding the co-sponsored meeting or event as soon as such information becomes available.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **A. Nebraska *VOTER***

The Nebraska *VOTER* is the official communication vehicle between the state League and its members.

#### **B. VOTE411—Online**

The board may request funding from the Education Fund for VOTE411 in federal election years. An evaluation after an election shall be conducted to determine the degree of usage by the public and the candidates as a basis for continuing to offer VOTE411. The grant request form is available on the shared Google drive. The form also can be requested via email to the chair of the Education Fund Committee and/or LWVNE treasurer.

### **CRITERIA FOR CANDIDATES PARTICIPATING IN FORUMS OR DEBATES**

- A. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Election Commission (FEC) rules state that a nonviable candidate can be excluded from participating in a nonpartisan debate. The sponsoring organization must have articulated clear, fair, reasonable and objective bases for determining which candidates shall be invited.
- B. The League believes the purpose of a candidate debate or forum is to inform citizens in a responsible and civil manner. Some individuals file for elected office with no intention of campaigning and the League considers these individuals to be nonviable candidates.
- C. The League requires that a candidate must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to participate in a debate or forum. They must:
  1. Meet the state constitutional requirements for the elective office;
  2. File or announce publicly their intention to file for an office; and
  3. Exhibit some evidence of a formal campaign such as a manager, treasurer, an office, contributions or other visible organizational structure.

## **GUIDELINES FOR GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE VENTURES**

### **I. Grant proposals to organizations outside the League**

- A.** Obtain information in writing from the organization offering the grant, including:
  - 1. Purpose, objectives and criteria of grant.
  - 2. Organization's contact(s) for the grant.
  - 3. Name(s) of League project administrator(s) for grant, if awarded.
  - 4. Time factor, including the date the grant was announced or known and the date the proposal is due.
  - 5. Amount requested from granting organization.
  - 6. Expectations of the League, including in-kind and monetary support to execute proposal.
  - 7. When and how requested funds will be paid.
- B.** The president shall work with the League project administrator(s) in the writing of the proposal. Before it is submitted, the proposal must be approved by the state Board of Directors during a regularly scheduled meeting or by email vote and/or action by the board's Executive Committee if the grant deadline occurs during a timeframe when the board is not scheduled to meet.
- C.** Grant proposals approved for funding by organizations outside the League shall be reported to the board during a regularly scheduled meeting or by email. The report shall include a proposed budget for the project. The board shall communicate to the project administrator(s) its expectations for subsequent written reports on the project's expenses and achievements, e.g., at each board meeting, at specified board meetings and/or upon completion of the project.
- D.** Substantive changes to an approved grant proposal that would change the nature or scope of the project or exceed the funds allotted shall be presented to the board for approval during a regularly scheduled meeting or by email vote and/or action by the board's Executive Committee if a deadline from the funding organization occurs during a timeframe when the board is not scheduled to meet.
- E.** The project administrator(s) is encouraged to invite League members, including local League members and members-at-large, to participate in the project.
- F.** The state League treasurer shall set up a line item budget associated with the League's bank account to track income and expenditures for the project, and shall disburse funds for payments related to the grant proposal by debit card and/or check reimbursements, consulting with the project administrator(s) as needed.
- G.** The project administrator(s) shall provide a final report of expenses and an evaluation of achievements of the project to the Board of Directors at the end of the grant period.

### **II. Grant proposals to the League's Education Fund**

- A.** Local units of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, League members, and local and state non-profit organizations can apply to the League's Education Fund for funding. The Education Fund is budgeted as part of the General Fund, which is (501)(c)(3).
- B.** Requests for funding are initiated by completing a Project Request/Report Form, which can be obtained by emailing the chair of the Education Fund Committee or the LWWNE treasurer. The grant request form is also on the Google shared drive.
- C.** The League's Education Fund Committee reviews grant proposals from local Leagues and/or participation of the state League in cooperative activities with other non-profit organizations.

- D. Proposals recommended for funding by the committee are forwarded to the state Board of Directors for final approval by a vote taken at a meeting or by email as required by Nebraska Revised Statute 21-1895.
- E. Upon approval of a proposal for funding, the Board of Directors shall set expectations for written reports on the project's expenses and achievements, e.g., at each board meeting, at specified board meetings and/or upon completion of the project.
- F. The state League treasurer shall set up a line item budget associated with the League's bank account to track income and expenditures for the project, and shall disburse funds for payments related to the grant proposal by debit card and/or check reimbursements, consulting with the project administrator(s) as needed.
- G. Upon completion, a funded project shall refund to the League any funds appropriated but not used.
- H. Proposals not recommended for funding by the committee are reported at the next board meeting or by email.

### **FORMATION OF LOCAL LEAGUES**

Obtain the guidelines from LWVUS at <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/league-fundamentals/starting-local-league>

### **MEMBERS-AT-LARGE ORGANIZATION AND GUIDELINES**

- A. **Members-At-Large**  
Members-at-large are those members of the League who reside in areas where a local League is not available or who have opted to join at the state level rather than the local level. The member-at-large does not belong to a local League, but is a member of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska and the League of Women Voters of the United States.
- B. The member-at-large pays dues as determined by the state board, payable to the LWVNE treasurer. Renewal is due on the initial membership date or on a date determined by the Member-at-Large unit. Members who are in arrears in payment of dues shall be dropped from membership. A portion of member-at-large dues shall be credited toward national per-member-payment. Initial mailing to new members-at-large should include information on such memberships and the state League board directory.
- C. Members-at-large are put on the emailing list for the Nebraska *VOTER* as well as other communications distributed via email to LWVNE members. Members-at-large will be referred to the state website and/or will receive additional mailings of selected publications.
- D. A group of members-at-large in a community may form a Member-at-Large unit. The Member-at-Large unit is under the direction of the state board. The unit's role is the same as that of the individual member-at-large except that the unit has the advantage of being able to discuss program, arrive at consensus on state and national program items, and act as a group to carry out the purpose of the League.
- E. A Member-at-Large unit that has achieved a sustained membership and financial support capable of maintaining a full scope of League activity may apply to the state board to become a League in accordance with national League policies and procedures.