STUDY OF BALLOT QUESTION PROCESS

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Fall 2018 – Winter 2019
Study Goals

- 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)

- 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
PRIOR TO CONSENSUS MEETING
League/Unit Tasks

- 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@lwvma.org)
  - Contact person League, name, email address
  - Date and location of consensus meeting
Finding Posted Materials

• Latest versions posted on LWVMA website: https://lwvma.org/the-lwvma-study-on-the-massachusetts-ballot-question-process/

• From homepage, under Quick Links
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@lwvma.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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Form a Local Study Committee

- 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)

- 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

https://lwvma.org/the-lwvma-study-on-the-massachusetts-ballot-question-process/
Request Power Point

- Request PowerPoint at bqstudy@lwvma.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

• Inform LWVMA Study Committee (bqstudy@lwvma.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@lwvma.org with questions or suggestions

So far, 32 local Leagues are participating.
THE CONSENSUS MEETING
Consensus Meeting

- 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?

- 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

- 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

• 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
AFTER THE CONSENSUS MEETING
Local Steps after Consensus Meeting

• 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

• 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

- 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@lwvma.org.
QUESTIONS?

Raise your hand to ask an audio question.
Or
Type your question into the ‘chat’ box.