

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE

Handbook for Regional Directors
[Updated August 2010]



League of Women Voters of New York State
62 Grand Street
Albany, New York 12207
Telephone: (518) 465-4162 / Fax (518) 465-0812
Email: lwny@lwny.org
Website: www.lwny.org

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MISSION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

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.

The League of Women Voters of the United States

- **Acts** after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all government levels.
- **Builds** citizen participation in the democratic process.
- **Engages** communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters Education Fund

- **Builds** citizen participation in the democratic process.
- **Studies** key community issues at all government levels in an unbiased manner.
- **Enables** people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and conflict management.

REGIONAL DIRECTORS PROGRAM

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization and the local League is the most important segment of that organization. The League of Women Voters of NYS Board is committed to providing education, training and services to build and maintain the health and vitality of local Leagues including emphasis on Membership Recruitment and Leadership Development. The following are job descriptions for the Regional Directors and the Membership Director who form a membership team to lead the effort to achieve these goals.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Reports to: Membership Director

Objective: Build and support relationships between state and national leagues with local Leagues and their members to maintain League health and vitality.

Responsibilities:

1. Contact through conference calls assigned local League presidents and MAL unit chairs individually and collectively on a regular basis and send brief summary of meetings to Membership Director.
2. Forward and discuss during the conference call the bi-monthly summary of State Board decisions provided by Membership Director after each State Board meeting.
3. Provide an opportunity via conference calls for local Leagues to share issues in common.
4. Build relationships with local Leagues and their members in order to solve challenges when they arise.
5. Ascertain the “health” of the local League to which you have been assigned and report the assessment to the Membership Director.
6. Establish and maintain a communication link between local Leagues and State Board including gathering and sending feedback on issues of importance to the State Board.
7. Provide advice, orientation, and assistance in collaboration with the State League WHEN REQUESTED.
8. Provide an annual report for each local League from information gained by working with the local League throughout the year.
9. Identify potential leaders for nominating committee consideration for board appointments.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION**Reports to:** President**Objectives:** Oversee and Coordinate the Membership Activities of LWVNYS including working with a team that develops and maintains strategies to increase membership and develop leadership.**Responsibilities:**

1. Chairs the Membership Team that includes the Regional Directors and such persons appointed by the chair and meets periodically via conference call.
2. Informs local League membership chairs of state and national strategies designed to recruit and retain members through motivating new and current members to be involved with League activities.
3. Implements policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of local leagues, student chapters, and MAL [Member At Large] units.
4. Oversees the Regional Director process by appointing directors, assigning local Leagues to each region, solicits suggestions to devise strategies to strengthen local Leagues, solving problems and responding to questions from local Leagues.
5. Communicates regularly with Regional Directors with summaries of bi-monthly State Board meetings.
6. Reports to the State Board the status of local Leagues as needed and at the end of the year on membership statistics.
7. Approves all Regional Directors expenses for reimbursement.
8. Prepares and periodically reviews all State League membership and training publications. Initiates revisions as necessary.
9. Serves as a member of the Education Foundation Board of Directors.
10. Promotes, supports and assists with State League fund raising efforts.
11. Identifies potential leaders for nominating committee consideration and Board appointments.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL DIRECTORS' JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

I. FINANCIAL REIMBURSEMENT

Regional Directors, while on LWVNYS business, have the following allowances approved:

- a. Transportation: The most economical, yet efficient, mode of travel will be reimbursed.
 1. Exceptions to this rule due to individual circumstances will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
 2. For auto travel, mileage costs will be reimbursed at the amount designated in current LWVNYS policies.
- b. Tolls and parking fees are reimbursed.
- c. Lodging, when necessary, will be reimbursed. Efficiency and economy will be prime considerations. Most local Leagues will arrange for lodging with a member.
- d. Communications for League business, e.g., postage, telephone calls, fax, duplicating materials, will be reimbursed.

II. WORKING WITH LOCAL LEAGUES

Because the League is a grassroots organization, no single blueprint will work with all Leagues or with every Regional Director. All Leagues do not have the same strengths and weaknesses, and the reasons for these strengths and weaknesses vary from League to League.

Recognize these differences and adjust the approach to, and training for, each local League accordingly. Ask League specialists, when available, to provide technical assistance.

No one wants to be criticized or told what to do. You cannot force local Leagues to do things the "right way," and the "right way" for one League may not work for another League.

Tactful suggestions work better than decrees from on high. Be flexible. Suggestions may not be accepted and you must not be offended. Discuss problems with the LWVNYS Membership Director.

Be enthusiastic about the League and this enthusiasm will spread.

