

WORKING WITH A COALITION: GUIDELINES FOR JOINING COALITIONS

(Updated March 2008)

In deciding whether or not to join a coalition, the following things should be considered:

1. Does the coalition have well-defined goals?
2. Are the coalition goals the same as LWV goals?
3. Are sufficient people and monetary resources available?
4. Is this a League priority?
5. Is the extent of League participation clear?
6. Will the League's nonpartisan policy be compromised?
7. Will the coalition enhance LWV visibility?
8. Will the coalition be limited to the agreed upon issue(s)?
9. Does the coalition leadership respect coalition goals and process?

The League should be certain that all press releases, letters and other material circulated to the public by the coalition will be approved by the League representative to the coalition or the League president in advance of publication.

Local Leagues joining coalitions on statewide issues must inform and get approval from the state board.

Local League boards should review and approve the joining of statewide or local coalitions. If the League is a member of an ILO, the local League should advise the other Leagues in the area of this desire to join the coalition.

COALITION BUILDING

(UPDATED MARCH 2008)

A coalition is a cooperative arrangement between two or more organizations united by a common position on a single issue.

Why are coalitions useful?

1. Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that work together can accomplish more with fewer resources.
2. Money spent and a resource used by one group is augmented by the money and NGO of the other.
3. The connections and relationships of each NGO are enhanced.
4. By finding the right partner, an NGO can double its resources and work.

What are the risks?

1. Always be sure that a potential coalition partner is working towards the same goal
Read their bylaws and their mission statement.
2. Be sure that your partner will bring your NGO real benefits. Does the other group have a good reputation? Many members? Effective Leaders? A sound budget? A good communications network and PR?

How do you build a coalition?

1. Coalition building is not hard. Meet with other groups and educate them about your organization.
2. Find out everything about their organization, (structure, funding, history, mission, etc.)
3. Main Steps:
 - a. Identify potential partners (nearby local leagues, ILO's in your area, American Association of University Women, NYPIRG, Common Cause, local colleges and universities, etc.)
 - b. Educate them and yourself about the issues. Go to each other's meetings.
 - c. Meet with your prospective partners and plan the program/project. Be clear about your goals and mission.
 - d. Activate your coalition by assigning tasks, responsibilities and cost sharing.
 - e. Assign tasks and be clear about who is doing what? Have deadlines. It is a good idea to have co-chairs, one from each organization to be responsible for checking on their own people as to deadlines, completions, etc. Sponsor public forums together. Write a proposal for a joint project.

Principles for successful coalitions:

The purpose of the coalition must be clearly stated and widely understood. Coalition partners must see each other on a regular basis and plan strategies, activities, or projects together. Each member of a coalition must participate in a meaningful way. Don't just talk about it. Do it!

Testifying at Hearings

Giving testimony at legislative hearings is an opportunity to represent the citizen point of view. Hearings are most commonly held to compile information about legislation in the planning stage. After legislation is passed and implemented, hearings might be held to gather facts about the impact of the law. (Observing a hearing also is a valuable experience.)

1. Before the Hearing:

- a. Locate the hearing through government websites, newspaper articles, legal notices, radio announcements. Legislators may advise you of hearing dates if aware of your interest.
- b. Know what local/state laws and ordinances pertain to the hearing subject.
- c. Know how the hearing subject relates to current League study and position.
- d. Know the rules of the body before which you will testify.
- e. Notify the hearing chair of your intention to testify. Ask if there are time limits.
- f. Testimony given in the name of the local League must be approved by the local League president and if it has a statewide impact, must be approved by state League.
- g. Type your testimony. You will probably be asked to provide a specific number of copies for the legislative body holding the hearing. In addition, have enough copies to distribute to members of the press.
- h. Notify the state League prior to testifying before a state agency, commission or committee.

2. At the Hearing:

- a. Identify yourself and your League.
- b. Deliver a clear, concise statement. Make it interesting.
- c. Do not be too technical. Important technical data can be attached to your written statement.
- d. Give examples of the benefits that would result from the adoption of the League position and give alternatives to proposals with which the League disagrees.
- e. Anticipate questions that may be raised and be prepared to answer them. Don't be afraid to say that you can't answer a particular question at the time. Offer to supply the answer later.
- f. Thank the committee for listening.

LOBBYING FOR OTHER LEVELS OF THE LEAGUE

Local League lobbying support is vital for the implementation of program goals at the state, national and ILO levels. Several times each year the state and national Leagues will issue action calls requesting that local Leagues take immediate action on a particular issue.

The president is responsible for sending an official letter or taking the requested action on behalf of the League but the program item director, action director or another member may draft the letter for the president's signature. The writer may co-sign the letter with the president. A copy should be kept in the local League file and another copy sent to the state or national League. A copy of the reply also should be sent to the state or national League if it contains information of interest or an indication of the attitude of the legislator. Depending on the timing, League members may also be asked to lobby on the issue.

