01/27/2026

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Advocacy 101

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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Agenda

- Federal advocacy with Khadija Ali Amghaiab
- Questions on federal advocacy
- State level advocacy
- Local advocacy
- Questions for state and local level action

Meet Our Team

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What is Advocacy?

Goals:

- Educate the public, voters, or policymakers on an issue or policy
- Influence public opinion – building support for or opposition to a position or policy
- Influence legislation, regulations, or policies

Includes:

- Education
- Publicly supporting or opposing an issue
- Lobbying

Advocacy vs. Lobbying

Lobbying

- One type of advocacy
- An attempt to influence specific legislation
  - Introduced or proposals

1. Directed to a legislator, their staff, or another governmental employee
   a. Expresses view on specific legislation
2. Directed to the public
   a. Expresses view on specific legislation AND urge readers to contact legislature
   b. Expresses view on specific ballot measure

Legislative Priorities

Setting Legislative Priorities

Consider:

- The legislative, policy, and political landscape
- League position(s)
- Member understanding and agreement
- Unique role for League to play
- Other organizations' work
- Use of resources
- Timing
- Community involvement

Setting Legislative Priorities

Further Considerations:

- Community's concerns
- The "why" of a specific policy
- Area of greatest impact
- Time/people required and available
  - Hours
  - Partners
  - Volunteers

LWVUS Lobbying Priorities

- To guide its work in Congress, the LWVUS Board adopts lobbying priorities every year. The goal is to maintain focus on issues of primary importance identified by LWVUS. The goals are to:
  - Project a focused and consistent message,
  - Enhance the League's effectiveness and impact,
  - Build the League's credibility and visibility,
  - Ensure that the League has sufficient issue and political expertise,
  - Reflect program decisions made at convention and/or council,
  - Build on strong member interest and support, and
  - Enable the League to manage resources effectively.

LWVUS Legislative Priorities

You can find LWVUS's Legislative Priorities for 2026 Here

- Making Democracy Work® by defending remaining democratic institutions and rebuilding into a multi-racial, representative democracy through:
  - Protecting and restoring voting rights protections;
  - opposing anti-voter policies;
  - strengthening election administration;
  - protecting DC's right to continue governing itself, and
  - ensuring a well-funded, full count in the 2030 Census.
- Protecting individual liberties, upholding the Constitution, and holding government accountable and responsive to the needs of the people.
- Applying a democracy frame to respond strategically to issues like immigration, climate change, gun policy, and health care, including reproductive justice.

LWVUS Legislative Priorities: Emerging Issues

Assess whether the action:

- Is an unforeseen or unexpected crisis, and
- Requires an immediate response, or
- Addresses a significant risk of harm to many.

