

League of Women Voters of Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Area

Political (Nonpartisan) Activity Policy

adopted May, 2016

I. Statement of Policy

The League of Women Voters ("League") is a nonpartisan, political organization. The League's purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. However, it does not support or oppose any party or candidate. League board members should not only be allowed, but also encouraged, to seek and accept elective or appointive office in government and responsible positions in the private sector. At the same time, the League recognizes the need to impose some restrictions in order to preserve the nonpartisan nature of the organization.

II. Rationale

The League must be nonpartisan so that:

- its position on an issue can be readily accepted as unbiased and independent;
- it will not be obligated to any political party or faction;
- it can seek solutions in the public interest on the basis of fresh inquiry and objective study;
- its voter service work will have wide public acceptance and trust; and
- its membership will appeal to individuals of varying political views.

III. Guidelines for General Membership

The League recognizes the importance political parties play in our government and encourages its members to work in the party and for the candidates and issues of their choice. Accordingly, all members, other than the President and Vice President of Voter Services, are encouraged to participate in any political party or governmental activity, provided that they act as individuals and not in the name of the League.

When a member is acting in the name of the League, that member shall refrain from any partisan display or action of party affiliation or electioneering. For example, at candidate forums or debates sponsored by the League of Women Voters, an individual member may not participate in a visible role as a volunteer if said member has a close personal, family or professional relationship with a candidate that would create a perception of a partisan bias, or is a campaign volunteer for a candidate participating in the forum or debate. It is the responsibility of each League member to disclose any such relationship when asked to assist at a forum or debate. The President and the Vice President of Voter Services shall determine whether the volunteer so disclosing the relationship with a candidate may participate in the League sponsored event. In the absence of a consensus decision, the Board shall make the determination by majority vote.

IV. Guidelines for Board Members

a) Public Office, Boards, Commissions, Committees

The President and Vice President of Voter Services shall not run for or hold an elected public office during their respective League term of office. There may be times when the League's Board decides other positions are of particular sensitivity in the community. The President and Board members may accept appointment to national, state or local commissions, boards or committees where such service would not be in conflict with League program.

When a board member decides to run for, to hold, or to accept a public office, that member must notify the Board. If a conflict between a Board member's public duties and the official position of the League should arise prior to or during the term of office, the League board shall review the conflict and decide upon a course of action which shall be in the best interest of the League.

If a board member chooses to engage in political activity beyond the extent deemed to be in the best interest of the League, the board may ask for that member's resignation from the Board.

b) Support of Candidates for Public Office

Individual Board members may support candidates of their choice, as long as they do so as individuals and not in the name of the League. Because of the nature of their positions, the President and Vice President of Voter Services may not publicly support any candidate during their respective League term of office.

c) Public Issues

Board members are free on their own behalf to sign petitions or otherwise speak publicly for or against an issue. The President may never speak in conflict with a League position, even as an individual during the President's term of office. During the study of an issue and before a League position has been reached, members speaking in the name of the League should refrain from making any public statements for or against the issue. After the League position has been reached, the President or a designated representative may speak or testify publicly at meetings or hearings only in agreement with the League position, and not in disagreement with it. No petitions may be circulated during any League meetings or League sponsored events unless petitions are in support of League positions. The President has the responsibility to ensure that other petitions are not presented.

d) Employment

The Board shall evaluate and resolve any questions of conflicts of interest arising from a Board member's employment.

V. Interpretation

The League has a responsibility to be sensitive to community perception of League bias or League candidate support.

VI. Annual Review of Nonpartisan Political Policy

A Nonpartisan Political Policy Committee, appointed by the President, shall be responsible for the annual review of this policy prior to the League's Annual Meeting.