

# STUDY OF BALLOT QUESTION PROCESS

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts  
Fall 2018 – Winter 2019



# Study Goals

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- Educate LWV members about the ballot question process in MA
- At each League, consider, through consensus meetings, possible changes to the process
- LWVMA develops a position based on the answers to the consensus questions from each League
- Members vote on the position at Convention 2019
- LWVMA can propose steps to enact any recommended changes to the process



# Study Process (LWVMA)

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- 5-member LWVMA Study Committee
- Held 40+ videoconferences
- Conducted interviews
  - Attorney General's Office
  - Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office
  - Office of Campaign and Political Finance
  - Attorney who has represented ballot question committees
  - Secretary of Administration and Finance's Office
- Reported monthly to LWVMA board of directors
- Prepared consensus questions and supporting documents



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# PRIOR TO CONSENSUS MEETING

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# League/Unit Tasks

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- Read “Handbook for Consensus Meetings”
- Form a local study committee
- Schedule local consensus meeting(s)
  - November 1 to February 15
- Review posted materials
- Request PowerPoint
- Join one of the webinars
- Inform Study Committee (bqstudy@lwwma.org)
  - Contact person League, name, email address
  - Date and location of consensus meeting



# Finding Posted Materials

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- Latest versions posted on LWVMA website:  
<https://lwvma.org/the-lwvma-study-on-the-massachusetts-ballot-question-process/>
- From homepage, under Quick Links

## Quick Links








Candidate Forums and Debates  
2018

The LWVMA Study on the  
Massachusetts Ballot Question  
Process







Daniel Scharfman Citizen  
Education Grant Program



## LWVMA Study Documents

- Study Guide with consensus questions, background, and arguments in favor and against  (updated Sep 26, 2018)
- Study Report with information on types of ballot questions, processes, information for voters, other states, and finances  (updated Sep 26, 2018)
- Appendix 1: Key Players and Terminology 
- Appendix 2: Massachusetts Laws, Regulations and Court Cases 
- Appendix 3: Statements of Fiscal Consequences 
- Appendix 4: Initiative and Referendum in Seven States Other than Massachusetts 
- Appendix 5: Additional Resources 

## Consensus Meeting Documents

- Powerpoint presentation for Consensus Meetings (available on request contact [bqstudy@lwwma.org](mailto:bqstudy@lwwma.org))
- Consensus Questions Quick Reference and Outcome Sheet 
- For Consensus Questions 1-5: Information for Voters 2018 
- For Consensus Question 2: Appendix 3 (listed above)
- For Consensus Question 3: Citizens' Initiative Review 2016  and 2018 
- Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings 
- Local League flyer 

# Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings

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## Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings





# Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings

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[https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/  
Handbook\\_for\\_successful\\_consensus\\_meetings\\_LWVMA.pdf](https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Handbook_for_successful_consensus_meetings_LWVMA.pdf)

# Form a Local Study Committee

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- See details in the Handbook
- Do not worry about the number of people
- May divide into subgroups based on consensus question topics
- Read information in the Study Report
- Read the Study Guide
- Become local “experts”
- It is more interesting than you might think!



# Schedule Consensus Meeting(s)

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- November 1 to February 15
- Report is due February 16, so leave time for board approval and submission
- Decide format
  - Background and consensus in one session
  - Background and consensus in separate sessions
  - Daytime and evening sessions
- Line up a location, facilitator, and recorder
- Encourage participation, especially newer members



# Study Materials

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<https://lwvma.org/the-lwvma-study-on-the-massachusetts-ballot-question-process/>



# Request Power Point

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- Request PowerPoint at [bqstudy@lwwma.org](mailto:bqstudy@lwwma.org)
- Will be distributed upon request and to all webinar participants
- If we need to update it, we will email you a new version and describe what has changed



# Keeping in Touch with LWVMA

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- Inform LWVMA Study Committee ([bqstudy@lwwvma.org](mailto:bqstudy@lwwvma.org))
  - Contact person League, name, email address
  - Date and location of consensus meeting
- LWVMA Study Committee Chairs will send contact person updates and tips
- Email [bqstudy@lwwvma.org](mailto:bqstudy@lwwvma.org) with questions or suggestions

So far, 32 local Leagues are participating.



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# THE CONSENSUS MEETING

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# Consensus Meeting

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- Participants
  - Facilitator and recorder
  - Study Committee
  - Members (others may attend but may not participate in consensus)
- Study Committee provides background
  - PowerPoint (printed or projected) is one way
- Consensus Questions
  - One at a time. OK to go out of order, skip and return.
  - Study Committee presents summary and arguments.
  - Members come to consensus.
  - Recorder records results and comments
- Wrap up
  - Facilitator and recorder confer and confirm completeness





# What Is Consensus?

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- Collective opinion, general agreement
- Not a vote! Voting is no substitute for the informal and meaningful give and take of discussion and agreement.
- Members participate in a group discussion. The “consensus” reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity, but refers to the overall “sense of the group.”
- One individual cannot simply declare a block to consensus. The group must agree that there is no consensus.



# League Collaboration

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- Each League/Unit must report its own consensus results
- Collaborate through
  - Joint study committee/separate consensus meetings
  - Separate study committees/joint consensus meeting
  - Joint study committee and consensus meeting
  - Shared tools, advice and resources



# Members-at-Large Participation

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- LWVMA Members-at-Large who are not affiliated with a League or Unit may participate
  - Online consensus meeting through videoconference
  - Attend a consensus meeting in your area
- Email Study Committee if you are interested



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# AFTER THE CONSENSUS MEETING

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# Local Steps after Consensus Meeting

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- Reporting results to LWVMA
  - A report form will be available after November 1
  - The report must be approved by local board before submitting
- Report form includes results for each question
  - Yes, No, No consensus
  - Comments
- Overall comments
- After board approval, submit to LWVMA (instructions will be included with the form)



# LWVMA Final Steps

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- LWVMA board or assigned committee
  - Compiles results from each League/Unit
  - Considers comments
  - Drafts a position statement
- LWVMA board approves position statement
- LWVMA board recommends position to LWVMA members at 2019 convention
- Members vote to approve or disapprove
- If approved, added to “Where We Stand”



# Study Committee

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- Karen Price, Co-Chair, LWVMA board, LWV-Needham
- Donna Hooper, Co-Chair, LWVMA board, LWV-Lexington
- Karen Callanan, LWVMA Member at Large
- Carol Patey, LWV-Needham
- Florence Seldin, LWV-Cape Cod Area

To contact the study committee email [bqstudy@lwwma.org](mailto:bqstudy@lwwma.org).



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# QUESTIONS?

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Raise your hand to ask an audio question.

Or

Type your question into the 'chat' box.