The state Issues and Advocacy Committee and staff at the League's Albany office coordinate the lobbying efforts of the state League. Directors from the state board coordinate the lobbying of legislators and their aides, analyze proposed legislation, and prepare the legislative memos.

Local Leagues in all parts of the state can support these efforts by sending to the office any information they learn about their own legislators' positions on legislation which the League supports or opposes. Copies of letters, testimony, etc., as well as responses received, should be included so that a full picture of League action in New York State can be developed.

MANEUVERING AROUND THE CAPITOL **How To Find The Information You Need**

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

Public Information Office

Bill Status: 1-800-342-9860, open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., weekdays, all year; offers basic bill information and will mail copies of bills on request.

Bills, laws, and their histories are available on-line at <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>.

Assembly

The Assembly's homepage is <http://assembly.state.ny.us/>. From there you can obtain information about Assembly members, bills and legislation, public hearing calendars, legislative reports, committee schedules, and information about commissions and task forces. The list of Assembly Committee schedules and the bills to be considered in each meeting are listed as a sidebar to the bills and legislation section.

The Public Information Office in Room 202, Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12248, (518) 455-4218 is the place to go for copies of bills and their histories, voting records on the bills acted upon in the Assembly, attendance records of individual Assembly members, debate transcripts, Assembly and committee agendas, memoranda relating to specific legislative proposals, annual reports of Assembly committees, salary records of Assembly employees, status of particular bills, and other information relating to the activities of the Assembly. It is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mon.-Fri. You can review this information in the Public Information Office or obtain copies for 25¢ a page.

Senate

The Senate homepage is www.senate.state.ny.us/. You may obtain the same information for the Senate that is available for the Assembly.

Committee Schedules

Committee agendas and calendars for each chamber are reviewed by the vice president/ advocacy & issues by going to the Senate and Assembly websites to learn whether LWVNYS bills are to be discussed. Agendas are usually issued weekly, on Friday or Monday. Agendas are available at the Public Information Office, Room 202, Legislative Office Building (LOB) or Calendars are issued for each day of the session, usually the day before the session. Lobbyists are expected to attend committee meetings and report to the legislative director and the Off-Board Specialist.

Budget Bills

Budgetary material is available on-line once the Governor sends the Executive Budget to the Legislature, either through the Governor's website, the Division of Budget website, or the Assembly and Senate websites. A printed version is also available in the Capitol. For your area of expertise, you should get the appropriations bill, the Article VII (program) bill, the policy overview, the agency presentation, the State's five-year financial plan, and five-year capital program and financing plan.

Budget Hearings

Once the budget is available, a list of hearings will be published. If you wish to present testimony, get your name on the list by calling the number of the person in charge of the hearing.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Administrative Regulations

Existing administrative regulations are available on-line at www.dos.state.ny.us/infor/nycrr.htm. This is the on-line version of New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations (NYCRR), the compendium of administrative regulations, organized by agency.

Proposed Regulations

The New York State Administrative Register is published weekly and is available on-line at www.dos.state.ny.us/info/register.htm. Click on the year you wish to view, and click on the date of the Register you wish to view. Proposed regulations are listed in the Action Pending Index.

Administrative Hearings

The public is invited to submit written testimony in support of or opposition to proposed regulations. In addition, public hearings may be held around the state, at which member of the public are invited to testify.

STATE ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCIES

Agriculture and Markets

Serves agricultural producers and the consuming public. Promotes agriculture through various industry and export development programs; enforces food safety laws.

Audit and Control

Maintains the State's accounts; pays the State's payrolls and bills; invests State funds; audits State agencies and local governments; and administers the State employee retirement system.

Banking

Primary regulator for State-licensed and State-chartered financial entities operating in New York, including: domestic banks, foreign agencies, branch and representative offices, savings institutions and trust companies, mortgage bankers and brokers, check cashers and money transmitters. Ensures the safe and sound conduct of these businesses, maintains public confidence in the banking system and protects the public interest as well as the interests of depositors, creditors and shareholders.

Civil Service

The central personnel agency for the Executive branch of State government. Provides the State of New York with a trained workforce; administers health, dental and insurance programs covering State employees and retirees as well as some local government employees; and provides technical services to the State's 102 municipal service agencies, covering approximately 392,000 local government employees.

Correctional Services

Operates facilities for the custody and rehabilitation of inmates.

Economic Development

Creates jobs and encourages economic prosperity by providing technical and financial assistance to businesses.

Education

Supervises all educational institutions in the State, operates certain educational and cultural institutions, certifies teachers and certifies/licenses 44 other professions.

Environmental Conservation

Administers programs designed to protect and improve the State's natural resources.

Executive

There are numerous agencies within the Executive Department to accommodate governmental functions, including Budget and divisions and offices that do not logically fit into the framework of the other departments, such as the Division of Veterans' Affairs (which advises veterans on services, benefits and entitlements, and administers payments of bonuses and annuities to blind veterans) and the Office of General Services (which provides centralized data processing, construction, maintenance and design services as well as printing, transportation and communication systems).