The following samples offer two different suggestions for making your first communication with your local League Presidents:

***SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS WITH LOCAL LEAGUE PRESIDENTS
LETTER FORMAT***

Date
Local League President Name
League
Address
City NY Zip

Dear _____,

I am writing to introduce myself to you and to offer to work with you as your League's Regional Director and ask you to participate in 4-5 conference calls each year.

Regional Directors are assigned to work in partnership with the LWVNYYS Membership Director to provide service to local Leagues. Participating on a conference call with other local Leagues helps us to network and problem solve and share the wonderful things your League is doing in your communities.

We can offer training sessions, either a basic board orientation or one in a more specific area such as priority setting, increasing membership diversity, local action, or fundraising. Also, we are available to answer questions or to offer help in solving problems as they arise, often by a simple phone call or e-mail message. Being a League president is a rewarding, though a very demanding job. There are many resources available through the LWVNYYS and I will be happy to assist you in any way that I can.

By now, your board members should have the portfolio binders passed on by their predecessors which should include: In League; local League policies, including your nonpartisan policy; local bylaws, budget, and program positions; and whatever is particular to the portfolio. During basic board training your board members will have an opportunity to ask questions about any of these, as well as to learn about League structure and program at the state and national levels.

To help me get to know your League, please add me to the mailing list for your board agenda and minutes, your local VOTER, and other publications you send to your members such as your member handbook and annual meeting kit. When you begin planning for annual meeting, I should also receive copies of any proposed changes in bylaws. In addition to any training sessions we may schedule, I could also attend an occasional board meeting.

Please contact me to get acquainted and to explore your training needs. I look forward to meeting you and your board and to working with your League to have a successful year.

Sincerely,
Regional Director Name
Address
Phone/E-mail address

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS WITH LOCAL LEAGUE PRESIDENTS
MEMO FORMAT
(Adapted from the LWV North Orange County California)

DATE:
FROM: Name, address, phone, fax, e-mail of Regional Director
TO: Presidents of Leagues in Regional Director Assignment

RE: 1. Scheduling conference calls; board training; mini workshops;
Assisting your League
2. Information and assistance I need from you

Regional Director is a rather glorified title for the limited amount of management and training one volunteer can provide, but I love League and thoroughly enjoy chatting/meeting with different Leagues and wrestling with the challenges of managing our immensely complex organization.

What I would like to do:

1. Moderate conference call about 4 times a year with you and other local Leagues
2. Be a resource for information, be available to answer your questions, and provide whatever assistance you need throughout the year.
3. Act as a liaison to the state and national levels of League when asked. However, local League leaders are encouraged also to deal directly with those levels of League.

What I need from you:

1. Be available for our conference calls.
2. Put me on your list to receive all mailings—board meeting agendas and minutes, VOTER, annual meeting kit, and other materials you mail to members.

III. CONDUCTING CONFERENCE CALLS

Communication should take place by conference call about four-five times a year after the State Board summary is received. After setting a date and time, contact the State office and they will give you the conference call numbers. The Regional Director would be the host and the League presidents would be the participants. It is suggested that the Regional Director take the lead in setting the time and date and inform the participants by email. Adjustments could then be made if this proves totally impractical. On any given call, expect one or two leagues to not be able to attend. Encourage them to have another Board member take his/her place. It is a good experience for others to see the benefits that come from this process. **** NOTE: The conference call service can only host 1 call at a time, so please be sure to notify the state League of the date and time you will be using the service. ****

IV. KEEPING IN TOUCH

Keeping in touch with presidents of the assigned local Leagues.

Contact each president periodically to answer questions or to direct him/her to those who have the answers. Make it clear that the Regional Director is available to give whatever help is needed or to arrange for help from other specialists. Maintain contact by sending occasional e-mail messages expressing interest in a League project or event.

Keeping in touch with the LWNYS Membership Director.

Provide periodic reports to the Membership Director on the status of the assigned local Leagues. Share challenges and successes, ask for help if needed, report any complaints, and relay information that will provide an understanding of what is happening within those Leagues. Alert the Membership Director about sudden changes in status or danger signals seen, heard or read in local League agendas, minutes or VOTERs.

Providing League training to the assigned local Leagues, if asked or if needed.

You can offer to do a board orientation. Give the orientation unless, in certain circumstances, a state board member or other specialist would be more appropriate. The Membership Director is available to assist with these arrangements. Arrange for specific portfolio training when needed or requested. Conduct portfolio-sharing (counterpart-exchange) meetings among neighboring local Leagues when there is interest. You can also help with priority setting and long-range planning as a trainer or facilitator.

Serving as the communication link.

Act as a link between the LWNYS board and the assigned local Leagues using the bi-monthly State board summaries in such areas as:

- deadlines
- convention/council or regional meeting registrations
- per member payment (PMP) problems
- state fundraising.

