



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

Lobbying in Support of League Positions

(Adopted November 2, 2009)

Lobbying is an action technique that the League uses to bring about passage of legislation at the local, state, and national levels of government. After League members have reached consensus on issues, the next step is to effect legislation by lobbying.

Procedure

National Level: Effective lobbying on national program issues relies on a partnership among all League levels—lobbying in Washington and constituent lobbying at home. The LWVUS president testifies on Capitol Hill and, with members of the LWVUS board, lobbies members of Congress through phone calls and office meetings. The LWVUS frames the substantive issues and develops political strategies, targets key members of Congress and implements lobbying strategies. Day-to-day lobbying of staff members of Congress and committees is carried out by the League's professional staff lobbyists. The League's volunteer Lobby Corps of some 20 Washington-area League members lobbies each month when Congress is in session.

Direct lobbying by members of local Leagues is often the key to persuading legislatures to the League position. Members of Congress return to their states or districts regularly during the congressional recesses. Scheduling meeting with them at that time is an effective technique. Writing strategically timed letters, emails and faxes, or placing a telephone call is always a good idea to alert your legislators of action opportunities.

Leagues may act on national program only in conformity with positions taken by the LWVUS. The League speaks with one voice, a method essential for the effectiveness as an advocacy organization. A League board may choose not to respond to a particular call to action but may not take action in opposition to a position articulated by the LWVUS.

All action at the federal level must be authorized by the LWVUS Board. This includes any effort aimed at influencing the decision on a federal issue, such as communicating with an elected or appointed official, joining a coalition, taking part in a press conference or rally, or writing a letter-to-the-editor. A state or local League wishing to work in this way on an issue that is not an LWVUS legislative priority must consult with the LWVUS about the intended action. The following information must be provided in writing.

- The proposed action and the message to be conveyed
- The LWVUS position on which the action is based
- Evidence that this issue is a priority for that state or local League.

There are other times when local Leagues may wish to take action on federal issues. In those cases,

- Local Leagues wish to contact its U.S. Senator(s), the state League has to authorize the action.
- Local Leagues wish to take action on LWVUS non-priority issues must have authorization from LWVUS.
- Local Leagues wish to involve other Leagues and their members to take action on a national issue can only be pursued by LWVUS through a request from local Leagues.
- Endorsement of initiatives sponsored by other organizations is appropriate for LWVUS level.

State Level: Effective lobbying at the New Mexico state level involves registering as a lobbyist under the umbrella organization of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico. LWVNM does not have a paid lobbyist. Lobbying activities are carried on by League member volunteers who are registered as lobbyist. To become a lobbyist one must:

- Complete and have notarized a Lobbyist Registration Form
- Have the LWVNM president sign an Authorization Form to lobby on behalf of the organization.

Both forms are available on-line from the State of New Mexico, Ethics Administration web site.

Each League year, through the Action Committee, a proposed priority of legislation is identified and approved by the Board of Directors. Thereafter, League member volunteers may testify before committees, write, email, or fax letters, or telephone individual legislators about legislative matters.

Like LWVUS, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico relies on a partnership with local Leagues to take action on priority legislation. Through the Action Committee alerts, local members contact the legislators.

Local Level: When local Leagues wish to lobby their local legislators about local or regional issues, the president of the local League must be notified. Further, permission to lobby is also requested from the state League. The local Leagues fully inform the State Action Committee about their desire to lobby on a local position. The Action Committee needs to determine that the position is not in conflict with other League positions. The State Board of Directors hears the recommendation of the Action Committee and reaches a decision about the lobbying request. State permission does not extend to lobbying the whole legislative body.

To lobby legislators in the State of New Mexico, local League members must register with the State of New Mexico as lobbyists. Completed notarized forms are signed by the president, LWVNM.

Taking Action as an Individual: Individual League members are always free to take whatever action they wish on any issue at any level of government, as long as they do so in their own name and leave no doubt that they do not speak for the League.