

## **VOTER SERVICE**

### **JOB DESCRIPTION: VOTER SERVICE DIRECTOR**

**OBJECTIVES:** To encourage citizens to register and vote. To provide voters with accurate, timely and interesting nonpartisan information on elections, candidates, and the political process.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Uphold the nonpartisan policy of the League.
2. Recommend voter service activities for the year for board approval.
3. Appoint and oversee a committee to carry out the planned projects.
4. Strongly consider the production of a voters guide, or partnering with another organization which will produce a voters guide.
5. Promote voter registration and voter turnout. Provide voters with information on voting procedures, candidates and issues.
6. Be aware of the public relations, membership, fundraising opportunities provided by voter service.
7. Handle requests for League speakers on election-related topics and citizen education (non-election voter service.)
8. If there is a league website, make sure that up-to-date voter service related information is included and/or that appropriate links to that information are provided.
9. If there is a League telephone, make sure that the person in charge has appropriate and up-to-date voter service information.

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### **WHAT IT IS**

A key function of the League's voter service activities is to provide nonpartisan information to voters in order to increase participation in government. Voter service is a year-round function of the League with the most intense activity occurring in the periods immediately preceding elections. Voter service, as well as disseminating factual information, deals with the mechanics of voting.

Those participating in voter service activities must be well-briefed on New York State's election law. In local Leagues where there are both voter service and election law directors, they can work together to complement their activities. Often election law changes will have an effect on voter service activities, and it is the responsibility of the voter service director and committee to inform the public of these changes.

Pre-election services provided by many Leagues include:

- voter registration drives
- get-out-the vote drives
- information on local and state ballot proposals, including the major pro and con arguments
- production of a Voters Guide listing candidates seeking public office (including minor party candidates and those running as independents, their vitae, and, often, their views on selected local issues)

Year-round voter service activities should provide citizens with information and assistance so they will become more active in the democratic process. This can be done in many ways:

- Publishing directories listing names and addresses of elected officials, meeting dates of government bodies, etc..
- Issuing information on voter registration, political party enrollment and absentee voting.
- Monitoring local election law.
- Forming a Speakers' Bureau to disseminate League information.
- Conducting seminars on a broad range of topics (e.g. how town government works and what services it provides)

All of these voter service activities not only fulfill one of the primary missions of the League, but they are also a way of publicizing the League, attracting new members and even earning money.

Voter service does not advocate for any League position. Program and action activities are NEVER to be mixed with voter service activities. For example, a voter service speech on court merger must not be titled, "Why New York State Will Not Survive Without Court Merger." Clearly, that's program action. More appropriately a voter service speech would be "Court Merger: Some Arguments For And Against." Special care must be taken when the League is supporting or opposing a ballot proposal to separate voter service from advocacy. Questions should be referred to the LWVNYS voter service director.

### **THE DIRECTOR'S JOB**

Voter service is one of the most highly visible League activities. Political parties, factions within parties, candidates for elective office and issues must be treated equally and in an unbiased way. It is of the utmost importance that all activities be carried out in a nonpartisan manner. It is the job of the director to see that this happens. Additionally, the voter service director should:

- Be above reproach and squeaky clean.
- Meet with the last voter service director and discuss past activities.
- Have copies of *The Road to the Voting Booth*, Parts I, II and III and be familiar with their contents (see list of resources).
- Recruit a committee to plan a tentative voter service calendar for the year and then delegate responsibilities to members of the committee.
- Inform and receive approval from the board on all planned activities.
- Recruit a group of League members willing to fulfill requests for League speakers or moderators.
- Oversee all activities, offer guidance, and keep each committee member on target.
- Stay flexible so plans can be revised to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities or to cancel an activity that previously seemed worthwhile.
- Fill out and return the annual voter service questionnaire to the state League office.
- Send copies of voter service publications, newspaper clippings and reports of successful and/or unusual voter service projects as follows:
  - 1 copy to state office
  - 3 copies to the national office
- Accept praise on a job well done.
- Prepare a year -end report with recommendations for changes.

### **WHAT THE DIRECTOR CAN EXPECT FROM LWVNYS**

- Articles in *State Board Reports* on timely topics.
- Basic registration and voting information, accurate dates and deadlines for the current year.
- Publications to purchase for resale or free distribution, including *the LWVNYS Voters Guide*, which contains pros and cons on state ballot proposals, information on statewide offices and on registration and voting.
- Speakers notes which contain detailed information for use in the preparation of pre-election voter service speeches.
- Information on all statewide candidates, questionnaires for New York State legislative candidates, and assignment of responsibility for Congressional questionnaires. (See *The Road to the Voting Booth* for complete explanation.)
- Advice and training.

### **SPEAKERS BUREAU**

The League is often asked to speak to groups. Therefore, many Leagues organize a Speakers' Bureau made up of members who can speak on a variety of topics in which the League is interested. It is imperative to remember, however, that all topics must be approached in a strictly nonpartisan manner. *The Road to the Voting Booth* Part I includes a section on setting up a Speakers' Bureau.

## RESOURCES

- *League Basics (In League)* (LWVUS): An essential tool for League leaders. <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *Welcome to the League* (LWVNYS): Contains general information about the League. <http://www.lwvny.org/localLeague/Welcome>
- *The Road to the Voting Booth* (LWVNYS): Part I is a handbook for voter service directors, Part II a handbook on candidate forums, Part III a handbook on voter registration drives. <http://www.lwvny.org/vote/RoadtoVotingBooth>
- *Voter Service Chair* <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *Guidance to state and local Leagues Regarding Co-Sponsorship of Presidential Primary Debates* <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *Voters Guide Best Practices* <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm>
- *State of New York Election Law*
- *State of New York Education Law*