



LWVC Coalition Advice & Policies

Local Leagues frequently ask the state League about partnerships. Are there trusted partners that we can endorse? Do we have a list of recommended partners?

As with most League responses, we begin with “there’s no simple answer”. We can’t give you a list of organizations that are great partners for every potential League project. In the end, each partnership or coalition needs to be evaluated separately.

There are organizations we partner with frequently—but we don’t join them on every issue or every campaign. While our mission and work overlaps with that of other organizations, there is never a 100% correspondence.

Coalitions: Partisanship, League Reputation, and More

Joining coalitions is one of the ways that we are able to magnify our League voice, and increase the number of issues on which we can be active. Coalitions offer the prospect of greater clout and of greater member participation, can often accomplish what the organizations working separately cannot.

We have specific guidelines about how and why the LWVC join coalitions. You can find these in [How to... Take Action](#).

Though the LWVC policies are aimed more at advocacy coalitions, these partnerships may be for advocacy or for voter service work. In either case, working in coalitions raises broader questions about partisanship, League reputation, and the League’s role in the coalition. Here are some specific thoughts on these issues:

League Role & Reputation

The League has two distinct roles—codified into two distinct corporations. One is what we’ve come to call our voter service role—registering voters, educating ourselves and others about issues of importance to the community. In this capacity, we provide all sides of the issue and refrain from advocating for any specific issue or policy. This work is conducted through the League’s Education Fund.



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Our other role is to influence public policy through grassroots advocacy and lobbying. In this role, we use the positions—stemming from the League’s study and consensus—to improve the policies, laws, and regulations in California. Sometimes this involves influencing decision makers, at other times the public. In both cases, we use persuasive language designed to win hearts and minds. That language is, by design, not balanced. It is, however, never misleading. The focus of all this language is to provide enough information to persuade others of the rightness of our position.

The two roles (Voter Service and Advocacy) sometimes get confused—both by the public and by League members. This confusion frequently leads to people attacking us for taking positions on ballot measures, for participating in campaigns, and for speaking strongly about issues we care about.

Despite this confusion, the League has survived for almost 100 years doing both jobs. We intend to keep doing both.

When we join a coalition, we need to be clear about which role we are in. Is it a voter service role—one in which we want to provide unbiased information to the public? Or is it an advocacy role—one in which we want to persuade the public about an issue?

Advocacy vs Voter Service Language

Language used when we do advocacy work is designed to persuade and change minds; it is consciously persuasive.

When we are involved in a campaign, language is carefully crafted and tested with a goal to persuade a particular audience. It is clear that different messages work for different parts of our community, and not infrequently, League messages are somewhat different from other coalition partners. This works best when we are all clear about the overall goal, and who is speaking to which audience. This all part of how campaigns work.



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Partisanship

Nonpartisanship is a core tenant of the League. That said, we remain in control of what we mean by “nonpartisan”; we don’t allow others to define that for us. ***The League neither supports or opposes candidates or parties.***

Campaign Coalitions—*a.k.a.* Advocacy Coalitions

We are careful about when and how the League name is used—but we can’t control all of the campaign rhetoric. Nor honestly, would we choose to. The League is not the sole arbiter of messaging—especially in a state as diverse as California. Our goal is to win the fight; we need to listen to the experts about what will both persuade people, and motivate them to vote. We also need to be respectful of other members of the coalition and allow for a variety of messages that work within various segments of the community.

Inflammatory language is not always bad. Advocacy campaigns generally carefully craft language, with a specific goal in mind. This can include inciting (motivating) segments of the community to care about an issue—people who otherwise might not listen to our message or act on an issue.

The League’s role in an advocacy coalition should be to help ensure that the language is truthful, compelling, and strong—and, at the same time, ensuring that we avoid being hyperbolic or uncivil.

Learning More

If your local League is interested in learning more about how the League conducts advocacy campaigns, we’re happy to arrange an in-person workshop or discussion about these issues.

Guidelines for Assessing Potential Partner—Voter Service

The coalition policy for LWVC Voter Service is written in the context of candidate forums. You can see the full policy [here](#).



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Guidelines for Assessing Potential Partner—Advocacy

- Will the collective group efforts be more persuasive than operating separately?
- Will the coalition be able to finance the activities necessary for success?
- Does the League have resources other than monetary to contribute?
- Are the goals, if not the motivation, of the member organizations compatible?
- Do League members feel a commitment to join?
- Are there League members who have the time and the personal commitment to provide leadership in a coalition?

Depending on the issue/activity, LWVC has worked with the following. These don't represent endorsements for all work. These organizations may also be found listed in the [LWVC Resource Directory](#)

Groups we partner for voter service work:

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - California (AAAJ-CA)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Law Caucus
CalPIRG
California Calls
California Civic Engagement Project (CCEP)
California Common Cause
California Forward
California Voter Foundation
Disability Rights California
Future of California Elections (FoCE)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Mi Familia Vota
National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
Rock the Vote



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Groups we partner with for advocacy work:

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - California (AAAJ-CA)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Law Caucus
California Calls
California Clean Money Campaign
California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom -- CCRF
California Forward
CalPIRG
California Common Cause
Evolve California
Green California
Initiate Justice
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
PTA
Sierra Club
Natural Resources Defense Council - NRDC
Voices for Progress

Sources of Reliable Information

EdSource
California Budget & Policy Center
PPIC
California Water Foundation
California Healthcare Foundation
Institute for Governmental Studies -- IGS
California Civic Engagement Project