

## **PROMOTING THE LEAGUE**

### **JOB DESCRIPTION: PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR**

**OBJECTIVES:** To promote the League's image and activities in the community and to inform the public of League's services, positions, membership opportunities and fundraising efforts.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Formulate a public relations plan and submit it to the board for approval.
2. Educate board members to be aware of public relations opportunities, stressing that every event is an opportunity for exposure.
3. Develop and maintain contact with media representatives. Maintain an up-to-date list of media contacts, as well as a list of organizations for networking.
4. Develop all media releases, with the approval of the president, and/or the appropriate chair, and direct the releases to all appropriate contacts.
5. Maintain copies of materials which could be used for release - i.e., newspaper clippings, flyers, and ads for your League use.
6. Explore all means of promoting the League—including letters to the editor, Op Ed pieces, photographs of events, exhibits, radio and TV spots.

\*\*\*\*\*

Public relations is the art of using the media to inform and to influence . . . to communicate. Every League member is a public relations representative and everything a League does involve communications: election services, legislative action, membership, fundraising, program planning, and so on. The target audience ("public") may be internal or external or both. The key is to make sure that the message is focused, that it is heard and understood, and that it will have the maximum impact on the intended audience.

A communications strategy should be built into every activity on a League's agenda. Consequently, communications is a vital part of every League leader's job. All board and off-board leaders should keep the public relations director or the communications director up to date on plans and progress and confer with him/her about effective communication strategies

By working together, leaders can multiply the League's opportunities to accomplish its goals and to enhance visibility.

Good public relations takes time, planning, goal-setting, decision making and follow-through. It involves knowing the media, analyzing the political forces in the community, taking the pulse of public opinion, assessing the League's resources and promoting the League's perspective on a story. A good public relations director needs to have a good sense of the range of activities that the League plans to undertake and the priority assigned to each one. She or he also needs to know who might make a good spokesperson on a particular issue, who has the background material, who has the contacts. The League's visibility in the community or state depends, to a large extent, on how successful it is in getting stories carried by the media. The League's visibility depends on how well the leaders communicate among themselves to focus and to deliver those stories to the media and consequently to the public.

### **PROCEDURE SUGGESTIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS**

PR is more than just press releases. Good PR should be an implicit goal of all spoken and written communication, of all spoken and written League material, publications, bulletins, speakers bureaus, letters to editors, etc.

**ALL MEDIA RELEASES** should be cleared with the president, and with any appropriate chair before being released. Copies of all media releases should be maintained by the PR director.

**FORMAT** of media releases should include:

Media Contact/Address	(TO)
LWV Contact/Title	(FROM)
Date of Sending	(DATE)
Date of Releases	(RELEASE DATE)
Subject	(SUBJECT - title of story)

Where appropriate and possible background and biographical information should be included with a media release. In this day of digital photography, it is important to remember that photos often speak much louder than words.

**RESOURCES** are numerous and should be tapped! These include each other, your staff members, former LWV members, former Board members, and friends. Your LL's dead files are a font of information as well. Also take advantage of League Basics (*In League*) (LWVUS), *Impact On Issues* (New York State & LWVUS), *In League in New York State*, and the *President's Packet*, and the publications catalog.

**CapWiz** is a resource on the state League website at [www.lwvnys.org](http://www.lwvnys.org) that allows local Leagues to send press releases to a customize list of state and local media sources. Please contact the state League office for assistance in using this valuable resource.

**STATE LEAGUE CONTACT** should be encouraged as much as possible! The LWVNYS is ready, willing and able to offer assistance, and to receive suggestions.

**PERSONAL CONTACT** is an important facet of the PR chair's job. It is an important facet of every League leader's job. Contact with members of the media, League members, League friends, potential members, and government representatives should be encouraged.

**MEDIA RELEASES** - general press releases require you to clearly state: who, what, when, where, why, how, and perhaps why not. Be concise and straightforward.