via Getty Images

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LWV Policy Positions

LWVUS Public Policy Positions

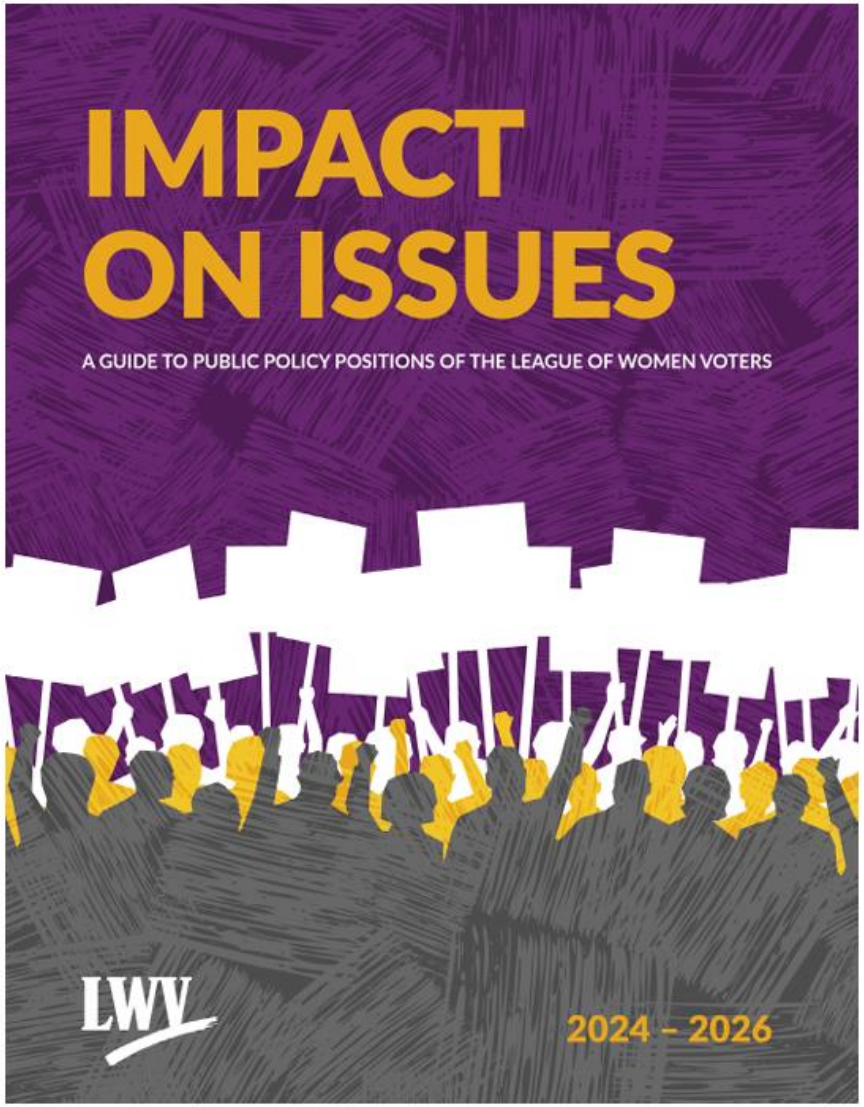
Adopted by delegates at biennial national Convention
- Ensures member understanding and agreement

Drive organization-wide work

Can be used by all Leagues

Ensure League is "speaking with one voice"

Impact on Issues
- **Content**: national positions and history of action
- **Purpose**: help Leagues use positions effectively at respective levels
- **"Taking Action" section**: advocacy guidance



Other League Positions

Level of League	Local Positions	State Positions	LWVUS Positions
Local	✓	✓	✓
State	--	✓	✓
National	--	--	✓

- Note: The level of League still determines the level of government advocacy

Local and State Action on Federal Issues

Level of League	Federal Offices that May Be Contacted	Chapter(s) that Must Approve
Local	• District rep in US House of Representatives • Executive branch offices/federal agencies	State and National
State	• State reps and senators in US House and Senate • Executive branch offices/federal agencies	National
National	• US Congress • Executive branch offices/federal agencies	LWVUS Board & through membership agreement from IOI policy positions

LWVUS Public Policy Positions

For more detailed information, please check out last year's webinar on **League Policy Positions and How You Can Use Them!**

Recording Here

Slides Here

VOTING RIGHTS

Citizen's Right to Vote

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Citizen's Right to Vote, as announced by the national board, March 1982:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

League History

Voting rights are core to the League's mission and founding. As an organization, the League's mission encompasses safeguarding and expanding voting rights for all Americans. The League's history on voting rights is evident through its decades of work detailed above. Here, we outline League actions on major voting rights legislation and litigation at the federal level and describe the actions that the League has taken to ensure that voters can participate in the process. The League continues to focus on the needs of voters through our messaging, policy positions, and mobilization efforts.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 Passage and Reauthorizations

The right to vote for every eligible American has been a fundamental League principle since its origin. Early on, many state Leagues adopted positions on election laws. But at the national level, despite a long history of protecting voting rights, the League found itself during the civil rights struggle of the 1960s without authority to take national legislative action on behalf of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* (VRA). Stung by the League's powerlessness to act on such a significant issue, the 1970 Convention adopted a bylaws amendment enabling the League to act "to protect the right to vote of every citizen" without the formality of adopting voting rights in the national program. This unusual decision reflected member conviction that protecting the right to vote is indivisibly part of the League's purpose.