Family Assistance

Promotes greater self-sufficiency by providing support services for needy families and adults that lead to self-reliance.

Health

Protects and promotes the health of New Yorkers through enforcement of public health and related laws, and assurance of quality health care delivery.

Insurance

Supervises and regulates all insurance business in New York State. Issues licenses to agents, brokers and consultants; conducts examinations of insurers; reviews complaints from policyholders; and approves corporate formations, mergers and consolidations.

Labor

Helps New York work by preparing individuals for jobs; administering unemployment insurance, disability benefits and workers' compensation; and ensuring workplace safety.

Law

Protects the rights of New Yorkers; represents the State in legal matters; and prosecutes violations of State law.

Mental Hygiene

Provides services for individuals suffering from mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance abuse.

Motor Vehicles

Registers vehicles, licenses drivers and promotes highway safety.

Public Service

Ensures that all New Yorkers have access to reliable and low-cost utility services by promoting competition and reliability in utility services.

State

Known as the keeper of records, the Department of State issues business licenses, enforces building codes, provides technical assistance to local governments and administers fire prevention and control services.

Taxation and Finance

Collects taxes and administers the State's tax laws.

Transportation

Coordinates and assists in the development and operation of highway, railroad, mass transit, port, waterway and aviation facilities.

LEAGUE POSITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

Some League members feel uncomfortable because they do not have all the facts to speak out in an all-out action campaign. These members should be reminded that only the identified League spokesperson, usually the president, is responsible for getting the League position to the public. League members should be encouraged to express views individually and can share the information obtained as a result of the League's study.

The following reminder about consensus and action which was included in the January 1980 LWVUS Post Board Summary bears repeating: "We hope that those of you who are steeped in the League program process are passing along the tradition: Once a position is arrived at, that is the League position. The relevant board determines when, where and how to apply the position thereafter. It is the prerogative of a member to take no action or to take contrary action as an individual. A board has the first choice but not the second. It may decide not to act, and communicate its reasons to the responsible board. It may not decide to 'take consensus' on the position or the application, and it may not take contrary action."

KEEPING RECORDS

It is very useful to maintain files on individual legislators - their views on League issues, their fields of expertise and interest, contacts made, newsletters, etc. In addition, records should be kept of all League action taken, including the following:

1. Copies of statements, testimony, media releases.
2. Details about and analysis of campaigns undertaken.
3. File of officials involved in the issue. (Who was on your side, who opposed, etc.)
4. Newspaper accounts, legislative newsletters, reports of interviews and phone contacts, letters sent and received.
5. File of organizations with names, addresses, common goals, dates and topics of any speeches by the League at their meetings.

ACTION CALENDAR

- ALL YEAR**
- Respond to state and national action calls.
 - Keep members informed with background information and action updates, particularly on priority issues.
 - Encourage every-member action through bulletin articles, telephone chains, e-mail, Fax, mailing, etc.
 - Work with the public relations director in getting publicity for your League's action.
- SUMMER**
- Review action files. Become familiar with positions and reference publications. Order *Impact on Issues* from LWVNYS or download from the state League website at www.lwvny.org and *Impact on Issues* LWVUS at www.lwv.org if you do not have access to an up-to-date copy.
 - Plan calendar. Try to anticipate focus for action on all levels and make preliminary plans.
 - Assist board in establishing local action priorities.
 - Determine plan for responding to action calls.
- FALL**
- Oversee campaign on ballot proposals.
- DEC/MAR**
- Organize state and federal lobby visits.
- FEB/MAR**
- Reevaluate action priorities.
- APRIL/MAY**
- Report to annual meeting.

RESOURCES

- *Impact on Issues* (LWVUS): Program positions of the national League. <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Presidents&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=137&ContentID=10190>
- *Impact on Issues in New York State*: Program positions of the state League. <http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/impact/impact.html>
- *State Board Report*: Issues five times per year by the state League, this publication includes material on program issues useful to item chairs. Distributed via email via local list serves contact the state League office. <http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources.html>
- *Welcome to the League* (LWVNYS): Contains general information about the League. <http://www.lwvny.org/localLeague/WelcomeLWV0706.pdf>
- *In League in New York State: A Guide to Managing a Local League*: Has a program and action section which contains job descriptions and important policies. <http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources.html>
- Nonpartisan Political Policy Handbook <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Presidents&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=9458>
- Action Alerts: Requests from the state League for action on various issues. To sign up for action alerts via the Citizen Action Tool Kit (CATT) located as a link at <http://www.lwvny.org> please contact the state League office at lwvny@lwvny.org. this requires an email address for notification.
- *NYS Legislative Reference Guide* (LWVNYS): Lists the members of the state legislature and other state officials. Available at the state League office lwvny@lwvny.org or at 518-465-4162
- *State Board Report*: Issues five times per year by the state League, this publication includes material on program issues useful to item chairs. Distributed via email via local list serves contact the state League office. <http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources.html>
- *Legislative Agenda Brochure*(LWVNYS): updated annually. <http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy.html>