

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