HOW TO DO A CONSENSUS STUDY:  
DUTIES OF THE LOCAL LEAGUE

Janet: Before we begin, let us introduce ourselves (name and League):
(Janet Kittlaus, Glenview Glencoe League, Laura Davis, Palatine Area League,
Beverly Graham, Oak Park River Forest League, Patti Lackman, Central Kane
County League, Sharon Welch, Chicago League, Sue Sosin, Chicago League)

Janet: We’ve heard from a number of League leaders asking, “Just what is the role of
the local League in this State consensus?  We will try to answer that question with this
zoom talk but please know that you can get in touch with us about any concern you
have by sending an email to issues@lwvil.org and in the Subject Line “FOR CJ UPDATE.

But first, an essential question: Why is the Local League input even needed?

Patti:
* The League is a bottom-up organization - it depends on its grass-roots
* It can only advocate for issues that are rooted in its positions
* Its positions are not handed down from on high but depend on input and consensus
from local Leagues

Sharon: Now to the issue at hand: What does the local League study group do?  With so
much substantive work done by the State study team already, what is there for the local
study group to do?

Sue: The local study group is essential to the consensus process.  The local League
study group is responsible for interpreting the consensus questions to local League
members. Its duties include

• Studying the state committee’s materials and perhaps do additional reading in
  order to fully understand the consensus questions;
• Providing opportunities for the local membership to learn about the consensus
  material in order to prepare them for the consensus meetings.  These
  opportunities include educational programs and articles in the newsletter.
• Finally, the committee conducts the consensus meetings so that the local
  membership understands the questions in order to discuss the consensus
  questions proposed.

Bev: To help you prepare your membership, check out our resources. We have provided
a Speakers Bureau in the event you want to provide a program using individuals who
are well-qualified to speak on one or more of our consensus questions.  You might
consider a movie night, using one or more of the videos in our Video Resource.  Given
pandemic restrictions, members may have to watch a movie independently, and then
have a zoom discussion later. Some of the video resources are short—you might provide
a link in your newsletter so that the membership can view these.  You can quiz your
membership using terms from our glossary by asking “how well do you understand the
criminal justice system?”
Sharon: After informing your members for the consensus meeting, then we come to the question: how is a consensus meeting to be conducted?

Laura: When you conduct a consensus study, you will be provided with a powerpoint with the questions, so that everyone is looking at a question. You may have noticed that we have 14 sections to the study, some sections with multiple questions. So you may want to think about a long session—or have two separate meetings. We do ask you to record responses to all the consensus questions. You will be provided a script to guide the discussion. You will also need a recorder who will take down the results of the discussion. It is particularly important to record comments which voice disagreement, but there is no need to wordsmith. If the consensus disagrees with a question or there is a strong minority, those comments need to be submitted. The job of the local League is to determine whether it agrees or disagrees with each consensus question. It is up to the State Study Committee to take the results from all the participating local Leagues and craft the final position.

At some point, when discussion has run its course, you would say, "This is what I am hearing you say: (pick one) 1) There is consensus that we agree with the question 2) there is consensus that we disagree with the question or 3) There is no clear consensus of the group." These results and relevant comments are recorded by the appointed recorder. If there is a vocal minority, the recorder would ask them to give the specific wording for their concern.

Janet: So the consensus meetings have been held. What happens now?

Patti: The recorder’s report of the results of the consensus meeting is reviewed and approved or amended by the local League’s Board. The response form, which will be provided to you, is completed and then submitted online to the state League. All of the local Leagues reports are reviewed by the State committee which then prepares an updated position. This then goes to the State Board for review and adoption.

Janet: Finally, what happens at convention? In a process you are acquainted with, all positions are reviewed by the delegates: the convention votes to retain, restudy/update, or drop.

So – there you have it? We all on the state study committee all want to emphasize two things:

- first, the participation of your local League is critical! Positions can be created or updated only if a critical number of local Leagues participate!
- Secondly, if we can help in any way, please be in touch by emailing issues@lwvil.org and in the Subject Line, write “FOR CJ UPDATE."