

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

FEBRUARY 2021



These Policies and Guidelines have been developed and adopted by the Board of the League of Women Voters of Amherst over many years. They have been updated and revised several times, most recently in fall, 2020. The Board should review these documents at the beginning of each League year. The Nonpartisanship Policy must be reviewed and approved each year by the Board.

Further guidance for local leagues can be found on the state and national League's websites, [Policies & Guidelines](#) | [League of Women Voters \(lwv.org\)](#)

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NONPARTISANSHIP POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to assure the credibility of the League of Women Voters of Amherst (LWVA) as a nonpartisan organization. The LWVA does not support nor oppose any political party or candidate. The League takes action on governmental issues and policies based on its principles and positions developed after member study and consensus.

The political effectiveness of the League of Women Voters is due to the nonpartisanship policy under which the League functions. The difference between individual member action, which may be strongly partisan, and the nonpartisanship policy of the League itself, is not well understood by the public. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to inform the community about what nonpartisanship means in League terms.

Board members must recognize that as a result of close identification with the League, they have a special responsibility to see that their activities do not create a partisan impression.

Guidelines for Board of Directors

1. Elective Government Office

Board members **may not**:

- seek or hold elective office to the Town Council or the School Committee
- seek or hold elective office above the local level

Board members, with the exception of the President, Spokesperson, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Committee Chairs, **may** seek and hold elective office in Amherst for:

- Jones Library Trustee
- Housing Authority
- Redevelopment Authority
- Charter Commissions

Board members should notify the board prior to seeking these offices.

2. Appointed Positions and Offices

All Board members **may** serve as appointed members of local boards, committees, or commissions if such service would not be in conflict with a League program. Board members should notify the board prior to assuming these offices.

3. Political Party Membership and Office

The League believes that political parties are essential to the American system of government and that the participation of informed citizens is beneficial to the political parties and to the system. The League encourages its members as individuals to be active in partisan activities, in finding and supporting candidates for public office and in seeking election to public office.

Board members, with the exception of President, Spokesperson, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Committee Chairs, **may**

- be members of political party committees
- run as delegates for their state and national conventions

but **may not** be officers in political party committees.

4. Support of Candidates for Public Office

All Board members **may**

- sign petitions on issues
- sign nominating petitions for candidates
- contribute to the campaigns for U.S. President and state-wide office.

The positions of President, Spokesperson, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Committee Chairs are particularly sensitive and visible to the community. These chairs **may not** take an active, visible role in a campaign for a political candidate, such as making donations to candidate campaigns. It is necessary that those holding these positions conform in their political activities to the meaning and spirit of nonpartisanship.

Board members, with the Exception of President, Spokesperson, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Committee Chairs may:

- circulate nominating petitions for candidates
- attend but not host informational campaign functions for introducing candidates
- contribute to campaigns of local candidates
- publicly endorse or support local, county, state or national candidates.

Board members **may not** attend fund-raising campaign functions for candidates.

Under certain circumstances, activity in other portfolios may also become sensitive to public criticism as partisan. Visibility in the League and the perception of the public are the key issues in deciding whether an individual's activity may compromise the nonpartisanship of the League.

5. Social and Other Media

Board members shall not indicate their political affiliations or candidate preferences at any level of government in the public media, including on open social networking sites or other public venues that also prominently identify them as LWVA board members. It is the responsibility of board members to assure that electronic communications indicating their own political affiliation or candidate preference are not shared publicly, and to adjust the settings on any social media accounts accordingly.

6. Additional Clarification

The Board may make exceptions for any Board member, including President, Spokesperson, and Voters Service Chair, who seeks a nonpartisan, local position which may be elective. If Board members are in doubt about the compliance of their anticipated actions with the nonpartisanship policy, they should discuss the situation in advance with the Board, or if time does not permit, with the Executive Committee.

If a member of the Board has violated the nonpartisanship policy of the League or is working in opposition to established League program or principles, that person may be asked to resign, if they do not resign voluntarily.

Questions not covered by this policy should be resolved by the Board.

Annual Review

The Board will review this policy, amend it as necessary, and readopt it annually.

Revised September 2020

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Board members may not participate in any decision-making process when that person or members of her or his immediate family has a financial or personal interest that may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of the League. When there is doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the Board, excluding the person(s) who may have the possible conflict. The Board shall evaluate and resolve any questions of conflict of interest arising from a Board member's employment.

