

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF AMHERST**

**POLICIES and GUIDELINES**

**Revised November 2017**

**Revised March 12, 2015**

**Revised February 12, 2015**

**Revised February 14, 2013**

**Approved December 6, 2012**

## **REVISION SUMMARY**

- 12-06-2012 Policies and Guidelines document approved.
- 02-14-2013 Policy on Annual Meeting Minutes adopted.
- 02-12-2015 Nonpartisan Policy revised. (Deletion of Finance Chair as sensitive position.)
- 03-12-2015 Candidates night policy for write-in candidates adopted.
- 11-17- 2017 Media policy incorporated language to include social media, signage, e-bulletins.  
Annual Meeting motions to be checked before final minutes are approved.  
Took TMCC off the list of offices people are unable to hold as board members.  
Made slight revisions to wording in nonpartisan section.

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## NONPARTISANSHIP POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to assure the credibility of the League of Women Voters of Amherst as a nonpartisan organization. The LWV of Amherst, as an organization, does not support nor oppose any political party or candidate. The takes action on governmental issues and policies based on its principles and positions developed after member study and consensus.

The political effectiveness of the League of Women Voters is to the nonpartisanship policy under which the League functions. The difference between individual member action which ~~is, or~~ may be strongly partisan, and the nonpartisanship policy of the League itself, is not well understood by the public. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to inform the community about what nonpartisanship means in League terms, and to insure the community has no reason to question the League's nonpartisan position.

Board members must recognize that as a result of close identification with the League, they have a special responsibility to see that their activities do not create a partisan impression. The Nominating Committee should explain the nonpartisan policy to perspective nominees. The Board, when making appointments, should also explain the nonpartisan policy to prospective appointees. The nonpartisanship policy should be explained and accepted each year at board orientation.

### Guidelines for Board of Directors

#### 1. Elective Government Office

Board members **may not**:

- seek or hold elective office above the local level
- seek or hold elective office to the Select Board, the School Committee, or as Town Moderator in their towns.

All Board members **may** serve as Amherst Town Meeting Members.

Board members, **with the exception of the President, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Chair,** **may** seek and hold elective office in Amherst for:

- Jones Library Trustee
- Housing Authority
- Redevelopment Authority
- Charter Commissions

Board members seeking these offices should notify the board ahead of time.

#### 2. Appointed Office

All Board members **may** serve as appointed members of local boards, committees, or commissions if

such service would not be in conflict with a League program, and with proper notification to LWV Amherst Board of Directors.

### 3. Political Party Membership and Office

The League believes that political parties are essential to the American system of government and that the participation of informed citizens is beneficial to the political parties and to the system. The League encourages its members as individuals to be active in partisan activities, in finding and supporting candidates for public office and in seeking election to public office.

Board members, **with the Exception of President, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Chair**, **may** serve in any position at any level in a political party committee or hold office in a political organization which supports or opposes candidates, with notification to the Board.

### 4. Support of Candidates for Public Office

Board members **may not** host fund-raising or campaign functions for candidates.

All Board members **may**

- sign petitions on issues.
- sign nominating petitions for candidates.
- contribute to campaigns for U.S. President and state-wide office.

**President, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Chair:** These chairs **may not** take an active, visible role in a campaign for a political candidate. These positions are particularly sensitive and visible to the community. It is necessary that those holding these positions conform in their political activities to the meaning and spirit of nonpartisanship.

Board members, **with the Exception of President, Voters Service Chair, and Local Action Chair** **may:**

- circulate nominating petitions for candidates
- host or attend informational campaign functions for introducing candidates
- contribute to campaigns of local candidates
- publicly endorse or support local, county, state or national candidates.

Under certain circumstances, activity in other portfolios may also become sensitive to public criticism as partisan. Visibility in the League and the perception of the public are the key issues in deciding whether an individual's activity may compromise the nonpartisanship of the League.

### 5. Positions Outside the League

Board members **may not** hold leadership positions (either active or honorary) in any group whose stated position is in opposition to the League program.

Board members **may not** work in opposition to established League program or principles.

## **6. Additional Clarifications**

The Board may make exceptions for any Board member, including the Voters Service Chair, who seeks a nonpartisan, local position which may be elective. If Board members are in doubt about the compliance of their anticipated actions with the nonpartisanship policy, they should discuss the situation in advance with the Board, or if time does not permit, with the Executive Committee. Questions not covered by this policy should be resolved by the Board.

