



POLICY FOR PARTICIPATING IN COALITIONS

Approved by the LWVMA Board November 5, 2012; revised and approved January 22, 2016

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts can join and participate in coalitions to more effectively achieve its advocacy, educational or organizational goals.

The LWVMA Board of Directors must explicitly approve the LWVMA joining or resigning from all coalitions or other, less formal arrangements. These include:

- **Coalition:** an alliance that brings the LWVMA together with other organizations for joint action toward a specific and well-defined goal.
- **Sponsorship:** a temporary alliance in which the LWVMA lends its name, reputation, experience, and organization to an event or action campaign.
- **Informal group, collaboration or meeting:** Less formal arrangement in which the LWVMA participates on a regular or temporary basis.

Throughout this policy, the term “coalition” shall also mean sponsorship and informal group, collaboration or meeting, unless otherwise specified.

A. Considerations for joining a coalition

The following considerations will guide the LWVMA board in determining whether to join a coalition. The criteria also apply to decisions on whether to have a representative attend the meetings of an informal group on a regular basis.

1. There must be clear and compelling reasons for joining the coalition.
2. The coalition must be nonpartisan, and participation in the coalition must not compromise the League’s nonpartisanship. LWVMA will immediately withdraw from any coalition that participates in partisan activity. The LWVMA may join coalitions in which other members are partisan organizations, but all coalition activity must be nonpartisan.
3. The coalition’s major issues should follow League positions, though there need not be a League position on every issue with which the coalition is concerned. The aims and actions of the coalition must be in accord with League positions.
4. The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with the LWVMA adopted program
5. Working with the coalition should accomplish more than the LWVMA can accomplish working on its own.
6. The members of the coalition should be organizations with which the League can work effectively and which are known to be responsible and reliable.
7. The coalition should be credible and financially viable, and the board should have confidence in its leadership.

The board *may* require the following information about the coalition, particularly if coalition participation will involve a financial commitment by the LWVMA:

- stated positions
- names of participating organizations, a description of engagement in partisan activity, and their website addresses
- names and background of board members and executives

- financial and tax documents
8. Resource demands for work with the coalition (including staff and volunteer time, as well as cash and in-kind expenses) should be worth the investment. Expenditures must be approved by the board.
 9. There must be a League member willing to be the LWVMA's representative to the coalition who has the time, knowledge and personal commitment to serve on behalf of the League. If the LWVMA representative is not a board member, the board should name one of its members to be responsible for the LWVMA's participation in the coalition.

B. Representatives to coalitions

1. The LWVMA board will vote to appoint the LWVMA representative(s) and, if appropriate, alternates to all coalitions.
2. On the resignation of an LWVMA representative, the board may vote to appoint a replacement.
3. The LWVMA representative to a coalition must have the prior approval of the LWVMA president/co-president or her/his designee before making any public statement of a League position.
4. A copy of this policy will be given annually to all LWVMA representatives to coalitions.

C. Annual review and approval of coalitions

1. LWVMA coalition representatives will provide a written report on coalition activities and LWVMA involvement in those activities to the Legislative Action Committee or chair after formal coalition meetings and major activities, but at least once a year.
2. Each year, the Legislative Action Committee or chair will review all coalition participation by the LWVMA and provide a written report to the board that includes the following:
 - a list of all coalitions that LWVMA is participating in
 - the name of the LWVMA representative for each coalition all other members of each coalition
 - a summary of each coalition's activities
3. The LWVMA board will review and vote on LWVMA's participation in and representatives to all coalitions annually, or, in the case of coalitions formed to work on specific legislation, at the beginning of each legislative session.
4. The LWVMA representative can recommend to the board at any time that the LWVMA withdraw from a coalition. The representative should state the reasons for that recommendation, and the board will vote on whether to continue as a coalition member, using the criteria for joining coalitions as a guideline. The board can also determine on its own whether to withdraw from a coalition.
5. The LWVMA board will review and vote on this policy annually.

D. Guidelines for the LWVMA's participation in a coalition

1. Whenever the LWVMA board decides to join or withdraw from a coalition, the president/co-president shall notify the coalition in writing.
2. The LWVMA representative must keep the LWVMA board informed of the coalition's activities and actions.
3. The representative may serve in a leadership capacity in a coalition.
4. The representative and the president/co-president are responsible for ensuring that coalition actions do not violate LWVMA's Nonpartisan Policy or positions on issues.

5. The representative should engage League membership in coalition-related activity when possible.
6. The representative is responsible for ensuring that the use of the League's name on statements, letters, press releases, publications or any other materials is reviewed and approved by a League president/co-president or designated representative.
7. The LWVMA representative can publically speak for the League on coalition matters only if authorized to do so by the president/co-president.
8. While a coalition must be nonpartisan, other coalition members may take partisan action as long as their actions do not compromise the nonpartisanship of the coalition. For example, if the LWVMA joins a coalition to sponsor a candidates' debate, other coalition members may announce their support of a candidate after the debate. If possible, the LWVMA representative should inform the LWVMA board when a coalition member takes a partisan action.
9. LWVMA will not be responsible for any coalition expenses beyond amounts specifically approved by the board.
10. LWVMA reserves the right to withdraw from a coalition at any time.