

2017 LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

WHAT?

Every year, the LWVIL Issues Committee encourages in-district lobbying contacts, or legislative interviews, with your state senator(s) and representative(s). This year we are hoping every League will participate.

The primary purpose of the interview is to strengthen the line of communication with your legislator ... nurture your relationship. The emphasis should be on an exchange of views and information, setting the stage for future action. The interview is also a stimulating activity for newer League members. Many Leagues deliberately put together interview teams composed of new and experienced members.

WHEN?

Please return your responses by MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017.

NOTE: The General Assembly is not in session Fridays through Mondays.

Representatives may also be in their local offices Feb. 21-24 and March 20-24

Senators may also be in their local offices February 27-March 3.

If your legislators serve districts located in multiple local Leagues, coordinate your interviews to avoid duplication. Legislators do not appreciate answering the same questions for different Leagues. Please see the files showing numbers of League members in legislative districts. We understand that many Leagues have seen an upsurge in membership, so these numbers are only approximate (>5 means between 5 and 10 members of a League are in a district). The League with the largest number of constituents in a district is expected to coordinate the visit, but other Leagues may offer to take the lead.

HOW

Setting-Up the Interview

- Write your legislator requesting an interview, and follow the letter with a phone call a few days later to schedule the interview. Be prepared with several available dates and times to meet.
- Determine how many visitors the office can receive.
- Send the interview questions in advance to help the legislator prepare for your visit.

Your Interview Team (2 to 4 local League leaders suggested)

- Each member of the team should review the issues you will be discussing, but no one needs to be an expert. Background on the LWVIL priority issues is included with this memo.
- Determine ahead of time who will lead the interview and who will ask the follow-up questions. Be sure to have a role for all team members. A short team meeting beforehand is highly recommended.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

The Interview

- Know something about your legislator before you go: What committees does he/she serve on? What prior legislation has he/she sponsored? What do they appear to be interested in? If any relate to our questions, you may want to focus on those.
- Introduce yourself, your League and the reason you are meeting with her or him . . . to share information, share ideas and ask for support.
- Thank the legislator for past support on any issues we have in common with them.
- Do not focus on any negatives - keep the interview upbeat!
- If taking notes, be sure to keep the session a discussion, not an interrogation.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if a question comes up that you are unable to answer.

FOLLOW-UP

- Be sure to send a timely thank-you to the person you interviewed. Include any follow-up information promised or that you think would be helpful.
- Report to your League members what took place during the interview -- accent the positive if you are reporting through your bulletin. **Remember that you must never embarrass a legislator or staff person, particularly in public documents.** Be sure to respect the legislator's wishes about sharing or not sharing his or her views with others.
- Send official report form to the LWVIL Issues Committee. A copy of your report to your members is also greatly appreciated by the Issues Committee. Both may be sent to LWVIL Issues Specialists via email at issues@lwwil.org or send a hard copy to their attention at the LWVIL office, 332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 634, Chicago, IL 60604.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

The traditional format for the League's Legislative Interview is as described above. You may want to consider other ways of meeting the goals of the interview: building relationships, providing the League's view on public policy topics and connecting others in your community to the political process. Your legislator might enjoy attending a public meeting sponsored by the League to discuss the issues, especially if she or he supports the League's position.

MORE QUESTIONS? HAVING TROUBLE SETTING UP AN APPOINTMENT? PLEASE CONTACT: Jean Pierce or Hilary Denk, Issues Co-Chairs 312-939-5935 issues@lwwil.org