

Proposed League Rights and Responsibilities Policy

(LWVUS website version at: https://www.lwv.org/league-management/proposed-league-rights-responsibilities-agreement?utm_source=LeagueUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_id=08112022)

Introduction

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) as outlined in [the organization's bylaws](#) has the responsibility of granting League recognition to groups that have fulfilled the requirements as established by the national board. For local Leagues, state League entities may establish additional requirements.

It is integral that all levels of the organization work in cooperation to further the mission of empowering voters and defending democracy.

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the requirements established by the national board, promote supports provided by LWVUS, and convey a transparent remedy process. This policy applies to any entity that acts on behalf of the League.

Enforcement of this policy is primarily handled by the Governance Committee of the LWVUS Board, which may collaborate with other people or entities, such as LWVUS staff, other Board committees, or state Leagues. The LWVUS Governance Committee will periodically review this policy and revise it as needed with final approval of the Board.

In line with legal and nonprofit best practices, the LWVUS Board has developed rights and responsibilities policies to support organizational alignment and mitigate risk, and in doing so, promote a healthier League network, as recommended in the [Transformation Roadmap](#). These two policies provide clarity on organization-wide expectations for LWVUS, Leagues, and members in the form of a League Rights and Responsibilities Policy and a Member Rights and Responsibilities Policy, and are formed from existing bylaws, policies, and legal or nonprofit best practices. They also provide a basic framework for resolving instances where Leagues or members may not be in

alignment with the organization. In keeping with League values, this framework emphasizes collaboration and support.

To ensure equitable outcomes, all LWVUS staff and committee members who will participate in the resolution process for any potential violations of the Member Rights & Responsibilities will receive relevant DEI training, and the outcomes of this process will be regularly evaluated via anonymized, aggregate data to monitor trends. Once implemented, the LWVUS Governance Committee will periodically review this policy and revise it as needed with final approval of the Board.

See the comment form below for feedback. All comments are being reviewed and considered. Key themes from the comments will be summarized and shared. The LWVUS Board will vote to approve the final version of the policy. LWVUS staff, at the direction of the LWVUS Board, will implement these policies.

League Rights & Responsibilities

League Rights

LWVUS is committed to the success of all Leagues and provides a variety of rights and services in support of their success.

At the discretion of LWVUS, and in consultation with the state League, some of the assistance and support that LWVUS is required to provide to a local League may be provided by the state League.

LWVUS will:

- Grant full recognition to state and local Leagues that fulfill requirements of the national board. [[LWVUS Bylaws, Article IV, Section 1; Article V, Section 2](#)]
- Grant a charter to only one local League in a community, so long as the local League remains in good standing. [[LWVUS Bylaws, Article IV, Section 1](#)]

- List state and local Leagues prominently on the LWVUS website and other communications as a state/local League of LWVUS serving the state/local League's region and will help to promote significant state/local League-organized actions, programs, and activities. [*Current practice; LWV.org*]
- Organize and hold LWVUS conventions at which state and local Leagues will be able to send delegates in accordance with [LWVUS Bylaws](#). [*[LWVUS Bylaws, Article IX](#)*]
- Charter and offer appropriate support for Inter-League Organizations ("ILOs") to address specific geographic and issue concerns that cross territorial boundaries of state or local leagues and in which local Leagues and their members may participate as appropriate to the particular ILO. [*[LWVUS Bylaws, Article IV, Section 2](#)*]
- Provide assistance and support to state and local Leagues, including:
 - Development and implementation of national campaigns, actions, and activities in which state and/or local Leagues are encouraged to participate in support of the [Purposes and Principles](#). [*[Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#); [Mission Impact Tools](#); [Organizing Resources to Build League Power](#); [OutreachCircle](#); [About Us](#)*]
 - Permission to freely use the "LWVUS" name and logo, as well as the creation and use of a state/local League name and logo based on the LWVUS name and logo, so long as use of LWVUS and the state/local League name and logo comply with [LWVUS Brand Standards](#). [*[Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#); [LWVUS Brand Standards](#)*]
 - Regular communications regarding action and opportunities at LWVUS. [*[League Update](#); [Organizing Resources to Build League Power](#); [LWVUS on OutreachCircle](#); [Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#); [LWVUS social media accounts](#); [emails from LWVUS Communications Team](#)*]
 - A membership database system to maintain and access the names, contact information, and other information about each member in the state/local League in accordance with the LWVUS Membership Data Policy. [*[Roster Portal](#)*]
 - Technical assistance with governance, such as best practices in conducting meetings, keeping corporate records, and board development. [*[Resources on the League Management](#)*]

site, particularly under the [Governance](#) and [Manage Your League](#) tabs]