At the beginning of each League year, the Board must review this policy its purpose and application, and the guidelines, revising them when advisable.

If it is decided by the Board of Directors that one of its members has violated the nonpartisanship policy of the League or is working in opposition to established League program or principles, the Board may ask for that person's resignation, if he or she does not resign voluntarily.

*Revised February 12, 2015/Updated 1/18*

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

Board members may not participate in any decision-making process when that person or members of her or his immediate family has an interest that may be seen as competing with the interests or concerns of the League. When there is doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the Board, excluding the person(s) who may have the possible conflict. The Board shall evaluate and resolve any questions of conflict of interest arising from a Board member's employment.

Board members shall not accept stipends, grants, or fees for service for League projects because they sit on the policy-making board that is responsible for the project. Honoraria received shall accrue to the LWVA or LWVEF.

Appointees to boards, commissions or committees serve as individuals rather than as formal representatives of the League unless the position was offered to the organization. If the seat is for the League, the president shall appoint a representative after each Annual Meeting or when appropriate. Board members asked to serve as individuals shall notify the Board of their appointments to boards, commissions or committees that might have the appearance of a conflict of interest. In that case League titles should not be used.

*Adopted September, 2006*

## **MEMBERSHIP POLICIES**

### **Policy Guidelines for Late Joiners of the League**

Any new member who pays dues between April 30<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> will be a member in good standing through June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year.

### **Policy Guidelines for Delinquent Dues Payers**

Membership runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>. A dues notice is sent out by mid-September. A warning notice of delinquency should appear no later than the November issue of the Bulletin stating that members not paid up by December 15<sup>th</sup> shall be dropped from the membership list.

Membership dues for the current year are payable on or before October 15<sup>th</sup>.

A listing of unpaid members may be presented at the November Board meeting. It shall be an option of the Board to call those members with a final reminder.

*Adopted September, 1999*

### **Dues Waiver Policy**

Membership dues may be waived for a member in good standing who demonstrates a significant commitment to the League if the dues present a significant hardship to the member.

A limited number of waivers will be available in any one year and will be granted on a yearly basis. The policy is administered by the Membership Chair.

*Adopted September 10, 2009*

### **Membership List Policy**

The membership list is not to be given to any person or organization except League members. When a request for the use of the membership mailing list is received, the Board will decide whether or not outside use is appropriate. If approved, the League will do the mailing, using the membership list.

### **Policy On All-Member E-Mails**

LWVA all-member e-mails will be used for cancellations, reminders, updated meeting information and state and national League action alerts. The e-mail lists will not be sent to state since one of their uses would be fund-raising.

*Adopted January 14, 2010*

### **Distribution Of Literature**

Non-League material cannot be distributed at League meetings without prior approval of the Board.

## **DIVERSITY POLICY**

The League of Women Voters of Amherst affirms its commitment to promote equitable, fair, and just treatment for all individuals and groups in our community.

The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. The League subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs in our community.

In both its principles and practices, the League will promote inclusion and actively work towards eliminating barriers, both within our organization and within our community, based on race, ethnicity, national origin, creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, language preference, level of education, level of income.

Awareness and consideration of the diverse needs, perspectives and conditions in our community will play a central role in all that the LWV of Amherst undertakes.

The League is committed to developing an inclusive membership that reflects the diversity of groups within our community.

The League is committed to taking action based on League positions; diversity is an important component in determining the focus of the action.

*Adopted 2002*

## **POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE LWVA BULLETIN, OTHER MEDIA AND SIGNAGE**

All material accepted for publication in the LWVA Bulletin or e-bulletin is subject to editorial consideration and/or revision. The following are acceptable for publication:

- announcement of League activities.
- announcement of League program study and action.
- annual meeting information excluding the treasurer's report.
- announcement of meetings and publications for other groups and organizations if inclusion of the material is suggested and presented by a League committee, or the event is co-sponsored by the League, or approved by the Board. Decision of the Board is necessary in any of these cases.
- Non-League originated material if it is directly related to League program or Voter's Service.
- Letters to the Editor from individual League members regarding League program.

The approval of the Board is needed for the content of social media and signs that does not meet the above criteria.