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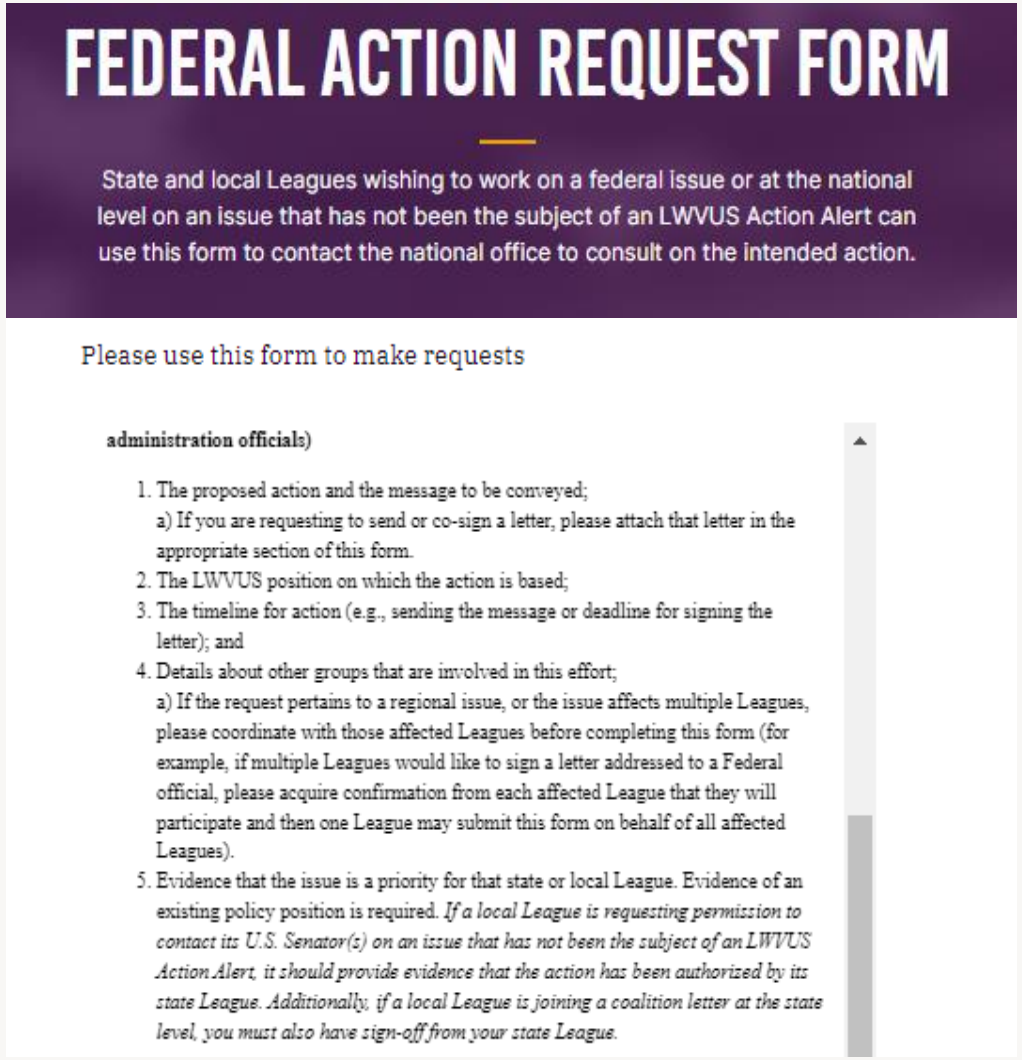
When Can Leagues Contact their US Senators and Representative?