Respond promptly to local League requests for assistance, referring questions to other Board members or staff as needed.

If you become aware of a particular problem that needs an immediate response, please contact the LWNYS Membership Director, President or staff to discuss the situation. There are times when you will be asked to work closely with this League to assist them personally.

V. **WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MINUTES AND VOTERS**

[Note: sample format for minutes can be found in the publication: In League]

Read carefully the minutes and VOTERS for assigned local Leagues. This helps to:

- evaluate the overall condition of the League's health and welfare
- be aware of emerging problems
- evaluate adherence to League policies and procedures
- learn creative and imaginative methods of handling activities.

Note any unusual/creative ideas, approaches, or events, and report them to the Membership Director so they may be shared with other local Leagues through a State VOTER article.

Discuss with the appropriate State Board member any problems or questions on program, voters service, action or administrative portfolios or possible bylaw violations.

Content in a Voter

As a guideline, a local League VOTER (newsletter) should include the following:

- name of local League
- date (month and year) of issue
- names and phone numbers or other contact information for the president, editor and the membership director
- calendar listing the date, time, place, and subject of each meeting with the name and phone number of the person to contact for further information
- unit and general meetings prominently highlighted, e.g., boxed, underlined, starred
- membership coupon, address, and, if applicable, phone number of the local League office
- mission statement as part of the masthead
- date and issue number, if using bulk mail

The format should be interesting, attractive, and easy to read. The VOTER should contain enough information so that every reader knows what is happening in the League, but it should not be so long and detailed that people are turned off and stop reading. Articles on current state, national, or inter- League organization activities should be included.

Distribution of Voter

The VOTER can be used as a marketing, public relations and membership tool and can be sent to local libraries, community officials, and prospective members in the local League

area. If the VOTER is used as a marketing tool; phone numbers and addresses of members should not be put into articles without permission.

Local League VOTER awards are given at each LWVNYS convention. Criteria for the awards are established by the LWVNYS Board. Local Leagues are notified of the criteria for the awards by January or February before the convention in the State Board Report.

VI. LEAGUES IN TROUBLE

When a local League has been identified as having difficulties, the Regional Director and the local League, in consultation with the LWVNYS Membership Director, should work together to identify problem areas and find solutions. If a local League is at a crisis stage, its activities should be restricted to those that are determined to be necessary to maintain existence and those that are running smoothly without needing much energy from members.

There is no set pattern to follow since each League is different, but there are certain points to cover. League members must realize the importance of the local League to the community, the good things they have accomplished, and the loss to themselves and the community if they were to disband. Often taking an Asset Survey helps a League to value the many good things they have accomplished and to see their challenges in perspective, thus easier to address. The survey questions are under “Asset Survey: Annual Checkup For Local Leagues” seen under TOOLS, Item D at end of this document.

Usually, it will be determined that the troubled local League has been neglecting one or more areas of League activity necessary for its vitality (e.g., membership or local program and action).

Making those areas priorities for the next few years may be all that is needed to restore health. Sometimes the problems relate to a lessening of volunteer energy in the area. This seems to be cyclical, and measures to streamline operations are often all that is necessary. The new document from National titled “ABC’s of Streamlining the League” has proved to be most useful at this stage.

If it is determined that the area cannot support a local League at that particular time, several options are possible:

- disbanding and then merging with another local League
- disbanding and becoming a state member-at-large (MAL) Unit
- disbanding and encouraging former members to become State members-at-large.

These options should be discussed with the LWVNYS Membership Director, who will work with all concerned to find the best solution.

Refer to In League, for procedures for changing the basis of a League’s organization and the form that must be submitted by the local League.

VII. **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS: DIAGNOSIS AND CURE**

The following list will help to evaluate local Leagues and pinpoint existing and potential problems that will need attention. The major value of the list is to help avoid being misled about the health of the local League.

A local League is not doing fine just because it has published an excellent Know Your Town booklet, completed a good voters service project, or its president is pleasant. The list of symptoms is not complete, but it gives some idea of what to watch for. A local League that exhibits most of these characteristics is very challenged.

