

2022-2023 LWV Ohio State Convention Planning Positions and Priorities (Program): Local League Input

TO: Local League Presidents

FROM: League of Women Voters of Ohio

gy and drive of the suffragists. Their purpose was to encourage active and informed public participation in government through voter education and through a process of study and advocacy aimed at understanding and influencing public policy. These two separate but equal missions of the League, nonpartisan Voter Service, which neither supports or opposes candidates or parties, and Program and Advocacy, continue to the present day.

TIMELINE

December — February

Local Leagues review positions and past priorities at a Positions and Priorities: Looking Ahead to Convention meeting. This can be a regular meeting, an open board meeting or a special meeting. **This is a members only activity.**

Again, Local Leagues that think they might suggest updates, concurrences or new studies might want to hold their meeting early in order to gather support for their proposal from other Leagues. Local Leagues may lobby other Leagues to support suggestions they might have.

Feb 28, 2023

Deadline for local League responses. Please make sure your local League board has approved the final report with all your recommendations. Please use the form online at <https://forms.gle/zWioCrSgnzRyDG5T6> If you are unable to complete the form online, please return your report via email to advocacy@lwvohio.org.

1st Week of March 2023

Priority Planning Committees compile reports.

March 11, 2023

State board considers the recommendations from Local Leagues and creates a Proposed Statement of Positions and Priorities

April-June 2023

Local Leagues review the Proposed Priorities. They may wish to use the League network to rally support for recommended and non-recommended items.

June 2023

State Convention delegates debate and adopt 2023-2025 positions and priorities.

POSITIONS: THE PROCESS

The biennial Position and Priority Review is a chance for Local Leagues to give policy direction to the LWVO board and staff regarding **state** League positions (you are asked to review national positions in alternate years). Grassroots planning is a unique League feature. We ask you to give thoughtful consideration to the positions and activity that LWVO has taken historically, and to provide feedback based on the unique perspective of your members.

This link will take you to the complete LWVO positions (**Agenda for Action**): **You can visit the page on our [website](#) to have a short summary of each of our positions to help you with discussion.**

One of the highlights of State Convention is the adoption of a program that will position the League as a leader in advocacy and education in Ohio. In selecting issues that are important, lively and relevant, you can ensure that the League will have an impact on the significant policy issues facing our state.

Grassroots planning is a unique League feature. The program planning meeting is an every-member opportunity to review existing League positions. These positions are important in taking action at both a local and state level. The selection of priorities in regard to issues helps determine where we will spend time, talent, energy and money in planning an overall legislative strategy. We cannot focus on all our issues.

It's important that each Local League take the time to consider, complete and submit a response form. Based on local League responses, a proposed program will be developed by the LWVO board of directors. At Convention, recommended and non-recommended items will be discussed and debated. Delegates will then adopt the 2023-2025 state positions and priorities.

Thank you for participating in this important process!

Added helps: Appendix 1: definitions and Appendix 2: Sample meetings

Special Circumstances and Procedures

Updates and studies can be problematic if not given sufficient time for development. The support of other local Leagues can play a role in allowing for a recommendation for

acceptance at convention. Yet, that is not the final word as we have seen at the last state convention. A League can bring a new study to the floor (the Criminal Justice Study as an example). This is a grassroots organization.

Proposing a New Study

It is anticipated that a League suggesting a study for a new position will form the core study committee for the work involved. But that committee also needs representation from other areas of the state. **Therefore, there must be support from other Leagues. Getting that support at this stage is very important.**

A new study should be a critical issue for which we lack a position to take action. It should reflect an essential part of our mission (such as the recent new position on armed school personnel) or add to the scope of our important positions (such as the recent concurrence on charter schools).

Start with the topic of the study. Define its scope. Then start with these questions:

- Is there a national position/s that could be used for advocacy here? If no, proceed. If yes, then maybe what is needed is a guide or rubric to help with advocacy support.
- Would the study result in a position that could then influence state legislative actions? Our positions support us in changing policy at the state level.
- Could League make a unique contribution in this area or does it duplicate the work of others? We cannot do everything. Our positions and priorities are weighed against our nonpartisan nature and our main mission of Making Democracy Work. We do have positions that allow us to partner or lend support to other organizations to take the lead on some issues.

Next set of questions to ask:

- Is there already another League's position on the issue? Is the position based on the same circumstances as Ohio? If there are several positions, is one better for Ohio? Can parts of several positions be combined? Finding Leagues that already have studied the issue and have a position short cuts the process. There is still a need for a committee to review the positions and formulate how it might look for Ohio. The procedure now is not a study but a **concurrence (see definition page)**. We used a concurrence for our position on charter schools. The base position was from LWV Florida.
- Are there enough interested members in your League to form the core of the committee?
- Do we have financial resources to study the issue?