- Technical assistance with administrative functions, such as compliance with federal tax law reporting obligations. [[Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#); [League Governance Checklist](#)]
- Support for public policy advocacy and organizing efforts, including:
 - Research on policy issues related to the [Purposes and Principles](#);
 - Technical assistance on advocacy and organizing strategy and techniques;
 - Policy advocacy at the federal level in support of the [Purposes and Principles](#); and
 - Providing information to state and local Leagues on legislative and regulatory policy related to the organization's priority issues;

[[Guide to LWVUS Services for Leagues](#); [Organizing Resources to Build League Power](#); [LWVUS Policy, Advocacy, and Litigation Briefings](#)]

- Representing the organization in and/or coordinating action within federal or national jurisdictions (e.g., government agency, media) and may choose to support activities or events related to the [Purposes](#) that are organized by others in the state/local League's region if LWVUS determines that the state/local League is not supporting the activity or event. [[LWVUS Bylaws, Article XI, Section 3](#); [Impact on Issues](#); [Federal Action Policy](#)]

League Responsibilities

Requirements for all Leagues include:

1. Adoption of and consistency with the [first three articles of the LWVUS bylaws](#). These define the key policies of the organization:

- [Nonpartisanship](#)
- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)

All Leagues shall abide by these key policies. As a best practice, Leagues shall review the policies annually for member understanding.

[LWVUS Bylaws, Articles I-III; Sample Bylaws Template; DEI Policy]

2. In addition, all Leagues shall consistently report their membership data (at a minimum by Jan 31 each year) and remit per-member-payments (as defined by Convention delegates) on an annual basis, no later than the close of the fiscal year on June 30. *[LWVUS Bylaws, Article XIII, Sections 1-2]*

3. Leagues shall comply with all brand standards to protect the organization's trademark. *[LWV Brand Standards]*

4. Leagues, as legal entities, shall comply with all federal and state law and regulations as applicable. These include but are not limited to adherence to all IRS regulations and state nonprofit regulations. *[League Governance Checklist]*

5. Leagues should participate in the key programmatic work of the organization as defined by Convention delegates at the start of each biennium. Programmatic efforts should engage the level of government, entity, or institution most appropriate to the level of the organization unless otherwise instructed. All work at the federal level is coordinated by LWVUS. No League can act in opposition to a League position. *[LWVUS Bylaws, Article XII, Section 3; Impact on Issues; Federal Action Policy]*

6. Annually, Leagues shall:

- Participate in the LWVUS surveys about programmatic work. *[Semi-annual survey]*
- Report and update leadership contact information to LWVUS in the roster portal.
- Submit to LWVUS any changes to governance documents (such as bylaws).

7. Promote and honor member rights and responsibilities. *[Member Rights & Responsibilities]*

8. State Leagues shall assume responsibility for the organization and development of local Leagues, member-at-large units, the guidance of ILOs, the promotion of League program, financial development and such other matters as the national board may from time to time delegate to them. [[*LWVUS Bylaws, Article V, Section 3*](#)]

Reporting Process

Any suspected violation of the League Rights and Responsibilities can be reported to the Board Governance Committee, which will determine the response.

Reports can be made via the online reporting form [LINK to be created]. People directly and indirectly involved may submit reports, as well as witnesses and third parties. If a report comes in from another source (e.g., a phone call, email, in-person conversation), whoever takes the report should fill out the online reporting form with the information they have.

Once an online report is submitted, it goes to the Governance Committee for review. A copy of the report may also go to applicable LWVUS staff members. The Governance Committee determines whether the National Board has jurisdiction over the alleged violations, and if not, who is most appropriate to address the report.

Interim Measures

Should a report involve an incident requiring immediate action (e.g., due to the nature or severity of an allegation or the potential to cause immediate reputational harm to the organization), the CEO of the League of Women Voters, who has been hired by the national Board, may enact interim measures as they see fit that take effect immediately and remain in place while the Board conducts an investigation or decides on a permanent resolution.

Interim measures may include, but are not limited to:

- Temporarily suspending the authority to speak or act on behalf of the League and use its brand and logos
- Temporarily suspending access to digital tools belonging to the League
- Temporarily suspending eligibility for grant funds
- Requiring remedial action, such as a public statement

Enforcement of League Responsibilities

When a Report Is Received

When a report is received by the Board Governance Committee that suggests, or may suggest, a League is not complying with one or more of the League responsibilities listed in this policy, the Governance Committee decides, based on the nature of the report, how it will be addressed.