### **Policy of Editing Copy for the Bulletin and the e-bulletin**

Bulletin copy is subject to editing by the Editor and the President. Members who wish to see the edited copy should indicate this and give ample lead time to the Editor.

*Adopted 1981, later revised*

### **Policy on Material to be Included in the Bulletin and the e-bulletin.**

Since the Bulletin is distributed to non-members as well as members, certain material shall not be included in the Bulletin, such as information for action at the Annual Meeting and members' email addresses. The e-bulletin gives e-mail addresses as links; the email address itself is not visible to the reader.

The Information Packet for the Annual Meeting, including the Budget and the Nomination Slate, will be distributed to members in a separate mailing.

*Adopted November 8, 2007, updated 1-18*

## **POLICY GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING LEAGUE DONATIONS**

The Board can decide to make decisions to donate and/or to publicize causes and/or to encourage the membership to donate individually as a means of taking action on a consensus position.

No donations can be made which would violate the League's nonpartisan policy. This is the only hard and fast rule. All other guidelines for the Board are flexible.

The following guidelines should be considered:

1. The purpose of the donation should fall directly within a League consensus or fall within the scope of an established League public service activity.
2. The recipient should be implementing our consensus so that donating becomes a form of action.
3. Donations should be earmarked for a specific project or activity.
4. The Board should be able to evaluate the project before making a donation.
5. The Board should review in what manner our contribution will be publicized.
6. Support at one time does not mean automatic support at some future time.
7. Requests can be referred to the appropriate action committee who will make recommendations to the Board.
8. The amount expended for donations should be taken from the appropriate budget category.

*Adopted 1981*

## **POLICY ON RECEIVING DONATIONS**

The annual finance drive solicits donations and support from individuals and from local businesses, and it is the League policy not to accept donations from groups advocating particular causes.

*Adopted December, 2004*

## **POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF NON-LEAGUE MEMBERS**

The guidelines for recognizing service by non-League members who contribute time, effort, or resources to the League include two levels of recognition. The first refers to a gift or acknowledgment for service to the League. The second refers to a LWVA gift membership paid for by the League and presented to the person being honored for exceptional service to the LWVA.

### **1. Recognition for Service to the League**

To recognize individuals who contribute significant service to the League and are not members, a LWVA member may recommend to the LWVA Board that such persons be acknowledged for their contributions with a gift such as a Certificate of Appreciation signed by the President of the League, a special book, a LWV coffee mug, a plant, or the like.

- a. The LWVA member who nominates a person for this recognition shall be asked to send in writing or make a brief statement in person to the Board as to the services performed or other contributions by the individual to be honored.
- b. The person shall be approved to receive this honor through a LWVA Board vote by consensus.

### **2. Gift Membership in Recognition for Exceptional Service to the League**

Any person may be recommended to the LWVA Board to be honored with a Gift Membership in recognition for exceptional service to the League to be paid for by the LWVA upon verbal or written recommendation by a LWVA member and seconded by another League member.

The criteria for this Gift Membership shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. The person so nominated shall fit the qualification for LWV membership or associate membership (see LWVA Bylaws for these qualifications).
- b. The person so nominated shall have contributed exceptional services, time or effort to the mission, programs, and projects of LWVA without remuneration beyond usual contributions.
- c. The person shall be approved to receive this honor through a LWVA Board vote by consensus.
- d. The duration of the LWVA Gift Membership for Exceptional Service to the League shall be for one year and can be renewed by the LWVA through the process described in “c” above.

*Adopted August, 2005*

## GUIDELINES FOR COALITIONS

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Board of Directors has approved the following “Guidelines for Coalitions” as a policy for joining statewide coalitions. Local Leagues are frequently invited by other groups/organizations to join coalitions. Combining forces toward a limited and well-defined objective can increase the League’s impact.

Before a League board decides to join a coalition, it should fully understand the commitment involved (Time, money, and resources) and should plan to play a leadership role (on a steering committee, if possible) in order to influence the activities of the coalition.

These “Guidelines for Coalitions” can be used by local Leagues as their guidelines or as a framework for a local League policy on coalitions. If you have any questions about joining coalitions, please contact the LWVM office or Local League Services, (617) 523-2999.