If you have now gotten to this point and want to proceed, take these steps as early as possible. Start with a document explaining the study. Email that document to every League using the presidents list from the LWVO office. The instructions should state that if a League supports you, they should indicate that support by also requesting a study, or concurrence, in the appropriate place. This gives Leagues a chance to discuss the issue as part of their meeting on by-laws, positions and priorities.

Your document should include:

- o Subject of study
- o Rationale
- o Request for study or concurrence
- o If concurrence, the state and position (include electronic link)

Proposing an Update/Review

When you read through Agenda for Action, you can see the date a position was adopted and each time it was revised. Some of our positions are very comprehensive and actually reference policies, documents, agreements, etc. Sometimes terminology has changed. Sometimes the scope of the issue has expanded or new research has redefined the issue.

An Update requires a study of limited scope in light of the new information. An example of this was our water position that referenced agreements that have been replaced with new agreements and policy statements. For changes in the documents cited in a position due to replacement or expiration, etc.(example: our interbasin transfer of water position).: A committee of experts need to review the replacement agreements, etc. to see if the update just needs these documents to be changed. This is in process with our water/Great Lakes positions. The new agreements/documents in no way affect the position itself. Another example would be terminology changes whereby a group would review the position, inserting the new terminology.

If the review is needed because there have been substantial changes within the issue, then these considerations are important:

- Is the position sufficient as it stands to achieve the desired change?
- Is there a need and is there member interest in altering the position?
- Are there enough interested members to form the core of that study committee from your League?
- Do we have financial resources to update this position (about \$200 per year)?

Building Support for Your Recommendation(s)

To be a recommended item at the 2023 Convention, a program recommendation must have significant support among Ohio Leagues as indicated on local Leagues' Report Forms. Therefore, LWVO urges Leagues to build support for their recommendations for a review/update, a study, or for dropping a position by reaching out to other Ohio Leagues during the planning process December-February and asking them to make the same recommendation.

Legislative Priorities

Our priorities right now are voting rights, election security and redistricting. We are prioritizing Making Democracy Work.

We never thought we would still be dealing with redistricting, but that still needs to be our focus. We have fought long and hard to get us to this point and need to keep going as we are

In order to prepare for State Convention, we need all local Leagues to review several items. In this packet, you will find all the materials you need.

Please note: If there is any chance of your League presenting a study, please start early in order to gain the necessary support from other Local Leagues. There is a guide to proposing a study in Appendix 4.

A. An Introduction

B. Overall timeline

C. Positions as found in Agenda for Action

- a. Definitions and Procedures for Updates**
- b. Definitions and procedure for recommending a new study**
- c. Definitions of terms used in review of current positions**
- d. Procedure for review of positions**

D. Legislative Priorities

- a. Guidance in recommending priorities**
- b. Your League's priority and rationale**

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Introduction: What is League Program?

League program is the education and advocacy platform that members of the League of Women Voters adopt to support the mission of their organization.

League Principles are concepts of government supported by the League as a whole. They are the authorization for adoption of national, state, and local program. (See Appendix 3)

The LWVUS Bylaws (Art. XII, Sec. 2) define program as follows:

The program shall consist of action to implement the Principles and those governmental issues chosen by the convention for concerted study, or concurrence, and action.

Program includes both:

- Action to support League principles.
- Study of public policy issues, followed by action to support adopted positions.

Origin and Purpose of the League

The League grew out of the women's suffrage movement. In 1920, after women won the right to vote through passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, members of the movement founded the League of Women Voters of the United States in order to make further constructive use of the emerging temporary maps.

We have positions on lots of important issues. **In the action section of Agenda for Action, you can read how we have taken action on some of our issues.** A quick visit to our website will review our current social justice priorities. Just click on [Current Policy Priorities](#).

As you discuss legislative priorities, we hope you will underscore the importance of the full Making Democracy Work® Campaign. At the national convention, delegates again fully supported the **League-wide Campaign for Making Democracy Work®: Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting**. It is our essential mission, and we are seeing how important it is here in Ohio.

*****Keeping that in mind, and considering all the other issues that have been active, your League needs to recommend **ONE additional** position that should have priority for state action in 2023-2025. Consider:

- Is this issue of paramount importance over the next two years?
- Can this issue be addressed most effectively through state (rather than federal/local) action?
- Are there local League members well informed about this issue/position and willing to advocate for it?
- Is this issue current (in step with the times and member thinking)?
- Can League make a real contribution, or will it merely duplicate the work of others?
- Will timing and political realities permit League to be effective on this issue?