Symptoms of Ill Health

- Negativity.
 - Carelessness about nonpartisan policies.
 - Lack of effort to recruit and retain members. Early diagnosis and treatment of this symptom may prevent a future crisis situation in which a local League finds itself without leadership.
 - Lack of sufficient member participation in local League activities.
 - Lack of understanding of a local League's function and value in the community. If the members are busy talking only to themselves, the community might not know enough about the local League to support it.
 - Poor relationship with public officials.
 - Unsatisfactory fund drive, lack of membership and community support. If there is, nevertheless, an adequate bank balance, it may be that the local League is not budgeting properly (insufficient spending) or is supported by just a few large contributors.
- A tendency to be isolated—not geographically, but in attitudes toward the State and National levels of the League and sometimes toward other local or regional Leagues.
- Poor attendance at conventions, councils, and regional meetings.
 - Lack of understanding of the local League's reason for being [its value]—a tendency of the board or members to think of themselves as a civic association or as a women's club.
 - Poor understanding of League program: study, consensus, and action.
 - Stagnant board with no new leadership being developed or encouraged.
 - A president who does it all (and often very well).
 - Negative or defensive attitude toward outside help.
 - Personality conflicts on board.
 - Program presentations of poor quality.
 - State and National resource materials unused or used exclusively with no additional research by the resource committee.
 - Poor board to membership communication.
 - Poor or nonexistent committee system.
 - Few meetings or workshops.
 - Dull, unimaginative meetings or meetings consisting mainly of outside speakers.

- Board meetings that are poorly planned with no agenda with estimated timing—little is accomplished. Or not adhering to the agenda and time estimates so that one person dominates meeting.
- Poor public relations within the League. When this situation is coupled with good community public relations, the community usually thinks the local League is stronger than it is.
- Sloppy administrative procedures; no local board list, membership list, bylaws, budget, or calendar for board use.
- Bulk of the work being done by a few people.
- Lack of strategy planning; no setting of priorities; no goals and objectives.

Possible Cures

- If a local League complains of problems or exhibits unhealthy signs, the following list may suggest ways to help.
- Board training: use of one or more workshops in this handbook.
- Concerted attention on the part of the regional director: visits, telephone calls, correspondence.
- Direct help from members of the State Board.
- Temporary cutback in program overload. Choice of program should be based on the need to reach consensus, appeal to new members, and the degree of community interest.
 - Plan with the board a year round calendar that provides League Visibility each month through events, activities, op eds, etc.
 - Each event/activity includes Outreach at three levels: Personal , Allied organizations and Media
 - Support these events by vigorous, well-planned membership efforts where potential members are asked to join.
- Enthusiastic orientation of new members and their gradual introduction into the work of the League.
- Active, well-planned local program item with opportunity for newer members to participate which leads to Leadership Development.
- Shared committees and programs with other local Leagues.
- Revitalize the board: suggest the addition of new members to offset negative attitudes, bad habits, and boredom.
- Development of a strong, broad-based committee system. A program item should have a chair and a minimum of two or three committee members. The greater the participation in resource committees, the more the local League will involve members and grow. Emphasize the use of publications and other League tools.
- Promote improved communication among the board, membership, and community.
- Encourage communication with both State and National levels of League.
- Develop goals and objectives or strategy planning to help focus on problems and find solutions.
- Have a board retreat.

VIII. WORKSHOP FOR LOCAL LEAGUES IN TROUBLE

STEP I: MEMBERSHIP MEETING

This workshop is intended to be used at a membership meeting of a League which is having difficulty and which may be considering disbanding or merging with another local League.

Objectives:

- to look at the local League as a whole, focusing on strengths as well as areas needing improvement
- to encourage members to identify the reasons League is important to them and their community
- to identify reasons why members are reluctant to assume leadership roles and changes necessary to correct this
- to think of ways of communicating enthusiasm for League to uncommitted and prospective members

Materials Needed:

Blackboard and chalk, or easel and pad, marking pens, and masking tape.

Time Needed:

One and one-half to two hours.

Procedure:

Facilitator leads discussion of the following questions at a membership meeting and records the answers, keeping as many of them as possible in front of the participants for reference.

It will help the facilitator if another person is responsible for recording the answers on the easel pad or blackboard. Easel pad pages can be taped up around the room so that all can be seen at the same time.

1. Tell some good things your League has done—activities that have pleased you, have been well received, etc.
2. In what ways does your community benefit by having a local League here? Would the community miss the League if it disbanded?
3. What are the factors that are in favor of a local League in this city/area/county (population base, finance resources)?
4. List the advantages of being a full-fledged local League. What would be the advantages of merging with another local League? Becoming a State MAL unit?
5. What are the disadvantages?
6. Can you identify what has gone wrong? List symptoms of difficulty.
7. As individuals, what has the League meant to you?[Your Personal Story in 2-3 sentences]
8. What are the rewards of board membership?
9. What are the rewards of being president?

10. What factors may be keeping members from accepting the presidency? Board membership? Let's talk about how these could be mitigated.
11. What are you offering to new members to make them want to "buy in" to the League? When the session is over, the easel pad pages should be kept. Statements, questions, answers, thoughts, and suggestions should be written up and a report of the session sent to the president to share with the local League board. The report should be used for board discussion of the local League's problems and can be used as background information for a board session such as the "Board Conference for Leagues in Trouble" explained below.

