



## **Guidelines for local Leagues on ballot questions:**

### **General Information:**

LWVMA will support or oppose statewide ballot questions based on our positions, arrived at through study and consensus. We will issue a list of our stands on the ballot questions with our reasons as soon as the final versions are available from the Secretary of State's office.

If we do not have positions at either the national or state level that permit us to support or oppose a ballot question, we will not take a stand on that question.

Any forum or published voter information on the ballot questions should make clear the League positions on the questions, or if the League has no position on specific questions.

LWVUS notes that: It is the responsibility of the board of directors to ensure that voter service activities and lobbying activities are kept clearly separate. Voters' guides and other voter service materials must not contain statements of League positions, and League positions on ballot issues must not be discussed at voter service events. Additional LWVUS information on issues forums is at <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/book/voters-service-and-citizens-information>.

### **Forums on ballot questions on which LWVMA has taken a stand:**

If LWVMA has a stand on a ballot question, it means we are advocating for or against the question, and such forums would be advocacy events, not citizen education/voter service events. They cannot be paid for with education fund money or Scharfman grants.

LWVMA suggests that League forums on questions on which we have taken a stand focus on the reasons we are supporting or opposing a question. There is no need to invite a speaker from the opposing side. The speaker presenting the League side should cover the opposition's arguments and then refute them.

When we have a clearly-stated position, we suggest that local Leagues stick with presentations that support that position, bearing in mind effective support includes countering the other side's arguments and permitting audience questions from opponents.

### **Forums on ballot questions on which LWVMA has no position:**

In this circumstance, it should be explained that LWVMA has no stand on a specific question because it has no positions at the national or state level on this subject.

LWVMA suggests that, when local Leagues hold forums on this type of ballot question, they ask credible speakers on both sides of the issue to present their case.

This type of forum is a citizen education/voter service event and can be paid for with educational fund money.

**Forums that include both types of ballot questions:**

LWVMA recommends that local Leagues not plan forums that include both ballot questions we have a position on and those we do not have a position on in the same event. Such a program would blur the line between advocacy and citizen education. If a local League decides to do such a program, we would suggest dividing it into distinct parts, and treating the two types of questions in the manner outlined above.

### **Voter Guides on Ballot Questions:**

If all the ballot questions are included in a printed piece or on a local League website, it should be treated as an advocacy piece, and not be presented as an impartial voters' guide because we are advocating for certain ballot issues. It should not be labelled a "Voters' Guide," since that term is used for our non-partisan information. The information should state clearly which questions the League has a position on. Those could be listed first, with the reasons for the League stands. The ballot questions the League has no position on could follow, perhaps with the pro and con arguments from credible sources or from the Secretary of State's voters' guide.

Another option is to simply list all of the ballot questions with no recommendations, but that information is already sent to every household by the Secretary of State.

### **Presenting Ballot Questions at League Information Tables:**

The question has been raised whether Leagues can offer both voter registration and other voter information and information on the ballot questions that we have taken a position on at such events as town fairs and harvest festivals, or anywhere your League may have an information table.

Voter service/citizen education and advocacy are equal but separate parts of the League's mission. When you are presenting the League to the public in a situation such as a table at a townwide event, it is both important and appropriate to show these two sides of the League.

LWVMA urges local Leagues to do that, but carefully. Perhaps you can offer voter registration forms, information on your upcoming Candidates' Nights and similar voter service information on one side of your table, and information on ballot questions on the other side, with membership information in the middle. You should be prepared to explain that the League is non-partisan, never supporting candidates or political parties, but does actively support issues it has studied and reached membership consensus on and seeks to educate voters about those issues.