Will pursuit of this issue support the ideals of diversity, equity & inclusion in League activity?

Board Involvement: The local Board approves all recommendations. A Board representative then completes the form and sends it in to LWVO. Only one form per League should be turned in.

Reminder: It is important for all Leagues to complete and submit a response form whether or not they recommend a legislative priority, review/update, study, or dropping a position. We need to know every League has discussed the positions and legislative priorities.

League Response Form: 2023-2025 State Program Planning

Please complete this form at <https://forms.gle/zWioCrSgnzRyDG5T6> by Feb 28, 2023. If you are unable to return the form online, please email it to: advocacy@lwwvohio.org.

Contact information:

League _____

Board approval Date _____

Submitted by _____

Title _____

Phone number _____

Email _____

Recommendation to Review/ Update a Position:

No recommendation _____ *or*

One item to be reviewed/updated (from the list on page 6)

Rationale:

Are there enough interested members in your League to form the core of the study committee? Yes/ No

Recommendation to Drop a Position:

No recommendation _____ *or*

If your League recommends dropping a position, please complete the following: Position to drop:

Rationale:

Recommendation for a New Study:

Please refer to "Definitions and Things to Consider". Also, please double check to make sure LWVUS does not already have a relevant position.

No recommendation _____ *OR*

Topic for the recommended study:

Scope (what should and should not be covered)

Rationale (why timely and important):

Members willing to work on study:

Recommendation for Concurrence:

No recommendation _____ *OR*

We recommend concurrence with LWV _____ on the following position:

Is there a place where it can be accessed electronically?

Rationale (why timely and important):

Legislative Priorities:

Our League is dedicated to Making Democracy Work issues: yes or no

Is there ONE additional position/issue that should have priority for state action in 2023-2025?

No one position should have priority _____ *OR*

Position that should have priority _____

Rationale:

Methodology: What method did your League use for program planning?

_____ Board meeting _____ Membership meeting _____ Other (please describe)

Other:

How many members in attendance?

Was the planning packet easy to understand? ____ yes _____ no

What suggestions do you have to improve future planning packets and processes?

Thank You!!!

APPENDIX 1

Definitions

Actions that can be taken on positions:

- **Retention of Current Positions:** Current positions not recommended to be reviewed/updated or dropped will be assumed to be recommended to be retained as is.
- **Review/ Update:** This is a study of limited scope to evaluate a position in light of new information, changed circumstances, and/or conflict with another position.
- **Dropping a Position:** Are there positions that are no longer relevant/ needed?

New Study vs. Concurrence

- **Study** is the process of formally investigating and discussing a body of facts (including policy implications) whether supporting or contravening a working hypothesis, leading to or including a statement of position. The committee formulates a group of questions to be discussed. Based on the consensus around the questions, a position is formulated.
- **Concurrence** is an agreement among a substantial number of members, reached after study, leading to acceptance, reaffirmation, or rejection of a previously formulated statement of position.

APPENDIX 2

THE PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

Purpose: To recommend which LWV Ohio positions should be retained or dropped and which, if any, new studies should be undertaken. To identify and recommend a priority issue.

Goals of the Meeting:

1. To increase member awareness of current LWVO positions (and national and local League positions if you'd like) through discussion of positions.
2. To engage in a healthy discussion, and to identify and recommend any positions that need to be dropped or updated; to make suggestions for issues that require new studies.
3. To prioritize the areas in which League should be most active at the state level for 2021-2023.

What You Will Need

A successful, productive Program Planning meeting requires a certain degree of effort by League leaders. You must be able to supply the information that leads to good decisions. A local board member with experience related to state program is the most appropriate person to prepare and chair the meeting. While this is a great way to introduce new members to League positions and process, have experienced members help with specific questions, and the history of some of our positions.

Two sample Program Planning meeting formats are outlined on the following pages. Both require the following:

- League members!
- League Quiz Bowl host (if Quiz Bowl tool is used)
- Discussion Leader(s)
- In advance: a review of the full positions in *Agenda for Action* by discussion leader(s) and officers so that they can act as resource people during discussion of positions
- Recorder(s)
- Resources (ideally, at least one copy of each of the following for each small group, or multiple copies for large group): LWVO's positions as stated in *Agenda for Action* (<https://my.lwv.org/ohio/positions>) and LWVUS's positions as stated in *Impact on Issues* (<https://my.lwv.org/ohio>); local League program information. While additional copies of *Agenda for Action* and *Impact on Issues* are available for purchase, members may also access the files on the lwvohio.org or the lwv.org websites listed above.
- A copy of the handout "Definitions and Things to Consider, for each member (included in packet)
- Flip-chart, blackboard or whiteboard
- A block of time!

