Empowering Voters

New Member Handbook
2019-2020

www.lwvtallahassee.org

LWV Tallahassee
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Introduction to the League of Women Voters

Congratulations on your decision to join the League of Women Voters. We are happy to welcome you as a member of the Tallahassee League (LWVT), the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) and the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). You now belong to one of the nation’s most widely recognized, respected and effective citizen organizations.

In the League, we are not all organizers or speakers. We don’t all think alike or support the same political party. Most of us have little spare time. At different times in our lives we have different assets to offer. But together we have the intelligence, skills, energy and enough time that, when put together, make up an important, effective and purposeful organization. The League can help you be an interested, informed and effective citizen and you can help the League. This is your League. The more time and talent you are willing to invest, the more you will gain from being a member. Be active. Get involved. There is no shortage of opportunities.

Purposes and Principles

- **League of Women Voters Mission, Vision & Values Statement**
  
  **Mission:** Empowering Voters; Defending Democracy  
  **Vision:** We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.  
  **Values:** We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

- The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

- **League of Women Voters Education Fund Mission Statement**  
  The League of Women Voters Education Fund works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues. Donations to the Education Fund are tax deductible.

In addition to these stated purposes the League adheres to principles or concepts of government. The League Principles serve two functions: 1) authorization for adoption of national, state and local program; and 2) as a basis for taking action at the national, state and local level. The Principles are in Appendix One of this handbook.

Nonpartisan Policy

In 1920, The League of Women Voters made a choice: The League would neither support nor oppose any political party or candidate for public office. This decision continues today to ensure that the League’s voice is heard above the tumult of party politics. This nonpartisan policy has added strength to the League’s positions on issues and has made wide acceptance of League voter service and other educational activities possible.

At the same time, the League is a political organization and encourages members to participate fully in the political party of their choice, to run for office, to contribute their time, finances, energy in support of candidates as well as to be active generally in the governmental process. It is an advantage to the League to have politically active members. For its active members, it can be a personally satisfying experience.

Our nonpartisan policy is the cornerstone of our Voter Service program: candidates appear at our events because they trust our forums will be fair and impartial and they know they will be treated with respect. Candidates give information to the League because they know it will not be used for partisan purposes. This reputation for fairness and independence accounts for the confidence placed in our positions by interested citizens, other organizations, and the media.

While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary in order to maintain our nonpartisan policy, which has always been a major source of strength for the League. For
example, members should refrain from wearing the League button while attending a campaign rally for a candidate or working for the candidate.

**Nonpartisan Policy Applicable to Board Members**

Individual Board members must recognize that as a result of close identification with the League, each board member has a special responsibility to see that his/her activities do not create a partisan impression.

- **Elected Office.** Board members may not run for nor hold any elective office.

- **Political Party Office.** No member of the Board shall serve in any elected position in a political party.

- **Campaign Contributions.** The President, Vice-President, and the Voter Services and Local Government Chairs may not attend fundraising events or make campaign contributions for candidates. Other Board members may attend fundraising events and make campaign contributions for candidates at any level.

- **Political Campaigns.** The President, Vice-President, and the Voter Services and Local Government Chairs shall not chair or administer fundraising or political campaigns, chair a campaign event or work in a significant way in the campaign of a candidate for office at any level. Other Board members may not undertake such activities for candidates for local office, but may do so for candidates for federal or state office.

- **Social and Other Media.** No Board member shall indicate her/his political affiliation or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, including on social networking sites or other public venues that also prominently identify her/him as a member of the LWVT Board. No Board member shall publicly endorse any candidate at any level (such as displaying a yard sign or a bumper sticker).

The President, Vice-President and the Voter Services and Local Government chairs may attend free political party events for information only.

The political activity of a spouse or relative of a Board member is considered separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member.

Board members shall present questions about specific situations to the Board if this policy does not resolve the question.

