

Legislative Interview Process 2024

OVERVIEW

Every year, the LWVIL Issues and Advocacy Committee encourages local Leagues to solidify their relationships with their state senator(s) and representative(s) by holding Legislative Interviews.

The primary purpose of the interview is to strengthen the lines of communication with your legislators and build goodwill. The emphasis should be on a respectful exchange of views and information, setting the stage for future action in your community.

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The interview is also a stimulating opportunity for newer League members. Many Leagues deliberately put together interview teams composed of new and experienced members.

If your legislators serve districts located in multiple local Leagues, please coordinate your interviews to avoid duplication. Be respectful of everyone's time—legislators do not appreciate answering the same questions for different Leagues. If you do not know which other Leagues share your legislators, please contact issues@lwwil.org.

HOW DO WE CONDUCT LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS?

Set Up the Interview

Find your legislators' contact information (ilga.gov). Write/email your legislator requesting an interview, and follow the letter with a phone call a few days later to schedule the interview.

Expect the interview to last at least 30 minutes; verify how much time the legislator has available. Be prepared with several available dates and times to meet.

Determine whether the interview will be remote or in person. If it will be in person, ask how many people the office can accommodate with appropriate Covid protocols.

Prioritize the Questions

The [2024 interview questions](#), found on the [LWVIL website](#), are prioritized based on LWVIL Program Priorities. Leagues are strongly encouraged to ask the questions marked with a STAR before asking others and before adding your own. You may send the [interview questions \(without background information\)](#) in advance to help the legislator prepare for the interview.

Choose Your Interview Team

Usually teams have two to four members. Each team member should review the issues you will be discussing, but no one needs to be an expert. Background on the LWVIL priority questions and many others is included on the [LWVIL website](#).

Meet ahead of time. Determine who will lead the interview and who will ask the questions. Be sure to have a role for all team members. See if anyone is willing to share their experience with an issue.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Do Your Homework

Check out ilga.gov and learn something about your legislator before you meet: What committees do they serve on? What prior legislation have they sponsored? What do they appear to be interested in? Do their interests directly relate to one of the priority questions?

Set Expectations

When you introduce yourself and your League, emphasize the reason for the interview: to strengthen your relationship and find out where they stand on different issues. If you are lobbying for a bill, then state that you will be asking for their support. Thank them for past support on any issues they have in common with the League.

Be Positive!

You are trying to build good will and open channels of communication. Find out what your legislator thinks about various issues and look for places where you can work together. This is not a time to debate your legislator's opinion. It's a discussion, not an interrogation. For this reason, it is recommended that you not take notes during the interview.

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." If a question comes up that you are unable to answer, just say that you will find the answer and send it after the interview.

FOLLOW-UP

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. Remember that you must never embarrass a legislator or staff person, particularly in public documents, such as your newsletter. Be sure to respect the legislator's wishes about sharing or not sharing their views with others.

Send the [report form](#) to the LWVIL Issues & Advocacy Committee.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS - Be Creative

You may want to consider other ways of meeting the goals of the interview, which are: building relationships, exploring the legislator's stance on public policy topics, and connecting others in your community to the political process.

Your legislator might be willing to attend a public meeting sponsored by the League to discuss the issues, especially if they support the League's position.

QUESTIONS?

Having trouble? Please contact your Issues & Advocacy Co-Chairs at issues@lwwil.org.