



## Guidelines for Local Leagues on Ballot Questions

### General Information

Prior to each state election, the LWVMA board of directors carefully considers each statewide ballot question to determine whether to support, oppose or take no stand on it. The board's decisions are primarily based on a review of relevant established positions, which were arrived at through study and consensus and are stated in [Where We Stand](#) and [Impact on Issues](#). If we do not have relevant positions that permit LWVMA to support or oppose a ballot question, or if the board decides there are conflicting positions, LWVMA will not take a stand on that question.

Although LWVMA may support or oppose certain ballot questions, [LWVUS notes](#) "it is the responsibility of the board of directors of each state and local League 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 is available [here](#).

Local Leagues may decide whether to support, oppose or take no position on local ballot questions based on the local League's review of local, state, and national positions. Only LWVMA may make such determinations for statewide questions.

### Ballot Question Forums

Local Leagues should use the guidelines from LWVUS to guide their decision-making around sponsoring or participating in ballot question forums and in the preparation of materials for public dissemination. Forums and materials should be either voter service or advocacy and should not attempt to be both.

If a local League wants to present a voter service ballot question forum covering both sides of all the questions or a forum on one or some questions, the local League should make it clear that this forum aims to present both sides of all the ballot questions as a public service.

If a local League wants to present an advocacy ballot question forum for one or more of the questions the League supports or opposes, it should be made clear that the purpose of the forum is advocacy, not voter service. Local Leagues may participate in events sponsored by ballot question coalitions, provided those events do not also advocate for a candidate or party. LWVMA advises that the local League ensure that the event is non-partisan early in the planning process.

### Speaking on Ballot Questions at Meetings in Your Community

Local Leagues may be invited to explain the ballot questions by a community group. This should be considered a voter service and should not include advocacy unless advocacy is the requested purpose and the League has been specifically invited to present one side of a ballot question. Local Leagues may use materials provided by LWVMA and the Secretary of State for information on the question, including reasons to support both a yes and a no vote.

### Public Materials on Ballot Questions

Ballot question information may be presented as a voter service, in a public document such as a letter to the editor encouraging being prepared to vote or on League web/social media sites. The information

presented should refer to the LWVMA Online Voters' Guide and the "red booklet" sent to every household by the Secretary of State, which is also available for download at the Secretary of the State's website. In this case, the information should be presented factually, with both pro and con arguments if arguments are listed. The League's position on the questions should not be stated in this type of information.

Letters and online materials that advocate for or against ballot questions that LWVMA supports or opposes should be treated as advocacy pieces, and not be presented as impartial voter information. For an advocacy piece, refer to the LWVMA website for the official presentation of the League's stands on each question.

### **League Information Tables**

The question comes up whether Leagues can offer both voter registration and other voter information and information on ballot questions that we have taken a position on at such events as town fairs and harvest festivals, or anywhere a local 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 offer voter registration forms, information on upcoming Candidates' Nights and similar voter service information on one side of the table, and information on the ballot questions on the other side of the table, with membership information in the middle. 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.

If the event and resources and volunteers allow, it would be even better to have a separate table for voter and membership information and for ballot question information, but that is not a feasible option in many cases. LWVMA encourages local Leagues to promote all sides of the League.

### **Individual Member Activities**

Individual League members are, of course, free to advocate for any ballot question. But they must not identify themselves as League representatives unless they are working for a ballot question that LWVMA supports or opposes.

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