No board member may obtain for her/himself, or for members of her/his immediate family, or for other organizations of which she/he is also a board member or key staff member a material interest of any kind from her/his association with the League.

Any honoraria received shall accrue to the LWVA or LWVEF.

Appointees to non-League boards, commissions or committees serve as individuals rather than as formal representatives of the League unless the position was offered to the organization. If the seat is for the League, the Board shall appoint a representative after each Annual Meeting or when appropriate. Board members asked to serve as individuals shall notify the Board of their appointments to boards, commissions or committees that might have the appearance of a conflict of interest. In any case League titles should not be used.

Adopted September, 2006

MEMBERSHIP POLICIES

Policy Guidelines for Late Dues

Membership runs from July 1 through June 30. A dues notice is sent out by September 30.

Membership dues for the current year are payable on or before January 20. Reminders will appear in the November and December eBulletins. Members may also be reminded by email or phone calls. After January 20, unpaid members may be removed from the membership list.

Adopted September, 1999

Policy Guidelines for Late Joiners of the League

Any new member who pays dues between April 30 and June 30 will be a member in good standing through June 30 of the following year.

Dues Waiver Policy

Membership dues may be waived for a member in good standing who demonstrates a significant commitment to the League if the dues present a significant hardship to the member.

Waivers will be granted on a yearly basis. The policy is administered by the Membership Chair.

Adopted September 10, 2009

Membership List Policy

The membership list is not to be given to any person or organization except League members. If there is a request for the use of the membership mailing list, the Board will decide if such a mailing is appropriate and if so, will do the mailing.

Policy on All-Member Communications

LWVA all-member communications will be used for eBulletins, cancellations, reminders, updated meeting information and state and national League action alerts.

Adopted January 14, 2010

DIVERSITY POLICY

The League of Women Voters of Amherst is an organization that is committed to promoting equitable, fair, and just treatment for all individuals and groups in our community.

The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. The League subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs in our community.

The League is committed to developing an inclusive membership that reflects the diversity of groups within our community.

In both its principles and practices, the League will promote inclusion and actively work towards eliminating barriers, both within our organization and within our community, based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, age, language, level of education, level of income, diversity of employment, philosophical differences, and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

Awareness and consideration of the diverse needs, perspectives and conditions in our community will play a central role in all that the LWV of Amherst undertakes.

The League is committed to taking action based on League positions; diversity is an important component in determining the focus of the action.

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.

Adopted 2002

(See also LWVMA and LWVUS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies, 2018)

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE LWVA BULLETIN, OTHER MEDIA AND SIGNAGE

All material accepted for publication in the LWVA Bulletin or e-bulletin is subject to editorial consideration and/or revision. The following are acceptable for publication:

- announcement of League activities
- announcement of League program study and action
- annual meeting information excluding the treasurer's report and budget
- announcement of meetings and publications for non-League groups and organizations if inclusion of the material is suggested and presented by a League committee, or the event is co-sponsored by the League, or approved by the Board. Decision of the Board is necessary in any of these cases
- Non-League originated material if it is directly related to League program or Voter's Service
- Letters to the Editor from individual League members regarding League program

The approval of the Board is needed for the content of social media, Bulletin articles, and any signs not meeting the above criteria.

Policy of Editing Copy for the Bulletin and the e-bulletin

Bulletin copy is subject to editing by the Editor and the President or Associate/Assistant Editors. Editors are also responsible for making sure Policy Guidelines for the LWVA Bulletin are followed and for proofreading.

Members who wish to see the edited copy should indicate this and give ample lead time to the Editor.

Adopted 1981

Policy on Material to be Included in the Bulletin and the e-bulletin.

Since the Bulletin is distributed to non-members as well as members, certain material shall not be included in the Bulletin, such as members' email addresses which appear as links; the email address itself is not visible to the reader.

The Information Packet for the Annual Meeting, including the Budget and the Nomination Slate, will be distributed to members in a separate mailing.

Adopted November 8, 2007

POLICY ON DONATIONS FROM THE LEAGUE

No donations can be made which would violate the League's nonpartisan policy. This is the only hard and fast rule. All other guidelines for the Board are flexible.

The following guidelines should be considered:

1. The purpose of the donation should fall directly within a League position or fall within the scope of an established League public service activity.
2. Donations should be earmarked for a specific project or activity.
3. The Board should be able to evaluate the project before making a donation.
4. The Board should review in what manner our contribution will be publicized.
5. Support at one time does not mean automatic support at some future time.
6. Requests can be referred to the appropriate committee who will make recommendations to the Board.
7. The amount expended for donations should be taken from the appropriate budget category.