Sample 1: Small Group Format for Program Planning Meeting (approximately 2 hours)

Modify this plan to meet the needs of your League.

Local Leagues might organize the Positions and Priorities Planning meeting around small group discussions. This is a two-and-a-half hour meeting. Think about how to make this meeting fun – food always helps!

- ♣ Sign-in and coffee—15 minutes
- ♣ Welcome and overview of meeting—5 minutes
- ♣ Small-group discussions on retain, drop, update—25 minutes
- ♣ Report their recommendations—15 minutes
- ♣ Break —10 minutes
- ♣ Small-group discussions on priorities—15 minutes
- ♣ Report their recommendations—20 minutes. At this point, it may be necessary to use some means to narrow your selections.
- ♣ Whole group discussion of new study possibilities—15 minutes
- ♣ Close

Divide the participants into three groups that correspond to the three state program categories: **1) Government; 2) Social Policy; and 3) Natural Resources.**

- Provide each group with at least one copy of *Agenda for Action* and the complete national positions for reference. Summaries are not adequate. Also please make sure each member has a copy of the handout “Definitions and Things to Consider”
- Allow each group to decide on retaining, dropping or updating positions within “their” category. To keep the process flowing, appoint a recorder in each group who will make notes and report their recommendations to the whole group. Use a flip chart for a visual.
- Following a break and using the same groups, ask them to prioritize one position.
- Let each group report back to the whole group. Last, as a whole group, discuss issues to recommend for study, if any. Also, seek agreement on the ONE legislative priority, if any.

Sample 2: Whole Group Format for Program Planning Meeting (approximately 2 1/4 hours)

Pre-meeting: Chair finds experienced members to read about each position and create a two minute summary of the position.

Meeting: Modify this plan to meet the needs of your League.

- ♣ Sign-in and coffee—15 minutes
- ♣ Welcome and overview of meeting—5 minutes
- ♣ Whole group discussion on ***retain, drop, update*** for each of the positions in each of the three Agenda for Action categories (1. Government, 2. Social Policy and 3. Natural

Resources)—25 minutes for each program category. Each discussion begins with the summary of the position.

- ♣ Break (snack)—10 minutes
- ♣ Whole group discussions on priorities – 10 minutes for each Agenda for Action category, 5 min. to reach ONE priority overall
- ♣ Whole group discussion of new study possibilities – 10 minutes
- ♣ Close/ summarize

Provide each table with at least one copy of *Agenda for Action* and a copy of each of the three Agenda for Action category handouts. Provide each member with a copy of the “Definitions and Things to Consider” handout. You will also need to have, as reference, a copy of the national positions (*LWVUS Impact on Issues*). Summaries are not adequate.

To keep the process flowing, appoint a recorder who will take notes for the final report. Use a flip chart or chalkboard for a visual.

Following a break, prioritize one position for lobbying or state attention. Last, as a whole group, discuss any item to recommend for a study.

APPENDIX 3

Law is imperative in the promotion of **League Principles**

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international peace.

APPENDIX 4

Proposing a Study

Proposing a Study :

1. A local or state League Board votes to propose a study for LWVO.
2. A short description of the scope and objectives of the proposed study is submitted for review and recommendation to the Program Planning Committee/Advocacy Committee with the results of the Local League's review of state positions and priorities. The Committee prepares a report for review by the Board at its March meeting and is published with the *Call to Convention*. **The scope of the study will explain the extent and limits of the study. Obtaining support from other Local Leagues prior to this review is TV important.**
3. At the March state Board meeting, it is reviewed with the following questions in mind:
 - Are there people (drawn from several local Leagues) available to work on the issue?
 - Is the problem one that can be addressed by governmental (as opposed to private) action?
 - Is the issue one in which the League is likely to make a difference in the outcome?
4. Studies recommended by the Board require a simple majority for adoption. If the study is not recommended by the Board, it is listed in the *Call to Convention* as "not recommended" and a majority vote on the first day of Convention is required for the study to be placed on the agenda during the Program Planning session on the second day. In this case, a **2/3 vote** is required to adopt the study.

