

## How the LWVC Takes Action

*To reach [the League's aim], study is not enough, becoming experts is not enough. Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but ability to act.*

- Marguerite Wells, President, League of Women Voters 1934-44

Leagues at all levels take action. Our advocacy can include writing letters to media or legislators, holding press conferences, speaking at hearings and public meetings, adding our voice to a ballot measure campaign or sending action alerts to our members. Taking action is always based on current program positions and/or on League Principles. Positions are developed based on member study and consensus. We have many positions, and many opportunities to act, so how does the League of Women Voters of California board determine when to take action on state legislation and statewide ballot measures, and on which items?

### League Priorities

The LWVC has a series of priorities: the Issues for Education and Advocacy set every two years at the LWVC convention, the legislative priorities set for each legislative session by the board, and the core issues of the League that include redistricting, elections, initiative and referendum process, voting rights, campaign finance reform and reproductive choices.

### Requests for Action

Recommendations and requests for action on issues—bills before the legislature, potential ballot measures—come from a variety of sources. Local Leagues or League members can request that the LWVC look at a potential piece of legislation for action, or we may be asked by the author of a bill for the League's endorsement. Other groups working in a particular area can ask that the League join them in endorsing a bill or ballot measure. Or, most commonly, we simply are following legislation in a particular area closely and find something that we want to address.

### Analysis: How Does It Fit with League Positions?

These requests are first sent to the off-board Program Director and/or Legislative Consultant responsible for the issue area for analysis. Off-board Program Directors and Legislative Consultants are experts on League positions and previous League action on the positions in a particular area, and do analysis of bills and ballot measures with recommendations about potential League action. They watch legislation in their area of expertise, and they frequently are the ones that draft the letters and testimony in their issue area.

The Legislative Consultants write analyses of the measure under consideration, including a summary of the measure and how it changes current law, a summary of the related League positions, and how the League positions apply to the measure. They also give recommendations about supporting or opposing the measure and indicate how important they feel it is within their area. The Program Directors may add their comments and recommendations, including information about previous League action on similar measures.

### Legislation Committee

Recommendations for action on legislation and ballot measures are considered by the LWVC Legislation Committee, made up of the LWVC President, VP for Advocacy and Program, all program directors from the LWVC board, and two off-board members. The Legislation Committee can take action for the LWVC on bills, and makes recommendations

to the whole LWVC board for action on ballot measures. Whenever action is taken, that is reported to the board and the membership. Members can find a record of League action in the [Bill Status Report](#) and on our Web site, <http://lwvc.org>.

Some of the criteria that the Legislation Committee and the board use in determining whether to take action on a particular issue are:

- League positions, including previous League action
- What does the League's voice add to the debate on this?
- What will happen if the League does not speak?

Frequently, the League has multiple positions covering a single measure, and the Legislation Committee must balance these positions together – and sometimes against each other. At other times, the League supports a part of a measure, but doesn't like another part, so we must weigh the importance of the supported portion against that of the non-supported portion. All of these factors weigh in the Legislative Committee and the board discussions.

For ballot measures, we also consider what else is on the ballot for that election. That element of the decision process for ballot measures doesn't so much affect whether or not we will take a position but rather when we might take a position and how strongly we will be involved in a campaign.

### **Endorsement Strategy**

Because the League's resources are limited, we try to be strategic about how we endorse measures. We want to make sure that it is something that we really can endorse (that it isn't still in a nebulous state), and that it isn't going to change in some way that will make us have to either withdraw our support or otherwise backpedal. If there is going to be some kind of campaign, we also want to be given a strong voice in the campaign messaging. We are involved in some campaigns from the very beginning (redistricting, clean money), but frequently wait to see whether a measure qualifies for the ballot before endorsing. Some of the other factors that we consider when looking at a ballot measure include the reality of its passage (is it really worth putting our energy into this?), who else is working on it (can we realistically be in a coalition with these organizations?), overall campaign strategy (is there a total plan, and can the League take an effective role?), and whether we want to make a statement of principle on an issue.

### **For More Information:**

League of Women Voters of California, [Issues](#) (LWVC position statements and action policies as well as our current priorities for education and advocacy)

League of Women Voters of California, [Legislative Priorities](#)

League of Women Voters, [Issues](#) (LWVUS statements of position and priorities)

League of Women Voters, [League Basics](#)

We also have extensive resources on League members only Web sites:

League of Women Voters of California, [Action Resources](#)

League of Women Voters of California, [Action Policies and Positions](#), 2011

League of Women Voters of California, [How to...Take Action: Guidelines for Local Leagues](#), 2006

League of Women Voters, [Impact on Issues](#), 2010-2012