The Board makes decisions to donate and/or to publicize causes and/or to encourage the membership to donate as individuals.

Adopted 1981

POLICY ON RECEIVING DONATIONS

The League accepts donations and support from individuals and from local businesses. The League reserves the right not to accept donations.

Adopted December, 2004

POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF NON-LEAGUE MEMBERS

The guidelines for recognizing service by non-League members who contribute time, effort, or resources to the League include two levels of recognition. The first refers to a gift or acknowledgment for service to the League. The second refers to a LWVA gift membership paid for by the League and presented to the person being honored for exceptional service to the LWVA. The League may present a token of appreciation such as a League mug or a small bouquet to a speaker or program participant if the Board so chooses.

1. Recognition for Service to the League

To recognize individuals who contribute significant service to the League and are not members, a LWVA member may recommend to the LWVA Board that such persons be acknowledged for their contributions with a gift such as a Certificate of Appreciation, a special book, a LWV coffee mug, a plant, or the like.

- a. The LWVA member who nominates a person for this recognition shall be asked to send in writing or make a brief statement in person to the Board as to the services performed or other contributions by the individual to be honored.
- b. The person shall be approved to receive this honor through a LWVA Board vote by consensus.

2. Gift Membership in Recognition for Exceptional Service to the League

Any person may be recommended to the LWVA Board to be honored with a Gift Membership in recognition for exceptional service to the League to be paid for by the LWVA upon verbal or written recommendation by a LWVA member and seconded by another League member.

The criteria for this Gift Membership shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. The person so nominated shall fit the qualification for LWV membership. (see LWVA Bylaws for these qualifications).
- b. The person so nominated shall have contributed exceptional services, time or effort to the mission, programs, or projects of LWVA without remuneration.
- c. The person shall be approved to receive this honor through a LWVA Board vote by consensus.
- d. The duration of the LWVA Gift Membership for Exceptional Service to the League shall be for one year and can be renewed by the LWVA through the process described in "c" above.

Adopted August, 2005

Coalitions and Collaborations

The League can work with other groups in a variety of ways - coalitions, collaborations, and less formal or more short term commitments. Definitions of these types of joint efforts are below:

Coalition - usually a more formal commitment over a longer time period to reach goals. There may be a formal organizational or administrative structure and more specific financial obligations. Many organizations may be members of a coalition. The League should, when possible, have a leadership role in the planning of coalition actions and the League representative should report to the Board on a regular basis. Membership should be renewed yearly.

Collaboration/Co-sponsorships - collaborations or co-sponsorships are usually somewhat less formal and often formed to cover one event (e.g., a symposium or lecture series on affordable housing). The administrative structure is usually looser and for a shorter period of time.

Action Campaigns - groups come together to work toward community awareness or action on a specific issue (e.g., efforts to ban styrofoam containers).

Special Event - this is a short term event that might include marching in a parade, putting on a community event like a lecture or forum (e.g., on the Electoral College).

The overriding guideline is that the group activities and purpose are nonpartisan. It is clearly understood from the outset that the League does not support or oppose candidates or political parties. If the collaborating group changes its nonpartisan position and begins to take positions in favor of or in opposition to candidates or parties, the League must withdraw from the group. Our nonpartisanship is one of the key reasons for the League's reputation as a highly respected and influential organization.

The collaboration efforts should be in line with the League's adopted positions on the local, State or National level as well as its purpose and goals.

The name of the League should be on all publications and publicity.

Financial obligations should be clear from the onset. The Board of the League should approve expenditures for the collaborative efforts or any increase in expenses.

The League Board should name an official representative to the collaborative effort. The League representative should speak on behalf of the League if authorized by the League President or Board and should report to the Board.

Please refer to LWVMA, Policy for Participating in Coalitions/Collaborative efforts
<https://lwvma.org/w-content/uploads/2019/07/05-Coalition-Policy.pdf>

Adopted 2021

POLICY FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA PROGRAMMING

1. Programs should be of local interest, although need not be exclusively about local activities or issues.
2. Programs can be informational; they do not have to be tied to issues on which the LWV has a position.
3. Programs should be diverse in the choice of speakers and topics covered.
4. Programs should not include candidates except in a nonpartisan way such as a candidates' forum.
5. Programs should not advocate against LWV positions.

