



LWVC Interest Group Guidelines

Updated 2024

LWVC Interest Groups (IGs) include members across the state who are interested in a specific topic, such as water, criminal justice, housing, climate change, or other. IGs provide a forum for California League members to support each other in exploring advocacy and educational work around their specific topic of interest, always in line with California League [advocacy positions](#). Members of an IG can find and share resources, share successes and best practices, and provide support to local Leagues.

While IGs are not part of the formal League structure and do not have the power to speak for the League in the way that the state League, local Leagues, or membership does, they are important venues that promote advanced thinking on key issues and can help inform League advocacy work. They also provide a way for more League members to engage with the work of the state League and fellow members across the state in ways that are meaningful to them. These guidelines are intended to ensure that we maximize the effectiveness of IGs while holding to the [One Voice policy](#) that allows us to drive a powerful and consistent message.

Each IG has an Area Director assigned and many have an associated Position Director as well. The IG Chair is responsible for keeping their Area and Position Director(s) informed of IG developments and actions. If the IG has an associated Position Director, then the Position Director is responsible for bringing any requests for state action on legislation to the attention of the Area Director and state staff. The Area Director, and at times the Position Director, will act as resources and facilitate communication between the IG and state staff to help ensure the IG's work is aligned with these LWVC Interest Group Guidelines.

What Can Interest Groups Do?

- Share topics of interest and host IG-only discussions on topics of interest. Share articles, resources, and items of interest within the IG.
- Host monthly IG Zoom Meetings to discuss timely and relevant topics.
- Discuss relevant legislation or legislative implementation.
- Discuss challenges on related topics.
- Share best practices related to issue areas.
- Support local Leagues grappling with similar issues at a local level.

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- Support local Leagues in implementation of state legislation related to issue areas.
- Host forums for local Leagues to learn from each other about successes and challenges in issue areas and in implementation of state legislation.
- Submit proposed Issue Area Action Policies to the LWVC Board for review and approval.
- Apply to host caucuses at the biennial Convention.
- Recommend areas of focus for consideration by Local Leagues during Program Planning. However, communications need to make clear that the recommendations are not being made by LWVC, but instead being made by individual League members acting as part of an IG.
- Request action on state bills through communications with the volunteer Position or Area Director assigned to the Interest Group.

What Requires Prior LWVC Approval?

- Communications with state agencies, state agency employees, or state level elected officials when acting as an IG or an IG Member.
- Communications with other state-level advocacy organizations like the ACLU, Asian-Americans Advancing Justice, Common Cause California, etc.
- Coordinating any action across multiple local Leagues that is related to state legislation, implementation of state laws, or that requires contact with state government agencies, actors, or state-level advocacy organizations.
- Hosting any event for local Leagues or the public requires prior approval before contacting potential speakers. We encourage IGs to explore setting up expert webinars and panels for League members and the public on timely and topical issues. These should not focus on active legislation, but be more broad education about the IG topic. Please ensure speakers include diverse experts from LWVC partner organizations, issue area experts, etc. Webinars and other events should ideally be scheduled a minimum of 60 days in advance so the Interest Group can sufficiently market the event. If LWVC staff have capacity, they will support marketing, but this cannot be guaranteed depending on other organizational priorities at the time. Please use this [LWVC Interest Group Event Permission Request Form](#) to request approval to host a webinar. LWVC staff will respond within 10 business days to requests.
- Writing and distributing any toolkit, talking points, or other materials intended to be distributed to LWVC members on behalf of the IG. Approval of the concept

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should be requested prior to extensive work. All written materials must be reviewed, edited, and approved by the LWVC prior to dissemination. In response to the request for approval, the LWVC will advise when materials should be submitted for review and how long will be required to review and approve. LWVC cannot guarantee any turnaround time for review and approval of toolkits, talking points, or other written materials IGs may create and wish to disseminate without having prior approval through the form linked below. Toolkits, talking points, and other written documents may not be disseminated until they have been reviewed and approved by the LWVC. Please use this [LWVC Interest Group Written Materials Permission Request Form](#) to request permission to create a toolkit, talking points, or other similar written document intended to be distributed to the LWVC membership, local Leagues or the public.

What are Interest Groups Not Permitted to Do?