- Letters to the Editor should be reviewed and/or generated by the PR chair, who should offer suggestions about placement, and format as well as content. Most LL releases, especially Letter to Editors, should be signed by the president. Again, the appropriate director or chair should review.
- Editorials are important when involved in advocacy; they are not written by a League person. Present the information to the appropriate contact (usually the editor); she or he will write the piece. It is important that both sides of the issue can be presented completely, and that the League's position is clear.
- OP-ED (opinion editorials) pieces are editorials that are written by a League person. They should clearly and concisely state the League position.
- Calendar and Event Notices allow good exposure for a variety of events. Learn the contact and the required format and deliver the message to newspapers, radio, television, cable, and meeting places (posters).
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs) can be 10, 20, 30, or 60 seconds long and are especially suitable for voter service messages.
- Photographs should be included whenever possible. Be certain to list the subjects from left to right and check the spelling of names.
- TV/Cable releases require good research and good preparation. Determine how best to tie your League project in with the station's activities.

**EDITORIAL BOARD MEETINGS**-An excellent way of educating a local paper about issues and League positions on them is to request an editorial board meeting. It is important to prepare in advance a position paper that states the League's position and material in support of it. It is also helpful for the paper to raise arguments in opposition and to present materials that countervail those arguments. Remember, an editorial board meetings should not be viewed as an adversarial proceeding but as an opportunity to educate and enter into a dialogue with the local press. If you request a meeting, you must be prepared to answer the hard questions in an informed, logical, and sophisticated manner.

**RADIO - TV APPEARANCES** - The key here is to clear, concise, conversational and correct. Remember: plug for membership, plug for funds!

**PRESS CONFERENCES** require good planning and present great opportunities to get your story exposed. The main components include: a comfortable site, a convenient time, written statements, press kits, sign-in sheets, opening remarks, and arrangements for interviews and follow-up action.

**PRESS KITS** may include as much of the following as appropriate and available: cover memo or release; background and history on the issue; fact sheet on the issue; quotes and comments by experts; selected press clippings; state-by-state or city-by-city analysis; speeches or statements on the issue; charts, visuals or photographs; biography on spokesperson; League information - including history, services, how to join and how to support. Much of the background information can and should be presented with citations to on-line materials.

**FEEDBACK** should be given by the PR chair to directors and to the LWVNYS. This includes clippings and comments.

**ADVERTISING** should be purchased when the exposure warrants the expense. A good public relations policy also considers advertising as a pay-back and an expression of appreciation for the free coverage given.

**TELEPHONE CALLS** - Consider putting a League phone number in the information section of your local phone book. It is important that the public know where to reach your League. Make sure that all League publications list a phone number for your League. Usually, the president's home phone is listed, but the voter service director's phone may also need to be listed. Calls of a public relations nature should be referred directly to the PR chair or appropriate spokesperson either by giving her or his telephone number to the caller, or by offering to ensure the call that the appropriate person will respond in a timely manner (ASAP).

**COALITIONS - CO-SPONSORSHIP** should be viewed as opportunities for good public relations. Please refer to guidelines in *In League*, this publication under "Program: Study and Action."

**COMMUNITY EVENTS** - Heritage and special days, fairs and parades should have League presence. Participation provides opportunity to distribute information, register voters and solicit membership and support.

**EXTRA OPPORTUNITIES** - Public relations opportunities abound in a variety of ways. Consider: League products; League services (speaker's bureaus; moderating candidates nights); direct mail, brochures, reports; tours of facilities; exhibits and displays; anniversary celebrations; community bulletin boards (using posters and computers); charitable contributions.

## **RESOURCES**

*In League in New York State*: general guide to managing and structuring a local League. <http://www.lwvny.org>

*Welcome to the League* (LWVNYS): Contains general information about the League. <http://www.lwvny.org>

*Impact on Issues* (LWVNYS): New York State's program. <http://www.lwvny.org>

*Impact on Issues* (LWVUS): National's program. <http://www.lwv.org>

Publications Catalog from LWVUS. <http://www.lwv.org>

*President's Packet* (LWVUS). <http://www.lwv.org>