Updated 1/18

POLICY ON ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

The Annual Meeting Minutes Review Committee must check with members who made motions during annual meeting, not including the motions written into the meeting script ahead of time. After the Annual Meeting Minutes are approved by the Committee appointed for that purpose, they shall be sent to the Board and made available for the LWVA members upon request. If a member is concerned about the Annual Meeting Minutes, the member shall bring that concern in person to the Board so the matter can be discussed.

Updated 1/18

GUIDELINES FOR EXPENDITURES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

The League of Women Voters **IS A NONPROFIT** organization but it is **NOT TAX-EXEMPT**. When purchasing or charging an item to the League, you should pay sales tax.

Expenditures and Reimbursements

Board approval is required for expenditures of \$100 or more.

When you spend money for the League and need to be reimbursed, please submit a reimbursement form or another piece of paper with the expenses itemized to the Treasurer. Attach corresponding receipts whenever possible. Please include the budget line item if you know it, and your name and portfolio so that the expense may be charged to the correct budget category.

Expenses incurred by delegates to State and LWVUS conventions can be sizeable. Traditionally, the LWV of Amherst has reimbursed convention expenses for:

- Registration fee (and banquet fee, if one)
- Transportation (air, mileage, airport transfers)
- Hotel rooms (assuming double occupancy where possible).

Travel is reimbursed at the rate of \$0.40 per mile, plus parking and tolls. There is no reimbursement for a second car traveling to the same location unless it is required.

Board members may request financial assistance for child care or elder care in order to attend Board meetings. Requests should be submitted in writing to the Treasurer and followed up with any receipts, if possible.

Charges to LWVA Accounts

When charging an item or service to the League, obtain a copy of the receipt and submit it to the Treasurer. Please include the budget line item if you know it, your name and portfolio so that the expense may be charged to the correct budget category.

At the time you make the charge, please verify that the amount charged to the League account is correct.

The League currently has charge accounts at the following:

- A. J. Hastings, Inc.
- Amherst Copy & Designworks
- Collective Copies, Inc in Amherst

League charge accounts are to be used only by League members.

LWVA POLICIES FOR CANDIDATES' NIGHTS

These policies include general principles and are not intended to address specific decisions in the organization of candidate forums.

A. Candidate Participation & Write-in Candidates

Candidates for elected office(s) whose names will appear on the ballot will be invited to participate.

Candidates who have announced a write-in campaign, have met all legal qualifications, at least one of the candidate criteria below, and have notified the Board at least five days prior to Candidates' Night will be invited to participate. In determining participation, the burden of proof will be on the candidate. The League may require information that candidate criteria have been met.

- There is evidence that a formal campaign is under way: for example, evidence of campaign volunteers, a website or Facebook page, issuance of position papers and other literature, campaign appearances, campaign ads, lawn signs.
- A newspaper announcement or article has appeared.
- There is evidence of financial support or receipt of contributions.

B. Candidates' Night Cancellations or No-Shows

If candidate cancels, the forum may proceed in the format as scheduled. In that case, the candidate may provide a written statement to be read by the Moderator including the factual reasons for the cancellation.

If a candidate cancels at the last moment or fails to appear without a reason, his/her name card will remain on the table and the Moderator will state that the candidate's reason for the absence is unknown.

Should a candidate inform the Board in advance that s/he is unavailable to attend the scheduled Candidates' Night, the candidate will be invited to offer a written statement equal to the number of minutes other candidates have for introductory statements; this statement will be read by the Moderator. Stand-ins for candidates are not allowed.

C. Policy to Co-sponsor a Candidate Forum

The Board will decide whether to co-sponsor a forum, including those preceding a primary or general election. If requested by an organization other than a local league, the co-sponsorship request should be made on the LWVA website form and distributed to the Board. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure the nonpartisanship of the group or organization, consider potential effects on League policy, and the public's perception of League nonpartisanship.

- Co-sponsors cannot endorse or be affiliated with a candidate
- LWVA will take the lead in establishing the format for the forum
- LWVA will provide the Moderator and timekeeper
- Authorized broadcasts may be live or if taped, available soon thereafter
- Candidates may not use or edit the footage in whole or in part for campaign purposes.

Adopted 2021

POLICY FOR DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE

Non-League material cannot be distributed at League meetings without prior approval of the Board or person(s) in charge of the meeting.