Form Here

Federal Action Requests

Advocacy Actions

- Communicating with an elected or appointed official
- Writing an op-ed or letter to the editor
- Joining a coalition
- Participating in a press conference or rally

Communication with Federal Officials

- Coalition letters to Members of Congress, the executive branch, etc.
- League letters to Members of Congress
- Meetings with federal officials
- Note: Officials must represent your jurisdiction

Federal Action Request Cont.

LWVUS consideration when outside stated legislative priorities…

Whether the action:

1. is an unforeseen or unexpected crisis, **and**

2a. requires an immediate response, **or**

2b. addresses a significant risk of harm to many.

Applying a DEI Lens to Our Work

- A way of examining a program, process, product, or otherwise with an eye toward how it will be perceived by and impact a variety of communities, voices, and perspectives, and what barriers may exist that prevent it from being equitable or inclusive to everyone.

- *Impact on Issues* p.5
- Webinar recording and slides

LWVUS Advocacy Support

LMS Resources	Home Page; Modules; League Update Sign-up
Legislative Office Hours	Sign Up Here
Advocacy Action Kits	Find them here
Previous Advocacy Webinars	Find them here
Position Interpretation	
Legislative Tracking	
Legislative and Policy Analysis	
Legislative Testimony Writing	
Advocacy Strategy Development	
Advocacy Email	advocacy@lwv.org

Litigation Support: litigation@lwv.org or Federal Action Request

Mobilization & Engagement Support: organizing@lwv.org

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Golden Rule

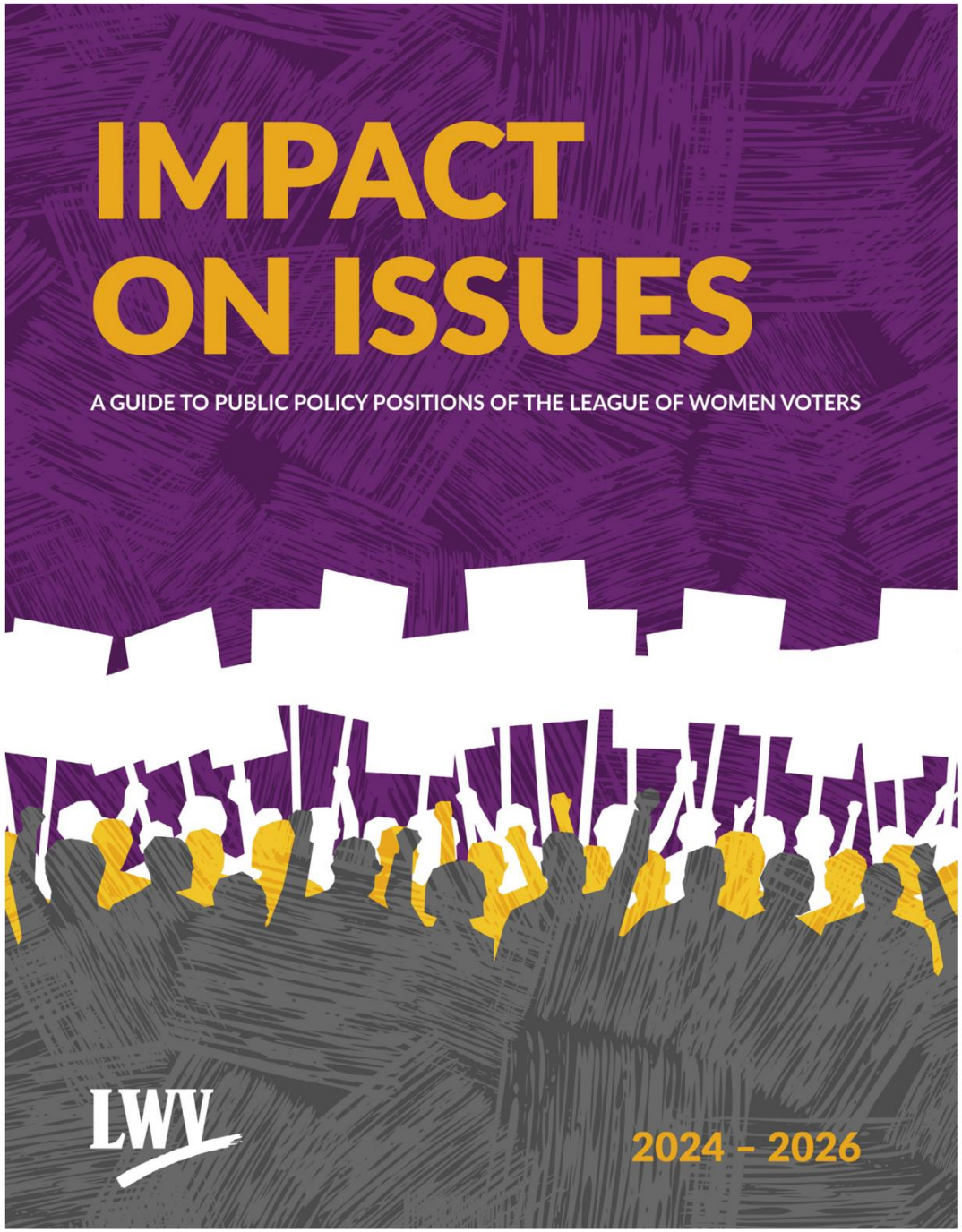
- **Level of League follows level of action**
- LWVUS: Federal action
- LWVMA: State level action
- Local Leagues:
  - Local action using LWVUS and LWVMA positions
  - Federal action when LWVUS issues action alerts
  - State level LWVMA supported/opposed bills