(Adopted 8-16-2017)

**Membership**

- Open to any person, male or female.
- Minimum age for membership is sixteen (membership for students is free through January 2021)
- Joining automatically makes you a member at the local, state and national levels and a large portion of your dues goes to support the state and national levels through per member payment (PMP) made by your local League.
LWV of Tallahassee Board
At all levels of the League, boards are elected to manage activities. At the local level an Annual Meeting is held in late April or early May to elect officers and directors, set the budget and approve the program for the coming year. The Tallahassee League elects ten board members: president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and six directors. The board can appoint up to six additional directors. A list of board members is attached.

What the League Does

Program
While the League is an action group it may take action only on issues that have been studied and on which the members are agreed. This approach to action is responsible for the League’s reputation for thorough study, a reputation that is pivotal to our political effectiveness. Every local League decides each year on an action agenda which is called the program and is developed by an ad hoc committee which presents it to the board for review. The last step in developing the year’s program is to present it to members at the Annual Meeting for member approval. It can be found on our web page.

National and state Leagues also develop programs but these span several years. You can find the national and state programs online at:

- National Issues and Positions: [http://lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition](http://lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition)

Study and Action Groups
The Tallahassee League has four study and action groups. Any member may participate in one or more simply by attending meetings, which are announced in the League monthly publication, The Voter. These groups participate in program development and then, along with the board are responsible for carrying out the studies and actions described in the program. The groups also consider the program of state and national League in determining the issues they will address. A list of the Tallahassee League groups with contact information is in Appendix Three of this Handbook.

Study, Consensus and Concurrence
Local Leagues often participate in national and state studies or conduct studies of their own to determine a League position on issues. Any member may participate in a study; these small groups provide wonderful opportunities for learning, networking and friendships.

Unlike many other public-interest organizations, the League does not rely on majority votes for decision-making related to study results. Rather, it seeks consensus through member discussion of specific key questions. Once consensus is ratified by the board the decision becomes a League position and can be used to direct action.

A League can also take action by concurrence. A League’s membership or its board may concur with the recommendations of a task force, a League committee, decision statements formulated by League boards, or positions reached by other Leagues.

Speaking for the League
Only the president or president’s representative speaks on policy matters in the name of the League. Individual members may not put forth League positions in public testimony or publications but may suggest the president do so. However, members are encouraged to speak or write as informed individual citizens.
League Action on Issues
League action takes many forms – lobbying, monitoring meetings, sending digital communications, social networking, polling citizens, circulating petitions, developing and publishing documents, forming coalitions and other activities. Actions are based on the League program and are intended to:

- increase public awareness of an issue and
- achieve a resolution of it consistent with League goals.

Lobby Corps
Because they live in the capital city of Florida, Tallahassee League members are able to support the LWV of Florida lobbyist at the Capitol during legislative sessions. Lobby Corps members are trained and then able to respond to requests for assistance at the Capitol.

Voter Service
This very important area of League activity is often what the community thinks of first when the League is mentioned. Voter service activities take many forms: sponsoring candidates meetings, debates and interviews; publishing candidate responses to questionnaires; registering citizens to vote; making voting information available; sponsoring and participating in get-out-the-vote campaigns; and publishing background materials on current public issues and lists of sources of information on these issues.

The Tallahassee League is very active in voter services. Our website, Vote411.org, is an important candidate information resource for local voters. We partner with other groups to present candidate forums, sometimes taking the lead and sometimes handling one component of an event. Election years are very busy for League members.

Citizen Information
League citizen information activities raise issues and provide information on all sides of an issue. These activities also help citizens understand public issues and reach their own decisions. They are distinct from the League’s action agenda, which may call for work towards a particular resolution of an issue.

Meetings and Regularly Scheduled Events

Board Meetings
Board meetings are monthly, August through May. Members are welcome and invited to attend meetings. Notice of each meeting is published in The Voter.

Annual Meeting
An annual meeting is held in April to elect officers and directors, set the budget and approve the program for the coming year.

Holiday Luncheon
League members look forward to the December Holiday Luncheon when we have a fundraising activity and hear from a speaker.

