

# PRINCIPLES

## *THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BELIEVES. . . .*

.... in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

.... that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

.... that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination..

.... that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

.... that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems which affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies which facilitate the solution of international problems.

.... that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

### **ACTING ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE LWV**

The Principles of the League of Women Voters evolved from, and incorporated, positions adopted in previous years. Action on the Principles by local, state, and national Leagues was authorized by the 1974 Convention of the LWV of the United States.

Action requires authorization by the appropriate board following its determination that there is member understanding and agreement on the issue and that the proposed action is appropriate as to timing, need, and effectiveness. When the action will have ramifications beyond a League's own governmental jurisdiction, the League should consult with all other affected Leagues to seek agreement. There are three exclusions regarding taxation, the economy, and international law since these references are general.

# WHAT IS THE LEAGUE

**PURPOSE** The League is a national organization whose purpose is to promote informed and active participation of citizens in government.

**MEMBERSHIP** The League is open to any person who subscribes to the purpose and policy of the League. There are three types of membership:

1. Voting members who are citizens at least 18 years old who are enrolled in recognized local Leagues.
2. Members-at-Large (MAL's) who are members residing outside the area of, and are not enrolled in, any local League. (National members do not participate in state or local programs.)
3. Associate members who are all other members enrolled in local Leagues (i.e. those under voting age and non-citizens).

There are about 110,000 members of the League in the United States. There are Leagues in every state, Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., and the Virgin Islands.

**ORGANIZATION** The structure of the League parallels the representative system of government under which we live. Our local, regional, state and national governments are dependent one upon the other; the base is the individual citizen. The several League levels are also interdependent; based on the individual member. Members determine the policies and program of all League levels. Membership is simultaneous on all four levels where applicable.

**NONPARTISANSHIP** The League acts in support of, or in opposition to, selected governmental issues which it has studied. It does not support or oppose candidates, factions or political parties. League members, as individuals, are urged to work in the political party of their choice. In order to protect the League's nonpartisanship policy, guidelines regarding the political activities of the Board of Directors are reviewed frequently.

**FINANCING** The League is a non-profit organization financed in two ways, by member dues and contributions, and through community and national finance drives which enable public-spirited citizens to help support the work of the League. Dues are collected at the local League level. National, state, and regional Leagues are supported primarily by local Leagues.

# WHAT WE DO

**STUDY AND ACT** The League of Women Voters is an action group. However, it may take action only on issues which have been extensively studied and on which the members are agreed. One of the reasons for the political effectiveness of the League is its *reputation for thorough study*.

Action includes...

- .... providing information to members and the public
- .... building public opinion
- .... supporting or opposing legislation

Complete facts, the pros and cons, are researched before acting. Members study and discuss the issues in small units so that everyone has an opportunity to express an opinion.

When a position is reached through

*STUDY / DISCUSSION / CONSENSUS*

by the membership, the League (and members as individuals) works to implement that position. Action methods include lobbying, testifying at public hearings, use of public forums and the media, panel discussions, League publications and letters to public officials. It is the responsibility of the League Board to direct and plan League Action.

**VOTERS SERVICE/CITIZEN INFORMATION** Voters Service/Citizen Information activity is directed toward encouraging citizens to register and vote and to participate in government and politics. League does this by providing factual information about voting procedures, candidates and ballot issues. When the League has a position on any issue, separate material is published to promote the League's stand. This is to insure the distinction between League Action and Voters Service.

## **WHAT WE HAVE DONE**

**NATIONAL** The League was organized in 1920 after equal suffrage for women was passed by Congress and ratified by the states. Since that time the League has kept pace with changing times. The League has worked hard to improve the legal status of women, the welfare of children; to extend the merit system in the federal civil service; to improve the Food and Drug Act and other legislation protecting the consumer; and to support several measures later embodied in the Social Security Act. The League championed the reorganization of Congress, civilian control of atomic energy and Home Rule for the District of Columbia.

The League has been devoted to the principle of international cooperation for over 35 years. It has consistently supported the United Nations, and the Trade Agreements Program.

The League is concerned about equal opportunities for all citizens in education, employment and housing and for reform in the welfare system. Water and air are long-standing concerns of the League.