LWVMA Legislative Action Committee

- 22 specialists who drive advocacy work
- Select and monitor 150+ bills in 20 broad areas each 2-year legislative session
- Submit written testimony and/or present oral testimony during committee hearings
- Suggest advocacy actions that local Leagues and members can take, organize educational events
- Guided by LWVMA's program priorities set by Convention

LAC bill selection

- Does LWVUS/LWVMA have a position to support/oppose?
- Does it have broad policy implications across Commonwealth?
- Does it have strong support from coalition partners?
- Where can we be effective by adding our name?
- Do we have an obligation?
- What is the likelihood of passage?
- Do we have the people power?



CLIMATE CHANGE

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Climate Change, as announced by the national board, January 2019:

The League believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and our planet.

The League believes that an interrelated approach to combating climate change — including through energy conservation, air pollution controls, building resilience, and promotion of renewable resources — is necessary to protect public health and defend the overall integrity of the global ecosystem. The League supports climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best-available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations. Individuals, communities, and governments must continue to address this issue, while considering the ramifications of their decision at all levels — local, state, regional, national, and global.

League History

In the late 2000s, LWVUS significantly increased its advocacy concerning global climate change. LWVUS believes that climate change is a serious problem that requires immediate domestic and international action. The League believes the US government should move ahead immediately, without waiting for other nations, on initiatives to reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases like carbon, methane, and other toxic air pollutants. Such actions will reduce the threat of global climate change, combat air pollution, increase energy security, and create new jobs.

In late 2006, the League joined other groups in issuing a statement of principles on the importance of reducing climate change. The League also created a Climate Change Task Force to provide information and assistance to the national board and staff on issues pertaining to climate change. The Task Force also worked to develop materials for use by League members at the local, state, and national levels.

In 2008, the League called on Congress to enact legislation to significantly cut the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global climate change and supported increased energy efficiency and a shift to clean, renewable energy. The League called for a moratorium on the building of new coal-fired electric power plants and supported requirements for utilities to produce a significant percentage of electricity from renewable resources.

The League supported the *Climate Security Act of 2008*, as well as amendments to strengthen the bill. This legislation provided for a cap-and-trade system, which would have cut greenhouse gas emission from electric power, transportation, and manufacturing sources. The emissions cap would be reduced over time to meet pollution-reduction goals based on the best available scientific information. These emissions reductions could be traded on a market set up by the legislation, allowing polluters to buy, sell, borrow, and trade emission allowances to ensure economic efficiency in the program. The League also urged elected officials to extend clean energy tax incentives. Though it passed the US House of Representatives, the legislation was sidetracked in the US Senate by special interests.

