

Opening Remarks by LWVMA Jean Cherdack
League Leaders Lunch
September 17, 2016

Today we have two special workshops for you. One, led by Nancy Brumback, will inform you on our ballot questions. The other, led by Karen Price, will teach you how to lead a consensus meeting. I want to talk a little bit about the League's consensus process. We often hear:

The League is too slow. Pundits and activist groups respond to issues and events almost instantly. News is all over the net and TV immediately. Why does the League take so long?

Well is it too slow?

Most of the major issues this nation is facing today are more than a decade old. It is generally not the quick response but the reasoned, well researched, policy base, that produces progress. The League must be in the fight for the long haul. We cannot jump from event to event, we cannot afford to have a short attention span. We cannot be just another voice about the issue of the day, to be heard once and then lost in the rush of later "news". We cannot achieve our goals with flip judgments and catchy offhand remarks.

For better or worse, the policies and direction of this nations' lawmakers are the results of decades of building political bases, of carefully nurtured ideas, of patient effort. The League must learn from this and from it's own experience. Women did not get the vote from some overnight social media campaign.

Another complaint:

The League process is too cumbersome. In other organizations a few individuals and executives set policies why do we need to go back to so much of the membership?

The League is first and foremost a membership organization of informed individuals. We must respect that and recognize that this is our greatest strength. Our policies must reflect the conclusions reached by the majority of our interested League members. People speaking and acting for the League must do so knowing that they are supported by the members and that members' views are the result of careful consideration of the facts and issues.

When you talk about League and someone brings up these concerns, you now have an answer.

During the coming months your Leagues will have the opportunity to be part of that process which guides and empowers those who speak and act for the League. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn today how to effectively run a consensus meeting and then to bring as many of your members as you can to consensus events. The results of these events will help set policy on key issues for many years to come.

October 1st Leagues will be receiving consensus materials for the LWVMA Charter School Study. Consider using these consensus meetings as a recruiting tool. Invite prospective members. Take this opportunity to show them what League consensus is all about.