Hot Topic Events
Hot Topic events are usually luncheons or dinners with a speaker. Look for an announcement in The Voter. This is an opportunity to meet people, talk about League business, hear important announcements and become active in the League.

- Monthly except June and July on the fourth Wednesday of the month, usually 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- Held at Four Points by Sheraton located at 316 West Tennessee Street
- Cost: $22 for members, $25 for nonmembers
Hot Topic events are a great way to introduce your friends to the League.

**Outreach**

LWVT participates in the Saturday Downtown Marketplace, the Frenchtown Market, and occasionally at other locations with a League of Women Voters table at which member volunteers offer information about the League and issues supported by the League. We also register people to vote. League members must be certified to register people to vote through the Florida League’s certification process which can be found on the state League’s web site (http://www.lwvfl.org/).

**Communications and Publications**

- *The Voter*, a newsletter published monthly except in June and July in print and digital format, is edited by Stuart Baker (sbaker@fsu.edu). The current and back issues are available online.

- Constant Contact, an online emailing service, is the means by which both the Tallahassee and state Leagues send information to members who have email addresses. New members are automatically added to the address list.


- Action alerts are emails sent by the national or state League asking members to contact elected officials about current issues and Florida Legislative and national Congressional votes.

- *Know Your Public Officials*, a list of national, state and local elected officials, is published in both online and print format. Print copies are made available at the Leon County Supervisor of Elections Office and local libraries.

- Our Facebook page is found at [www.facebook.com/LWVTallahassee](http://www.facebook.com/LWVTallahassee). Please “like” us and feel free to “share” posts.

- Our Twitter account is found at LWV Tallahassee @LWVTallahassee

- Our phone number is 850-309-3005. Leave a message because this phone is not answered but messages are retrieved regularly.

- Our email address is LWVTallahassee@gmail.com.

- Our mailing address is LWVT, 1400 Village Square Blvd., Suite 3, Box 115 Tallahassee, FL 32312-1231.
Appendix One: 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 that every citizen’s right to vote should be protected; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that 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 that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that 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 that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.
Appendix Two: LWVT 2019-2020 Board of Directors

(Board members are either elected or appointed. Those elected are so indicated by "E" and their term of office. Appointed members (A) serve one year but may be re-appointed. Officers are elected for one year.)

Teri Cleeland, President
703-201-1391m/668-6383h
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Sally Butzin, Vice-President
Education Chair
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Kathy Winn, Secretary
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Peggy Ball, Treasurer
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Gun Safety
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Sandra Kendall (E 2019-21)
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Trish Neely (E 2019-21)
Membership Chair
Lobby Corps Chair
322-3317
neely.fame@gmail.com
Katie Bohnett (A)
339-9599
Katie.Bohnett@gmail.com
Phelicia Stiell (A)
251-0853
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Barry Munroe (A)
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Appendix Three: LWVT Study & Action Groups, Committees, other Leaders 2018-9

Climate Change & Sustainability
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leelindalwv@gmail.com
850-894-0080

Health Care
Kathy Winn, Chair
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877-0960 (H)

Local Government
Daniel Irwin, Chair
904-537-5013
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Public Education
Sally Butzin, Chair
Sally.Butzin@gmail.com
850-728-1097

Membership Committee
Trish Neely, Chair
neely.fame@gmail.com
322-3317

Communications Committee
Linda Davis
lgdavis75@gmail.com
878-7320 or 559-09835

Lobby Corps
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The Voter
Stuart Baker, Editor
sbaker@fsu.edu
386-1086

Restoration of Felons’ Rights
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228-8379

Gun Safety
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sabrina.hartley878@yahoo.com
559-2027
Voter Services Committee  
Margaret Boeth, Chair  
Rmbt1947@gmail.com  
508-4800, 504-8492  
Barbara Licht, Co-Chair  
b_licht@comcast.net

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact  
TBD

Speakers Bureau  
Stuart Baker, Chair  
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