In December 2009, the League was thrilled to participate on the international stage, sending an official NGO delegation to Copenhagen for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In March 2010, 19 League leaders from as many states went to Washington to lobby congressional leaders on strong climate change

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MASSACHUSETTS

WHERE WE STAND

PROGRAM BOOK

LAST UPDATED JUNE 2025

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES

GOAL: Freedom of individuals to make informed reproductive decisions based on their own convictions and beliefs. (1972)

The League supports

- emphasis on preventive measures to avoid unwanted pregnancies
- sex education in the schools and community
- access to family planning information, services and devices to people who want them
- wide distribution of information about contraception and sterilization
- treating abortion as a medical procedure to be decided upon by a woman and her physician
- public funding for birth control and abortion services for the poor
- research on birth control methods

The League opposes

- restrictive birth control and abortion laws

League Action

Sex education: The League supports action to initiate or expand programs in schools and communities throughout the state. The League opposes efforts to enact state legislation to prohibit the teaching of sex education in public schools or to prohibit the dissemination of contraceptive information or information about abortion. The League opposes abstinence-only programs and supports programs that suggest abstinence as one of several choices for teenagers.

Family planning: LWVMA believes participation in family planning programs should be voluntary. The League opposes efforts by the legislature to restrict access to any forms of family planning. Many family planning programs in Massachusetts have depended on federal funding. Shifts from categorical funding to the use of other federal programs, such as Medicaid and Title X, and general budget constraints at the federal and state levels, require continued League support to ensure programs adequate to meet the needs of Massachusetts residents.

The League supports wide distribution of information about contraception and sterilization. The League has supported action to increase the availability of family planning services and information by supporting bills to require city and town clerks to offer such information to couples applying for marriage licenses. The League has opposed bills that would deny state funds to family planning providers if they also provide abortion services.

Marital status, age: In 1972, while the League study on birth control and abortion was in process, the Supreme Court invalidated the Massachusetts statute prohibiting distribution of contraceptives to unmarried persons. In an earlier ruling, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) had affirmed that first amendment rights covered exhibiting contraceptives. The cumulative effect of the state and federal decisions was to invalidate the Massachusetts birth control laws. The League position supports not only the right of contraceptive care for unmarried persons but also the right of contraceptive care to minors without parental consent.

Freedom of choice in abortion: Because members agreed that the law should permit the exercise of freedom of choice in keeping with diverse individual beliefs, the League supports a law that deals with abortion as a private decision between the woman and her doctor. The League supports repeal of restrictive laws and opposes new legislation that would seek further restrictions.

Elections and Voting; Nell Forgacs, Nancy Brumback

Bill #	Topic	Bill title	LWVMA Action
H834/S505 Summary	Same day voter registration	An Act establishing same day registration of voters	Support Testimony
H799/S503 Summary	Decouple municipal census from voting	An Act decoupling the municipal census from voter registration	Support Testimony
H820/S504 Summary	Disability access to polls	An Act enforcing accessibility for voters with disabilities	Support Testimony
H876/S517 Summary	Post-election audits	An Act strengthening the post-election audit process	Support Testimony
H63/S7 Summary	Felon voting	Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution relative to voting rights	Support Testimony
S531 Summary	Ranked choice voting in municipal elections	An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections	Support Testimony
H802 Summary	Photo ID to vote	An Act requiring photo IDs to vote	Oppose Testimony

MA Legislature quick facts

- 2 year term for both Senators and Representatives
- 200 members: 160 reps and 40 senators
- One of ten full time legislatures nationwide
- Current formal session ends July 31, 2026
- 8,000+ bills filed
- New session begins January 2027