For reports concerning local Leagues that operate under a state League, the Governance Committee should inform the state League that it has received a report and inquire about any actions the state League may already have taken to remedy the situation. If the Governance Committee feels the state is effectively addressing the issue, it may send a letter to the person or group that reported the issue affirming the authority of the state League.

An alternative response might be to send a formal letter to the League in question, clarifying the relevant LWVUS policies and suggesting resources for support. If the report involves a local League or Member-at-Large (MAL) unit, this letter or initial outreach may be created in partnership with the appropriate state League.

If Further Action is Necessary

If the Governance Committee determines that such measures are inadequate, the Committee decides on the next course of action.

State Leagues. For matters not directly involving a state League, and if applicable, the Governance Committee should consult with the state League to determine if:

1. The state League has the capacity and desire to effectively address the issue, and
2. The state League has policies and procedures that meet or exceed the standards of LWVUS, and can uphold those standards.

The state League must have a system that ensures an independent (free from conflicts of interest), unbiased, equitable resolution process, that includes an investigation of the report and the ability for the League that is the subject of the report to review and respond to the report it was named in. If the Governance Committee decides that the state is not equipped to handle such a process, the Governance Committee will handle the process, and may, at its discretion, work with the state League. If the Governance Committee determines the state League meets these requirements, the state League will take the lead in responding to the report according to its procedures, with the support of the Governance Committee and LWVUS.

LWVUS Governance Committee Process

Appointment of Taskforce. If the National Board is leading the resolution process, the Chair of the Governance Committee, in consultation with the Governance Committee, appoints at minimum one LWVUS staff member, one Governance Committee member, and the relevant Board State Liaison for the League in question (if applicable, and if there is no conflict of interest) to a taskforce that will lead the Committee's response to the report. If the State Liaison is already on the Governance Committee and has already been appointed to serve on the taskforce, they may serve in both roles.

Investigation. The Governance Committee Taskforce then decides how it will investigate the report. The investigation should attempt to include:

- interviewing the relevant League leaders, members, and others directly involved
- establishing basic facts
- noting, but not necessarily resolving, different perspectives

- identifying the challenges involved
- if possible, identifying possible solutions

The investigation may involve a meeting with all the relevant people or separate conversations or take another form. The investigation will continue as best it can even if the League in question, or any of the people the taskforce wishes to interview, refuse or are unable to participate.

Report. After the fact-finding and information-gathering take place, the taskforce writes a report to the full Governance Committee that includes:

1. *A summary of the basic facts and issues, the policies in question, and if applicable, the different perspectives and challenges as understood from the investigation.*
 1. The report should also include supporting documentation (such as emails, timelines, etc.) where relevant.
2. *A recommended plan for remediation, including deadlines for any action recommended.*
 1. The taskforce is encouraged to always include a training component as a part of the plan.
 2. The plan may include, but is not limited to:
 1. Ways the League of concern could access more administrative support (if it's struggling with administrative obligations)
 2. Finding a mentor to support an inexperienced League leader
 3. Recommendation that a local League switch to an MAL unit
 4. Connecting the League to resources (e.g., attorney with expertise in a subject area; digital tools; training)
 5. Sharing successful practices from other Leagues or connecting them directly to other League leaders
 6. Possible consequences for not complying with LWVUS policies
 7. Set of actions with deadlines that the local League and LWVUS agree to take to remedy the situation
 8. Check-in meetings with Board Liaison or state League for a set period of time

Opportunity to Respond. The report is then sent to the League involved in the complaint and given the opportunity to respond in writing to the report. The League's unaltered response is then added as an addendum to the taskforce's report and sent to the full Governance Committee for review and discussion.

Governance Committee Decision. After review and discussion of the investigation and report, the Governance Committee decides the next step by a majority vote:

1. Approve the plan recommended by the taskforce,
2. Modify and approve the plan recommended by the taskforce, or
3. Call an emergency meeting of the Board to vote on a Withdrawal of Recognition from the League of concern.

If the League of concern does not adhere to the agreed upon remediation plan, the Governance Committee can decide by a majority vote whether to repeat the process or recommend Withdrawal of Recognition of the League to the full Board.

This process fulfills Article VI, section 1 of the [Bylaws](#) concerning the investigative process required for Withdrawal of Recognition. Should the Governance Committee recommend Withdrawal of Recognition, per the Bylaws, a three-fourths vote by the Board is required. Withdrawal of Recognition is effective immediately.

Appeal. The Bylaws also state in Article VI, section 2: "A state, local League or an ILO may appeal to the next convention or council meeting for reinstatement of recognition by filing a written request signed by a majority of the members of its board with the secretary at least 30 days prior to the convention or council meeting. The convention or council meeting shall decide whether to hear the appeal and shall establish procedures for such a hearing."