STEP II: BOARD CONFERENCE FOR TROUBLED LEAGUES

Objectives:

1. Enable the board to take a close look:
 - a. at the total program it could undertake under League structure
 - b. at the amount of that program it is actually attempting to do
 - c. at the amount of League activity it must do to remain a visible organization in its own community
 - d. at items it can safely not do at this time
2. Help the local League decide what its priorities for effective operation are within the limits of its present circumstances
3. Help the local League excise guilt about what it cannot do and make members feel satisfaction with what is accomplished
4. Build strength by setting up a plan for success within the organization and within the community

Time Needed:

One and one-half to two hours.

Procedure:

1. Facilitator asks members to name categories of local League work as they understand them and specific jobs or activities their League usually does or would like to do in each category. List these items on board or easel pad. Encourage board members to make as complete a list as possible.
2. Draw a line across the board or pad at the bottom of the list. At this point, several sections of blackboard or pages of paper may have been used. Be sure each board member is able to view all categories and activities. The line drawn under the list is the bottom line. The facilitator explains that members must now consider the list they have made with the idea of removing from their work load those items they feel are least important to their success as a League in their community at this time. Point out that decisions made at this meeting are not permanent, and that they must constantly evaluate the needs of their local League, available volunteers, finances, and the needs of their community.

3. Facilitator now acts as a discussion leader to help determine what specific activities or whole categories of activities can be removed from the current workload or put "below the line." Usually members will begin with items they have already ceased doing or have never done. Frequently, one of these orphan items will become, after discussion, top priority and will be placed back above the line. Gradually, members will find more and more items that can be placed below the line.
4. The facilitator helps the group understand that they should remove activities without guilt. For example, a rural League may come to understand that it has no problem accepting the consensus of city and suburban Leagues on urban issues. Thus it may elect not to participate in a State or National study of these issues. If the local League has several active local program studies that year, it may decide not to do any State and National program studies until it has adopted a position on at least one of its local program items. The discussion continues until the items remaining above the line draw a clear picture of what can and must be done for the League to remain a viable organization in its community. Not only will top priorities emerge, members will have a better picture of the importance of some unglamorous organizational jobs as well.

NOTE: During the conference, the facilitator should help members understand the importance of local success to the strength of the League, to feel comfortable with their place in the big League picture (if 69 out of 70 Leagues in the state are doing the tax study and the local League can't find a chair or committee, will members feel comfortable accepting the resulting consensus if they do not participate?) to learn to live with guilt or free themselves from it. Point out that the glow of success from doing what they can do well may project a better community image than trying to do everything and doing it in an inadequate way. Talk about using energy in positive ways instead of crying over what they cannot do. Let them understand that the things "below the line" are not condemned to remain there forever, that they must keep looking at what they can and cannot do realistically with available members and money.

Each local League board that participates in the conference will have its own personality and perspective. It will be up to the facilitator to evaluate and tailor the conference to its needs.

TOOLS

A Regional Director can direct local Leagues to the websites of both the State and National leagues for additional information to guide local Leagues. These resources give guidelines for all aspects that apply to local League work. They include documents from the Membership Recruitment Initiative from National League and are designed to help Leagues increase Membership and develop Leadership.

1. ***In League***: found on the NYS website. www.lwvny.org under Local League Resources
2. ***State Board Reports [SBR] & News From Your State League [NFYSL]***
www.lwvny.org bottom of front page of website
3. ***Local League Bulletins & Newsletters***: www.lwvny-bulletins.org For ideas on programs, issues, other Leagues' activities
4. ***ASSET SURVEY: ANNUAL CHECKUP FOR LOCAL LEAGUES***: Regional Directors can encourage local Leagues to take the following survey to help them evaluate their "condition". It is important to encourage leagues to see their successes as well as their challenges.

ASSET SURVEY: ANNUAL CHECKUP FOR LOCAL LEAGUES

How is your local League? Is it the picture of health? Is it having minor aches and pains? Or is it showing signs of falling apart at the seams?

Grade your League as follows:

Consistently = 3 Frequently = 2 Sometimes = 1 Never = 0

(Individuals need not share their sectional scores. Total scores can be shared as can identifying the areas of weakness.)

ADMINISTRATION

How is your backbone?

Are you building leadership?

- _____1 Do you avoid playing musical chairs within the board? (Do you guard against having people on the board too long?)
- _____2 Do you resist always calling on the same tired "experienced" people? (Are you reaching out for new blood?)
- _____3 Are your committees more than committees of one?
- _____4 Do you take the time to do real training?
- _____5 Do board members have a clear idea of what is expected of them? (Do they have job descriptions?)
- _____6 Are board members encouraged to share and delegate part of their workload to others?
- _____7 Does your nominating committee work year round to identify leadership or talent where needed?