Approval process for local Leagues to act on state bills

1. Does LWVUS/LWVMA/LWV local League have a position on it?
2. Local League Board approval
3. Contact LAC Chair
4. Prepare legislative research sheet to submit to LAC
5. LAC votes to support local League efforts
6. Local League offers oral and/or written testimony to the joint legislative committee, posts to its website
7. LAC specialists available for guidance

Local League Action on state level bills

Examples:
LWV Cape Cod Area: Rosemary Shields

Take action on state bills

- Join Envoy program, one per local League
- Take action via the monthly Action Newsletter
- Respond to Action Alerts, ramped up at key dates
- Invite a specialist to speak on a topic who can offer ways to take action on state issues

Local action with LWVMA and LWVUS positions

- Town Meeting articles
- Plymouth and Cape Cod worked on nuclear safety issues
- It is likely that positions exist to support your work
  - Contact LAC if you need help finding one

Adopting a new position at the local League level

- Occurs at your annual meeting
- **Two options**
  - **Study**: Conduct a study and reach **consensus**
  - **Concurrence**: Adopt an applicable position by concurrence. Be sure you have member agreement and understanding on the issue.
- For more depth, see
  - League Basics
  - LWVMA bylaws, p.9
  - Your local League bylaws
- Recommend LWVMA adopt a new position by submitting a request during LWVMA program planning (January 2027) for Convention 2027.

LEAGUE BASICS

Formerly "In League"

League Basics contains essential policy and organizational information applicable to every local and state League. League Basics offers advice, guidelines and more detailed information to help leaders develop specific methods of operation to enable a League to accomplish its goals.

9. Overview of Program

The League's program consists of those governmental issues that the League has chosen for concerted study and action at the national, state or local level. The program process is specified in the bylaws and includes the following steps:

- Formal adoption (by members at an annual meeting or by state/national convention delegates) of an issue for study.
- Member study and agreement on broad concepts.
- Formulation of a position by the appropriate board of directors.
- Action as directed by the board of directors.
- Annual or biennial re-adoption of the position.

Local Leagues may work simultaneously on local, state, national and (if applicable) regional program issues, but action may be taken only in those areas where there is member understanding and agreement. Issues reflect community concerns and range from local park facilities to election reform, from childcare to nuclear waste disposal, from air pollution to international trade, from mental health to energy policy. (The national League's positions on issues can be found in *Impact on Issues* on the League Web site.)

Studies and Program Adoption

League program arises from the suggestions of members. At every level of the League, the board of directors is responsible for reviewing and discussing these suggestions, formulating them in appropriate language, and recommending all or some of them for adoption according to procedures specified in the bylaws. A local League's "action" or advocacy program is determined by members at its annual meeting; state and national programs are voted upon by delegates at state and national League conventions. In the course of the program adoption discussion, members often give suggestions to the board on scope of inquiry, timing, emphasis and ways to handle the study and/or action phases. ("How to do a study" is available in the Action Chair toolbox on the LWVUS website.)

Reaching Member Agreement

Before the League can take action, members must agree in broad terms on what they think about various aspects of the policy issue. The nature of the issue will affect how it is studied and how positions are reached. The board usually selects the method to be used: consensus (where agreement is reached using League responses to specific questions) or concurrence (where agreement or a vote on a pre-stated position is required).

Develop Your Own Position: Study

- LWV Concord Carlisle: Hanscom position

  Hanscom Field 8.1 Oppose extension of Hanscom field into a major airport 8.2 Support maintenance of general aviation activity at Hanscom Field at no higher than the 1973 level. 8.3 Support the participation of Concord and other Towns in the solution to problems associated with Hanscom Field.
- LWV Falmouth: Transportation position
- Use League Basics as resource

Resources

- LWVMA Supported/Opposed Legislation 2025-26 session
- LWVUS Impact on Issues
- LWVMA Where We Stand
- The Citizen Lobbyist
- Policy on Local League Support of Town/City/Region-specific Legislation

Contact information LAC Chair

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