



Advocacy & Lobbying Policy written by Ad Hoc Committee  
(in response to a Resolution at LWVMA Convention, May 2011)

Sent to Local League Leaders for comment March 28, 2012  
Approved by LWVMA via Electronic vote March 20, 2012

## **ADVOCACY**

League advocacy is based on member study and agreement on selected issues and involves concerted efforts to achieve public policies consistent with League positions. When the League at any level reaches a position, it speaks with one voice, the voice of a majority, and the minority abides by that decision. Leagues may decline to take action at any governmental level and maintain a public silence, but may not take action in opposition to official League positions.

1. LWVMA public policy positions are the official statements of position for each program area and reflect the program adopted at the most recent state convention.
2. Advocacy actions include, but are not limited to, providing information to members and the public, building public opinion, and supporting or opposing legislation. Methods to do this can include lobbying, testifying at public hearings, using public forums and the media, panel discussions, League publications, and communication with public officials.
3. Advocacy activities can sometimes be funded with tax-deductible monies through the education foundation (501)(c)3). This is the case even when only one side of an issue is presented, as long as no call to action on a particular piece of legislation is issued. Advocacy activities that can be funded by the educational foundation can include (1) developing public policy briefs that analyze issues and provide detailed information and recommendations for addressing them through specific reforms and (2) providing forums for discussing issues and educating policymakers and the public.
4. LWVMA advocacy is always based on League positions and is fact-based, respectful, clear, and unambiguous in its non-partisanship. As a non-partisan organization which does not support or oppose any political party or candidate (see LWVMA Non-Partisan policy), LWVMA must assure that its advocacy activities adhere to this policy.
5. When the LWVMA participates in a coalition with other groups, any advocacy actions that are undertaken must conform to the LWVMA Non-Partisan policy and the LWVMA policy for participating in coalitions.
6. As part of its mission, LWVMA lobbies state legislators on a regular basis on legislation the League supports or opposes. When LWVMA decides to undertake a major advocacy action or a



new direction in advocacy beyond this lobbying function, it will first communicate with local Leagues in the state about the need for and scope of this initiative, and will solicit feedback from the local Leagues in a timely manner relative to the action under consideration. LWVMA will provide local Leagues with the necessary information and materials on such advocacy action to enable them to be effective and involved at the local level.

### **LOBBYING**

Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation that has already been introduced in a legislative body and specific legislative proposals that the League or others may either oppose or support.

1. Advocacy is a broader concept than lobbying. While lobbying can be part of an advocacy strategy, advocacy does not necessarily include lobbying.
2. Lobbying includes action that transmits a point of view on a specific piece of legislation to elected officials or their staffs, as well as action urging the public to contact their legislators about a specific piece of legislation. Lobbying activities must be funded through general operating funds (501(c)4).
3. LWVMA lobbies state legislators on a regular basis on legislation the League supports or opposes.
4. When LWVMA participates in a coalition with other groups, any lobbying actions that are undertaken must conform to this policy and the LWVMA Policy for Participation in Coalitions.

All action at the federal level must be authorized by the LWVUS board. This includes any effort aimed at influencing a decision on a federal issue, such as communicating with an elected or appointed official, joining a coalition, taking part in a press conference or rally, or writing a letter-to-the-editor. A state or local League wishing to work in this way on a federal issue or at the national level must consult with the LWVUS about the intended action. (LWVUS Impact on Issues 2008-2010)