The League of Women Voters of Amherst has adopted the following "Guidelines for Coalitions" as suggested by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts:

- The coalition’s major issues should mesh with League positions and be nonpartisan, though there need not be a League position on every issue with which the coalition is concerned. The aims of the coalition must not conflict with League positions.
- The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with the League program and adopted action priorities or the goals should be the ones the League expects to achieve in the future.
- The coalition’s activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve the League’s organization, advocacy, or educational goals.
- The members of the coalition should be organizations with which the League can work effectively. The League should have the confidence in the leadership of the coalition and may serve in a leadership capacity.
- Expenditures for work with the coalition (including staff and volunteer time, as well as cash and in-kind expenses) should be worth the investment.
- Joining or resigning from a coalition should be a local board decision.
- The League representatives to a coalition shall be appointed by the local board annually.
- The League representative to a coalition must have the prior approval of the local League president or designee, before making any formal or public statement of League position on a specific issue.

*Adopted 2001*

## Policy for League Sponsored Media

Programs should:

1. Be of local interest, although not necessarily about local activities or issues.
2. Not advocate against LWV positions. On the other hand, they do not necessarily have to be tied to issues on which the LWV has a position.
3. Not include candidates except in a nonpartisan way such as a candidates' forum.
4. Include area residents as much as possible.
5. Show diversity in the kinds of speakers who participate.
6. Show diversity in the kinds of topics covered.
7. Be of broad interest.
8. Reflect well on the League in terms of content and quality.

*Updated 1-18*

## **POLICY ON ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES**

The Annual Meeting Minute Review Committee must check with members who made motions during annual meeting, not including the motions written into the meeting script ahead of time. After the Annual Meeting Minutes are approved by the Board or a Committee appointed for that purpose, they shall be made available for the LWVA members and sent to the board. If a member is concerned about the Annual Meeting Minutes after they are published, the member shall bring that concern in person to the Board rather than by using e-mail, written, or telephone communication so the matter can be discussed.

- *Updated 1/18*

## GUIDELINES FOR EXPENDITURES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

The League of Women Voters **IS A NONPROFIT** organization but it is **NOT TAX- EXEMPT**. When purchasing or charging an item to the League, you should pay sales tax.

### **Expenditures and Reimbursements**

Board approval is required for expenditures of \$100 or more.

When you spend money for the League and need to be reimbursed, please submit a reimbursement form or another piece of paper with the expenses itemized to the treasurer. Attach corresponding receipts whenever possible. Please include the budget line item if you know it, and your name and portfolio so that the expense may be charged to the correct budget category.

Expenses incurred by delegates to State and LWVUS conventions can be sizeable. Traditionally, the LWV of Amherst has reimbursed convention expenses for:

- Registration fee (and banquet fee, if one)
- Transportation (air, mileage, airport transfers)
- Hotel rooms (assuming double occupancy where possible).

Travel is reimbursed at the rate of \$0.40 per mile, plus parking and tolls. There is no reimbursement for a second car traveling to the same location unless it is required.

### **Charges to LWVA Accounts**

When charging an item or service to the League, obtain a copy of the receipt and submit it to the treasurer. Please include the budget line item if you know it, your name and portfolio so that the expense may be charged to the correct budget category.

**At the time you make the charge, please verify that the amount charged to the League account is correct.**

The League currently has charge accounts at the following:

- A.J. Hastings, Inc.
- Amherst Copy & Designworks
- Collective Copies, Inc. in Amherst

## **LWVA CANDIDATES NIGHTS —POLICY FOR WRITE-IN CANDIDATES**

All candidates whose names will not appear on the ballot but who have announced a write-in campaign for a contested office(s) covered by a Candidates Night debate or forum at least five days prior to the Candidates night, meet all the legal qualifications for the office, and who meet at least one of the following criteria, will be invited to participate:

- There is evidence that a formal campaign is being waged, for example, evidence of campaign volunteers, a website or Facebook page, issuance of position papers and other literature, campaign appearances, campaign ads, signs, etc.
- A newspaper announcement or article has appeared
- There is evidence of financial support or receipt of contributions
- The candidate demonstrates voter support and interest

In determining participation of candidates according to these criteria, the burden of proof will be on the candidate, not the LWVA. The League may require candidates to provide information to show that they meet the criteria.

*Adopted March 12, 2015*