

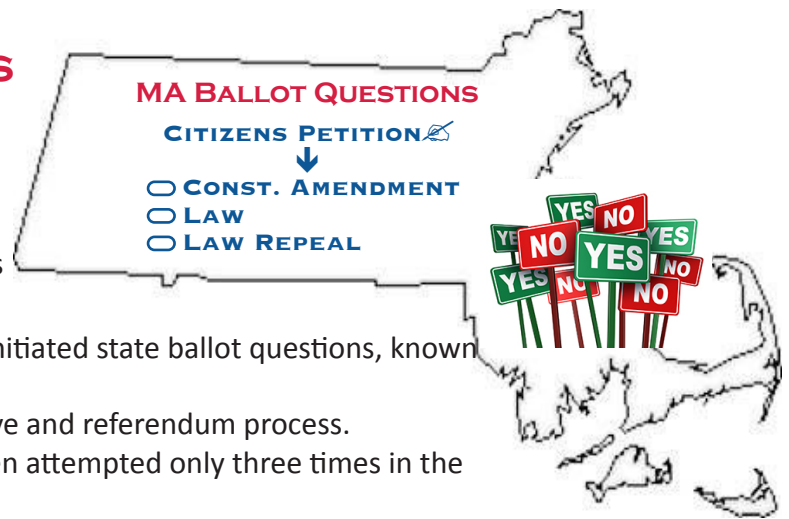
THE BALLOT QUESTION PROCESS

LWVMA STUDY 2018-2019

Every two years, Massachusetts voters may be called upon to vote whether or not to enact new laws, amend the constitution, or repeal recently passed laws through ballot questions.

Here are some facts you may not know about citizen-initiated state ballot questions, known as the “Initiative and Referendum” process.

- Massachusetts is one of 26 states that has an initiative and referendum process.
- A citizen-initiated constitutional amendment has been attempted only three times in the past 100 years.
- Signatures have to be collected twice, in the fall and again in the spring, to get a proposed new law on the ballot.
- If 43,167 citizens (2018 requirement) submit signatures within 90 days of a law being signed by the governor, that law is **suspended** until the next biennial election.
- There are only two states in New England that have an initiative and referendum mechanism, MA and ME.



Why a League Study?

This study incorporates the intersection of the League’s areas of mission: voting and advocacy. LWVMA has not studied the initiative and referendum process in MA and has no positions on this aspect of voting/elections.

What Should Local Leagues Do Now?

Form a local study committee

The committee can be as small as 3 people. The study committee will use the materials provided to become familiar with the subject and the consensus questions. It will coordinate the consensus meeting and report the results to the state. The committee should check the LWVMA website regularly and begin reading the materials posted. The committee will become the local “experts,” and an important link between your League and the LWVMA study committee. All materials will be posted by the fall, including the Study Guide with consensus questions, a powerpoint to guide you through the background and questions, and other useful materials.

Schedule local consensus meetings

As you plan your calendar for next year, include at least one time for a consensus meeting. Some Leagues may want to schedule two, one in the daytime and one in the evening. It is up to the local League to determine the best format. Consensus meetings should be held within December 1 to February 15. The local board needs to approve the consensus report, so be sure to leave time to complete this step. The report is due February 16.

What is available to get us started?

Visit lwvma.org (Under Quick Links on the right sidebar)

The committee posts materials as they are finalized on the study page of lwvma.org. Start with the newly-revised “Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings” found on the webpage. Browse the other materials and check back often. All materials will be available in the fall to prepare for consensus meetings December 1 to February 15.

How can my League get help?

If your League is a little rusty on doing studies, has never done a study, wants to join another League in the study, or just needs some help getting started, the study committee can help! Contact bqstudy@lwvma.org.