SCORE:_____

Are you developing teamwork?

- _____1 Are you using the executive committee only in emergencies? (Is the full board involved in the decision-making?)
- _____2 Are your board members comfortable with one another? (Are members able to avoid getting personal when they disagree?)
- _____3 Are minority opinions given a fair hearing prior to a board decision?
- _____4 Once decisions are made, are they accepted even by those who were on the losing side?

____5 Are board members growing in personal fulfillment?

____6 Are board members having fun?

SCORE: _____

Is board time used effectively?

____1 Does the board usually avoid wasting time on details that should be committee decisions instead of board decisions?

____2 Does the board recognize when committee decisions (or member motions) should be accepted and when they should be questioned further?

____3 Do meetings start and end on schedule?

SCORE: _____

Do you have good communications?

____1 Can your members rely on when your VOTER is coming out? (Is it published regularly?)

____2 Does your VOTER keep members in the know? (Is it informative?)

____3 Does your VOTER have a touch of class?

____4 Do you make sure that your VOTER doesn't read like a secret manual of some obscure government agency? (Does your VOTER shun League and government jargon?)

____5 Does the appearance of your VOTER make people want to read it?

____6 Do your minutes tell it like it really was? (Do you have accurate and adequate minutes?)

____7 Do you avoid expecting board members to make decisions with information thrown at them five minutes before the meeting starts? (Are agenda and background materials mailed out ahead of time?)

____8 Do you have a good system for timely distribution of State and National mailings?

____9 Are your board meetings held regularly so that everyone knows where and when to come?

____10 Are your bylaws up-to-date?

____11 Are your bylaws given to the board and available to the general membership?

SCORE:_____

Do you have good financial management?

____1 Is there enough money in the till to get things done? (Do you have an adequate budget?)

____2 Are your dues realistic?

____3 Do you pay your PMPs promptly?

____4 Do you hold a finance drive? (Do you solicit funds from the community you serve?)

____5 Are your members given the opportunity to contribute to League over and above their dues?)

SCORE:_____

Do you hobnob in the League world? (Are you in touch with other Leagues and other levels of League?)

____1 Do you urge board members to attend training sessions and activities?

____2 Do you and your board members take the time to read and USE materials from the LWVNYS and the LWVUS?

____3 Are workshops and conventions something you look forward to and do you attend them?

SCORE:_____

ATMOSPHERE

How is your heart?

____1. Are all kinds of members encouraged to hang in there? (Do you counteract the "I'm not smart enough feeling?)

____2. Is your attitude "Let's try " rather than "It won't work"?"

____3. Do your leaders avoid bossing everyone around?

____4. Do you include "new timers" in all the excited, friendly talk going on among the "old timers?" Are your meetings warm and sociable?

_____ 5. Do you have someone responsible at meetings for greeting and introducing guests and new members?

SCORE:_____

PROGRAM

How is your mind?

_____ 1 Is your League participating in national and state studies?

_____ 2 Is your League involved in a local study?

_____ 3 Are your program planning meetings stimulating for your members rather than avoided by most as boring?

_____ 4 Are your meetings interesting?

_____ 5 At consensus meetings do you have a hard time telling which direction the resource people are leaning?

_____ 6 Does the discussion leader disguise how he/she feels?

_____ 7 Do you hold dress rehearsals for your program presenters and discussion leaders?

SCORE:_____

ACTION

How are your muscles?

Is your action effective?

_____ 1 Does your League follow your most important decision-making bodies so that you know what is going on? Do you have any observers?

_____ 2 Does your League testify before local decision-making bodies?

_____ 3 Do only authorized and knowledgeable persons speak for your League?

_____ 4 Are you focusing your action on a few issues you are following closely instead of spreading your action activities too thin?

____5 Are League members represented on local task forces and your city and county decision making bodies?

____6 Do you join coalitions even if they don't always do things the "League way"?

Are you careful to speak with one voice?

____1 Do you take action only when the consensus or principle is really there?

____2 Do members feel like they are part of the action? (Do you consider member understanding and support?)

____3 Are you careful not to poach on other Leagues' territories without asking first?

____4 Are you careful not to support or oppose statewide legislation on which the State League does not have a position?

SCORE: _____

VOTER SERVICE

How good is your balance?

____1 Are you creating new ways to do old things?

____2 Is your public relations director a familiar face to the media in your area?

____3 Are you servicing new members as well as the community?

____4 Do your voter service materials conceal how you really feel personally about those issues/candidates? Are they objective?

