

## Board Responsibilities

- Attend all board meetings, be on time and stay to the end. All board members take part in decision-making—you are needed!
- Participate in all policy decisions, developing understanding of all parts of League program, service, policy and purpose. In other words—total board responsibility. Come prepared for board meetings. Read your agenda material and other reports forwarded to you during the interim between board meetings. This will allow for more intelligent decision-making.
- Carry out your own portfolio assignment.
- Safeguard the League’s reputation for non-partisanship.

## Portfolio Responsibilities

- Get the files and advice on procedure from the preceding chair. Training on a one-to-one basis between the outgoing and incoming chair is vital. While a new chair will want to try new methods and will have fresh ideas, it helps to know how things were done in the past, to be given some tips on getting the job done most effectively, and to know the rationale behind past board decisions that affect the portfolio.
- Study the relevant sections of *Board Handbook* (LWVIL), and *League Basics* (LWVUS).
- Attend a board training session and as many area, state and national League meetings as possible (Council, Convention, Leadership Workshops, Regional Workshops, Legislative Seminar).
- Secure the name of the state director for your portfolio (see the current LWVIL list). Use director as needed.

- Develop a committee, both to assist you and to nurture participation and leadership. Stay in touch with your committee—USE ITS MEMBERS. That’s why most people join the League.
- Report to the board any plans made by your committee. Request board authorization to carry them out.
- Learn what local, state and national reports or board deadlines pertain to you. Plan ahead so you can meet deadlines without panic.
- Keep a record and file for your successor. Prepare bulletin, program, or annual report materials as needed.
- Get copies of state and national publication catalogues and use them.
- Know what funds your portfolio has been budgeted and find out how you are reimbursed for expenses.
- Attend all general membership and unit meetings. Not only will you be a more informed, effective board member, but your contributions at these meetings are needed.
- Every local League president receives all state and national program materials. Make arrangements to obtain the materials which are pertinent to your portfolio from your president.
- Get help from your president, board members, committees, state board and staff and the national board and staff when you need it. Remember, individual League leaders all over the country are facing the same problems you are, enjoying the process of trying to solve problems, and doing so “to promote informed and active participation in government.”
- Do enjoy serving on your local League board!

## Reporting to the Board

If you have a report, call and let the president know. Making out the agenda for board meetings is very difficult when you’re working in the dark.

### What Should Be Reported?

- Progress in organization of a job, or in getting it accomplished.
- All reports or consensus meetings and proposed position statements.
- Decisions a committee has made. For example, you should mention any letters of inquiry that have been sent to elected officials. This keeps other board members from looking foolish if an official mentions the letter and asks why he/she got it.
- Problems encountered in getting a job done or reactions of members to a project.
- Information on resources that are significant to the League. For example, mention if there is another organization taking an active role in this area which may be a resource of partner.
- Important information from state or national Leagues relating to your job. For example, LWVUS is participating in a state wide coalition on this issue.

### When Should You Ask For a Board Decision?

- When you are going to spend more money than budgeted.
- When you want to hold a public or membership meeting (not committee meetings).
- When you want to publish something or distribute materials to members or to the public.

- When you want to make a statement in the League's name.
- When you want to make any demand on the League's time, money or reputation.
- When you want to establish a policy or solve a problem.
- When you are not sure whether you should ask for a board decision.

## How Do You Report?

If lots of information is necessary for an informed board decision, consider sending out a summary with the agenda. Or bring it to the meeting.

Be aware of time! The president has to get through the agenda on time and hates to cut you off, but other board members have reports to make, too.

At the beginning of your report, state what you are going to do. For example, "I'm going to ask the board's approval of a letter to the city council" or "I'm reporting on the committee's progress and some of the problems we have encountered."

If you want a board decision, state clearly and briefly what has led up to your request. For example, "The citizens' Master Plan Committee has issued a report and has asked other organizations to comment on it at the school board meeting next Wednesday. The report recommends that..." and so forth. Tell why the League should act. Do we have a position? What is it? Do we need a policy? Do we have one already?

## Make a Recommendation!

You know more about the possible courses of action than anyone else, except possibly the president, who cannot give your report for you and cannot make any motions. MAKE A MOTION that your recommendation be adopted so the board

will have something to discuss. More time is lost at board meetings doing committee work for chairs who are unprepared than for any other reason.

Offer pertinent information, if needed by the board, and be prepared to answer questions. Participate in the discussion.

Accept the board's decision gracefully. Usually they will follow your recommendations pretty closely but sometimes total board responsibility will dictate another course, which you must accept.

## League Tools You Need

The following basic League tools should be placed in a binder so they can be referred to easily and carried to board meetings:

- Portfolio job description
- Local League by-laws
- Local League budget
- Membership list
- List of your committee members
- List of local board members
- Non-partisan policy and board policies of your local League
- Local League calendar for the year
- League Handbook (LWVIL)
- A copy of *League Basics* (formerly known as *In League: Guidelines for League Boards* (LWVUS) online at [www.lwvil.org](http://www.lwvil.org))
- Local, state and national program lists *Impact on Issues* (LWVUS), and *Where We Stand* (LWVIL)
- State and national publication catalogues

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**The League of Women Voters®  
of Illinois**

## for the new . . . and not so new board members

*Although it is an honor to be on a League board, there are no honorary positions! Each board member has a dual assignment. A board member is a director first and holds a portfolio or specific assignment second. This division of responsibilities means that the burden of running an effective League is lightened since everyone is expected to share equally in fundraising, new member recruitment, attending units and special meetings.*

*If you are a new board member, you may be uncertain about your responsibilities and wondering if you will ever know as much as others seem to know. Hang on—it will all clear up shortly. But to hasten the prospect, here are some suggestions to help you...*