Proceeding with a Study after Adoption at Convention

1. If the study is adopted, **the proposing League names a leader to form a Study Committee**. All LWVO members shall be invited to join the committee. It is advisable to have at least one member of several Local Leagues from across the state serve on the committee.
2. The Study Committee is responsible for
 - carrying out the research;
 - planning the research questions and a discussion of the intended process (e.g., literature search, interviews, meeting attendance, surveys) to the State Board liaison within the first few months of the process;
 - providing consensus questions or a concurrence proposal by the end of the first year to State Board for approval;
 - providing resource materials to be posted on the LWVO website;
 - compiling a study guide including pro and con perspectives;
 - contacting the local Leagues to schedule unit meetings to educate members about the study and reach consensus or, if the Study Committee finds an appropriate position, concurrence.
3. For a two-year study, the goal of the first year is usually to conduct the research and organize it in a way that can be used. For the second year of a two-year study, or the first year of a one-year study, the Committee will frame and present to the state Board

a set of specific consensus questions or a proposed concurrence position that will be used to help formulate the final position. Whether the study is a one or two-year study, the same steps are followed.

4. A round of unit meetings for each Local League should be scheduled. For a two-year study, the meetings are discussions of the consensus materials resulting in a report back to the committee. Prior to the consensus meetings, the study guide should be compiled and disseminated in plenty of time for Leagues to share with members, understand the materials, and plan the meeting. A recorder must be chosen at each consensus meeting to report on areas of agreement, areas where there is no agreement, level of member participation, and other information relevant to the study. The consensus, or lack thereof, about each question must be recorded. No votes should be taken.

If concurrence was chosen because a position from another state provided a good position for Ohio, the Local League discusses the research and then votes yes or no on concurrence. A majority of Local Leagues must concur with the position.

Formulating and Adopting a League Position

1. The Study Committee presents to the Board a proposed position, reached by either consensus or concurrence; a report of the recorded views of the members at the unit meeting discussions that includes areas of agreement and areas where no agreement was reached; number of member participants; and a report of the study process and findings.
2. The committee is responsible for ensuring that the proposed position does not conflict with any LWVUS position.
3. The Board is responsible for approving the wording of the proposed position.
4. The Board must keep in mind the importance of wording the position in terms broad enough to enable the League to initiate, support or oppose a variety of specific legislative and executive proposals over a period of time. The positions should address policies unless governmental procedures are within the original scope of the study.
5. The committee should submit a report for the Archives that includes:
 - history – why the study was done, study committee members, time period
 - issues and topics studied
 - data and information sources
 - consensus questions
 - results

Disseminating a Position and Using a Position for Advocacy

LWVO is responsible for reviewing and approving all public releases of information on positions, advocacy actions, and policies in advance of their release to assure that the League speaks with one voice and to protect the League's reputation for trustworthiness, reliability, and consistency.

Once finalized and approved by the State Board, the position is announced to members, becomes part of the League's position statements, can be shared with the public, and can be used as a basis for action. Like all statements of position, it must be readopted at each convention in order to remain the basis for action.

It is important to remember that the study process is a cooperative effort between the LWVO Board and the Study Committee. It is the Board's responsibility to monitor the entire process

to ensure that the membership is able to come to consensus or concurrence in an unbiased and nonpartisan atmosphere.

Definitions

A Study is the process of formally investigating an issue, its supporting or contravening facts, and its policy implications. In League, study can take place at the local, state or national level in order to form a **Position** designed to provide the League with a basis for future political action or advocacy.

A position statement emerges through group interaction and the exchange of views on topics raised by careful research and analyses.

Consensus is an agreement among a substantial number of members, reached after study and group discussion at face-to-face meetings. No voting takes place to reach member agreement. Consensus is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions. In the consensus process, the Study Committee does not produce a statement with which members agree or disagree. Rather, the Study Committee uses questions to guide discussion, after providing background materials prior to a consensus meeting. (Non-members may not participate in consensus meetings though experts may be available to answer questions.)

Concurrence is the act of agreeing – or concurring – with a previously formulated statement or position. Leagues may concur with a statement or position arrived at by another League, a position stated by a study committee based on its research or reflecting widely held views, or a position of long standing that they wish to reaffirm. In preparing for Concurrence, the Study Committee and Board must approve the statement before it is sent to members for consideration; the study committee presents the statement and background material. From the viewpoint of League members, the simplest distinction between the consensus and concurrence positions is that in reaching concurrence they discuss and agree on a statement; in reaching consensus they discuss and agree on answers to questions. Both require a thorough examination of facets of the issue by a Study Committee.