____5 Do you have an active speakers bureau?

____6 Are your candidate or issue forums televised?

SCORE: _____

HOW IS YOUR GROWTH?***Are you recruiting new members?***

- ____1 Do you target specific groups for membership recruitment?
- ____2 Do you hold interesting prospective member meetings?
- ____3 Does your League provide opportunities for members who work to attend meetings at noon or in the evenings?
- ____4 Have you tried to encourage businesses to give community service credit for League participation?
- ____5 Do you provide membership materials at all your League functions?
- ____6 Do your board members carry membership materials with them so that they can recruit new members when the opportunity arises?

Are you retaining the members you have recruited?

- ____1 Do you know why your members joined?
- ____2 Does your League try to match new member interests with your ongoing activities?
- ____3 Do you make an effort to INVOLVE the new member from the outset?
- ____4 Do you use a telephone tree to inform the new member from the outset?
- ____5 Do your board members (or other actives) offer rides to new members?
- ____6 Do you have an effective system for following up on overdue members?
- ____7 Do you know why your drops have not renewed their memberships?

SCORE: _____

NOW ADD UP YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

165-210 Congratulations! You've won a League Fitness Award.

120-164 Your League requires at least a couple of aspirins.

0-51 Your League requires major medical treatment. Contact your Regional Director for consultation. Your Regional Director makes house calls.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

ACTION: Steps taken to influence public policy consistent with League positions at all levels of League. Techniques used to achieve League goals include lobbying; legislative testimony; public statements; media campaigns; public forums; letters to newspapers; campaigns on specific measures at elections; joining coalitions and litigation.

Individual members are not bound by League positions and may act privately for or against measures as they choose (whether or not they agree with League), but they may not use the name of the League when expressing an opinion contrary to a League position.

ACTION ALERT/CALL TO ACTION: A carefully timed request from the national, state, inter-League organization, or local League board asking members to take action on behalf of a League position. A request for legislative action is known as a call to action by the LWVNYS and an action alert by the LWVUS.

ADVOCACY: The LWVUS preferred term for action.

ANNUAL MEETING: A general meeting which is the main business meeting of the year for local League membership. It is generally held near the end of the League year. At that time members choose local program for the coming year, elect new officers and directors, adopt a budget, and amend bylaws.

ASSOCIATE MEMBER: A nonvoting member. Persons under 18 and noncitizens may be associate members. Dues are the same as for regular members.

BRIEFING: A training session held prior to unit meetings to prepare discussion leaders, resource persons and/or study committee members and others for presentation and discussion of the subject to be presented at units. The term "briefings" is also used for meetings held to prepare for conventions, legislative interviews, and ballot measure presentations.

CALL TO ACTION: See Action Alert

COALITION: An alliance of organizations acting jointly for a limited and well-defined goal. A coalition has a formal structure, established guidelines, a budget and is usually temporary. Member organizations are committed to action in the name of the coalition. Organizations may form an action coalition for the duration of a ballot measure campaign, a voters service coalition, or an informational coalition to develop and exchange ideas and material on their common goal.

CONCURRENCE: Substantial member agreement reached through group discussion based on information presented by a study committee or through other methods of member response. Members are asked to concur, or agree with, a statement. A concurrence statement may be a position held by another League or a decision statement recommended by a League board or study committee. The statement must be approved or rejected, as written. Concurrence is not the same as consensus.

CONSENSUS: Substantial member agreement preferably reached through group discussion. Consensus is the “sense of the group” rather than a majority opinion. It is not necessarily unanimous and is expressed in terms of rather broad objectives. The discussion is based on information prepared by a study committee and is guided by consensus questions. Only members may participate in determining consensus.

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS: Specific questions prepared by a study committee to stimulate interaction, focus discussion and facilitate conclusions by the group. Questions vary in style from open-ended to multiple choice. Questions are approved, in advance, by the appropriate League board.

CONVENTION: A biennial meeting held by the LWVNYS, the LWVUS and most inter-League organizations at which delegates make decisions affecting League goals and operations. The convention elects officers, amends bylaws, and adopts a budget, positions and studies.

COUNCIL: A biennial meeting of the LWVNYS and the LWVUS. Council adopts a budget and provides delegates an opportunity to exchange ideas in a less formal setting than convention. In an emergency, council can adopt a study as provided in the bylaws. In NYS we have Council by Mail.

EDUCATION FUND—ED FUND: The “tax-deductible” arm of the League; this fund underwrites educational projects. All levels of League can, and some do, establish their own Ed Fund. Those who do not wish to establish their own Ed Fund can deposit their tax-deductible contributions with the LWVUS or the LWVNYS. These monies are disbursed back to the contributing League, upon application and approval, for educational purposes.