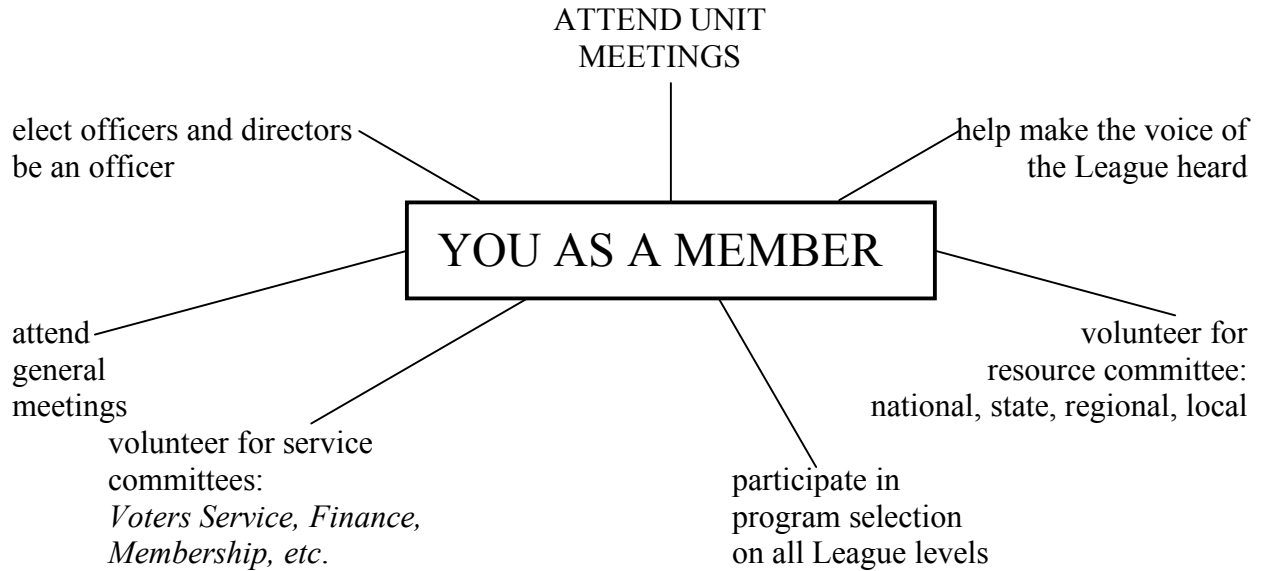
**STATE** The League of Women Voters of Colorado was organized in 1929 with the name "The Women's Citizen's League of Colorado." In 1940 the name was legally changed to the League of Women Voters of Colorado. Over the years the LWV/C has given sustained attention to such issues as jury service for women, a state civil service system, children's laws, Colorado water laws and judiciary revision.

The League has actively sought equitable reapportionment of the state legislature, a constitutional change to strengthen local government, and laws concerning air quality and land use.

**LOCA** Local Leagues have spearheaded improvements in the structure and efficiency of town and city government, have worked on such issues as public schools, housing, health services, sanitation, tax reforms, city charters and local planning.

**REGIONAL** In order to work together on joint problems, Leagues in the Denver metropolitan area (Metro) have formed an Inter-League Organization (ILO). The first issues studied were metropolitan transportation and service authorities.

# HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO



**THE MEMBER** The League structure is designed to give members *every chance to voice their views*. Because League is a membership organization, every member is encouraged to become a member of a working committee. *This is the key to League success.*

**THE PROGRAM** The League's program consists of governmental issues chosen by the members for *concerted study and action*. At program-making meetings the members discuss their ideas for local, regional, state and national program. The proposals are submitted to the Board. Individual members may also submit proposals. The Board considers all proposals and then presents a recommended program for consideration at the annual meeting or convention. Final decision on state and national program is made by delegates to respective biennial conventions. The recommended program requires a majority vote for adoption. A non-recommended item may also be placed before the delegates; it usually requires a larger vote for adoption.

*Criteria which must be considered when selecting program ....*

- .... The issue must be one on which governmental action is needed.
- .... The issue must fall within the Principles of the League.

*Additional considerations which may help members in making a choice....*

- .... Is the issue important enough to inspire member interest and commitment?
- .... Can the League be effective in this field?
- .... Would it be a duplication of effort?
- .... Is it timely? Are there funds, time and people available to do a thorough job?

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** At each level of League, Boards are elected by the membership to manage the activities of the League. There are usually five elected officers: President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. The remainder of the Board (depending on the size of the League) is composed of a number of elected and appointed directors. Each member of the Board has a portfolio (a specific area of responsibility)—Program, Voters Service, Finance, Membership, Legislative, Organization, Public Relations, Bulletin, Publications, etc.