- Interest Groups and IG members do not have the authority to speak for the LWVC. They may not present themselves as representatives of the state League or imply that communications from the IG are endorsed by or on behalf of the LWVC. This includes communications with local Leagues, coalitions, partnerships, or with any governmental agency. Occasionally the LWVC will request an IG member to represent the LWVC in a particular meeting; this falls outside the scope of this guideline. In the latter situation the IG member will be asked to check with the LWVC leadership before committing the LWVC to take an action or to make a public statement.
- Lobby or advocate in the name of the state, local or national League. League advocacy comes from the organized Leagues, not from subgroups within the Leagues. Any IG member wishing to advocate in the name of the state, local, or national League must have the express permission of that League.
- Make changes to the content on any LWVC website.
- Publish or disseminate materials outside of the IG listserv without prior LWVC review and approval.
- Host webinars or educational sessions for League members or the public without prior LWVC approval.
- While IGs may form workgroups for specialized topics, they may not form new IGs. The formation of new IGs is done by the LWVC.
- Solicit or accept funding or financial support from any external entity in any way to support the work of the IG or any member of the IG participating in any related meeting or activity.
- Use the listserv, online forums, or any other IG communication platform to try to advocate for state or local bills on which the state or local League has not taken a position. You may discuss such bills, but you may not advocate for or against

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them, or try to drive either League or individual advocacy on these bills through the IG.

What if we want to do something not listed here?

The lists above are not comprehensive, as we could not possibly imagine all of the ingenuity, opportunity, and ideas that League members and IGs will encounter in their work to build a more equitable California and democracy. We encourage innovation and original thinking - so if the IG has an idea not sufficiently addressed above, please email advocacy@lwvc.org to ask for guidance on how to proceed.

Local League Action on State Bills

If a local League would like the LWVC to act on a state bill, they should use the [LWVC Action Request Form](#), citing the bill and the reason for the request. This could be a state bill that applies specifically to the local area, or it could be on an issue that is of particular interest to the local League. Local Leagues may advocate on implementation of an established law in their local communities without LWVC involvement if they go through their local League process for approval.

Interest Group Listservs and Discussion Forums

Because most of our IG conversations occur online, it's important that we offer guidelines as to how to engage in digital spaces. Our online community has ground rules and all participants in the group are required to abide by these or you will be removed from the group, or have posting privileges suspended or removed, at the discretion of the LWVC. These ground rules may be updated as needed.

In addition to the rules noted here, [Netiquette & Tips for Success in LWVC Online Discussion Forums and Listservs](#) and [Speaking with One Voice: LWVC Advocacy Policy Explainer](#) provide helpful ideas to ensure rules are followed.

General Rules

- All Leagues and League members abide by our [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy](#).
- Be respectful and civil. This is a learning and sharing space. We learn through earnest discussion, our ability to listen with empathy, and engage in self-reflection. Sometimes the discussions we learn and grow most from are the most difficult. We owe it to ourselves, our colleagues, the League, and the people we serve across the state to engage in these conversations with humility, empathy, enthusiasm, and a genuine desire to learn and grow.
- Avoid tone policing which involves responding to the presentation of an argument rather than the content of the argument itself. Need to learn more

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about tone policing? [Try this infographic](#) or this [piece](#) for a more in-depth explanation.

- No personal attacks, discrimination, harassment, or bullying.
- No promotion of violence or illegal activity.
- No promotion or endorsements of candidates or political parties. The League is a non-partisan organization.

Privacy

To respect the privacy of all of the League's participants, contact information will not be shared with group members; only the committee leaders and LWVC staff/Board have access to that information. The LWVC will provide a listserv or other online platform for group communications. If individuals wish to share their contact information with other individuals, it is at their discretion.

Communication

Respect the communication preferences of the group members with whom you are participating. Your involvement with the LWVC is to advance the mission of the organization and working well in a team is critical to the success of your group and the LWVC. None of us can do anything alone – we are stronger together and respecting your colleagues is paramount to further strengthening our work.

Limit Post Lengths

If you wish to send something longer than three paragraphs, send a summary instead, and link or attach the longer document to the message. Lengthy posts can derail discussion and progress and are not suited for online discussion groups. Brevity is a superpower - use it.

Appropriate Dress

While this guidance may seem self-evident, please dress appropriately for all meetings – whether in person or virtual. **Minimal appropriate dress means wearing a shirt and bottoms at all meetings.** Casual dress for most meetings is fine. Depending on the circumstances, consider more formal attire for public presentations.

Flagging Inappropriate Messages

If you believe that a message is inappropriate, please do not engage in a group discussion on the matter. Such discussions take up valuable space, and distract members from more meaningful discussions. If inappropriate postings or violations are noticed, please [use this form](#) to report the matter.

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Removal Rule

The LWVC may remove any group participants, without warning, who violate these community guidelines. It is paramount that the LWVC create and nourish a diverse and safe community in which people from all walks of life and life experiences can participate without fear, intimidation, harassment, or bullying. Decisions about removal from the group, and suspension or removal of posting privileges, will be made at the discretion of the LWVC.

We are all here to make a more equitable future in California, empower voters, and defend democracy. These community guidelines help set shared expectations for how we will interact and engage with one another in our collaborative work to make a better California. Thank you for your work and participation.