

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.

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