GRASSROOTS: The League of Women Voters is governed first and foremost by its local Leagues. At state and national conventions, local League delegates decide policy, adopt the budget and bylaws changes, program and action. It is a “bottom up” or grassroots organization.

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS: Two or more members residing at the same address. The first member pays full dues; dues for subsequent members are half. The household shares a single copy of all League publications.

INTER LEAGUE ORGANIZATION—ILO: A group of local Leagues with shared interests organized as a separate League to coordinate activities within a county, metropolitan area, or region. Each ILO has one vote at the LWVUS and the LWVNYS conventions. ILOs hold conventions at which they adopt bylaws and a budget, elect officers, and choose studies. ILOs may also hold councils. They are funded by the contributions of member Leagues.

ISSUES FOR EMPHASIS: Timely and critical issues adopted by convention delegates on which League resources for study, action and/or citizen education will be concentrated during the biennium.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: Issues selected each year by the State Board, in consultation with program and legislative directors, consultants and the legislative advocate, for concerted League action in the Legislature.

LOCAL LEAGUES—LLs: Organization at the local level that may represent one or more communities. For a list of communities contained in each local League area consult the LWVNYS website.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE—MAL: A member of the LWVNYS and the LWVUS living in an area not served by a local League. A member of a member-at-large unit.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE UNIT—MAL UNIT: A group of members-at-large in an area where it is not feasible to carry on the full range of local League activities. MALs meet as a unit of the state League to discuss State and National program and to provide voters service to the community. Organization of a MAL unit is approved by the state board and the unit functions under state board guidelines and supervision. The MAL unit may be formed as the first step to becoming a new local League and replaces the League organization formerly known as a provisional League.

In addition there are individual League MAL members who have no affiliation with a local unit and are serviced by the State. This is usually because they don't live in an area where there is a unit organization.

MEMBER AGREEMENT: Substantial agreement League-wide on a public policy issue that may be elicited through various decision-making techniques. Member agreement is an essential basis for establishing a League position.

MISSION STATEMENT: A statement of the purpose of the League. Each League should adopt its own mission statement based on the LWVUS Mission Statement: 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.

NETWORK: An informal group of organizations meeting periodically to share information and strategies. In contrast to a coalition, a network is relatively unstructured, with each member organization maintaining its own autonomy in acting in its own name.

NONPARTISAN POLICY: The League is nonpartisan in that it never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. The League may, however, support or oppose particular ballot measures in line with positions adopted as a result of study and/or consensus reached on program issues. Individuals within the League are encouraged to actively support the political parties or candidates of their choice unless they hold sensitive board positions. Each League board adopts its own nonpartisan policy that interprets for its members and the community any restrictions it places on the political activities of its board members.

OBSERVER: A representative of the League who regularly attends public meetings of elected and appointed councils, commissions, boards or other civic bodies for the sole purpose of listening (not

speaking) and reporting back to the League. Observers may respond if asked a direct question. When appropriate, observers alert the League to take action on issues in the areas of League concern.

PER MEMBER PAYMENT—PMP: An annual assessment for each local League member that is paid by the local League to the LWVNYS, the LWVUS, and, in some areas, an inter-League organization. The PMP is determined by a vote of the delegates at convention.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: Along with the bylaws, "Policies and Procedures" is the primary guide for the board of directors. It contains the nonpartisan and cosponsorship policies, fiscal responsibilities, along with other pertinent information. In the yearly review of these policies many Leagues add the substantive motions passed during the immediate past year.

PORTFOLIO: Main areas of program and action activities such as membership, program, voters service, etc.

POSITION: The stand of the League on a public policy issue and the basis for action. A League position is reached as the result of a study and member consensus and must be approved by the membership. A position may also be reached by concurrence. A new position may be used as a basis for action, pending approval by the membership at an annual meeting or convention, if the appropriate board approves. The annual program planning process gives the membership the opportunity to review the positions.

PROGRAM: Those governmental issues chosen for concerted study and action at each level of government. Issues are chosen by delegates at conventions or by members at annual meetings.

PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS: Position review combined with consideration of a new study. Positions are evaluated, and new studies may be proposed. Proposals made by the planning meeting are considered by the board and then submitted to convention or annual meeting as either recommended or not recommended. Existing League positions at each level are reviewed for clarity, relevance and effectiveness.

STUDY: The process of gathering information on a specific issue for discussion by members and subsequent consensus in order to establish positions. Studies are conducted at all levels of League.

VOTERS GUIDE, PART I: An election-year guide published by state League that includes general voting information, dates and deadlines.

VOTERS GUIDE, PART II: An election-year guide published by state League covering ballot measures, League recommendations (support or opposition), and information on statewide candidates.