Although it is an honor to be on a League Board, there are no honorary positions. Each board member has dual assignments: You are a board member first but you also have a portfolio or specific assignment as well. This division of responsibilities means the burden of running an effective League is lightened, since everyone is expected to share equally in fundraising, new member recruitment, and attending membership meetings.

If you are a new board member, you may be uncertain about your responsibilities and wonder if you will ever know as much as others seem to know. This document is a guide to helping you get there.

**Board Responsibilities**

- Prepare for board meetings by reading agenda material and reports sent to you between board meetings. This promotes intelligent decision-making.
- Attend all board meetings, arriving on time and staying until the end. All board members take part in decision-making—you are needed! It is also a legal responsibility.
- Participate in policy decisions, developing understanding of all parts of League program, service, policy, and purpose.
- Carry out your own portfolio assignment.
- Represent the League in the community.
- 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 outgoing and incoming chairs is vital. While a new chair will want to try new methods and have fresh ideas, it helps to know how things were done in the past, to have some tips on getting the job done most effectively, and to understand the rationale behind past board decisions affecting the portfolio. Call the preceding chair, if needed.
- Study the relevant sections of *League Basics*, available at forum.lwv.org.
- Attend board orientation and training sessions and as many state, regional, and national League meetings as possible.
- Determine the names of the other Virginia local-League directors who have your portfolio. See the current Directory published by the LWV-VA.
- Develop a committee, both to assist you and to nurture participation and leadership. Stay in touch with your committee and USE ITS MEMBERS.
- Report to the board any plans made by your committee, and request board authorization to carry them out.
- Plan ahead and meet deadlines. Know the lines of communication with your own board and state board, and what reports or deadlines pertain to you.
- Keep records and files for your successor.
- Prepare bulletin, program or annual report materials, as needed.
- Know what funds have been budgeted to your portfolio and find out how you are reimbursed for expenses. The treasurer can inform you about this.
- Attend membership meetings and forums. Not only will you be a more informed, effective board member, but your contributions at these meetings is needed.
- Make arrangements to obtain materials pertinent to your portfolio from your president, who receives all state and national materials.
- Get to know and be in contact with the state League director related to your duties.
- Get help, if needed, from your president, associate board members, committees, and even the national board and staff. Remember, individual Leagues 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.”
How to Report to the Board

In advance of the board meeting, notify the president of the subject and amount of time needed for your report on the agenda.

What Should Be Reported?

- Progress in ongoing projects
- All reports of consensus meetings and proposed position statements
- Significant decisions a committee has made
- Problems encountered in getting a job done, or reaction of members to a project (negative, enthusiastic, etc.)
- Information on resources from state or national leagues relating to your job (e.g., LWV-US has entered litigation in Virginia as a friend of the court related to this issue, etc.).

When Should You Ask for a Board Decision?

- When you are going to spend a lot of money or are exceeding the amount budgeted for your area.
- When you want to hold a public or membership meeting (not a committee meeting).
- When you want to publish something, or distribute materials to members of 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, which sometimes is best done by involving the board.
- When you are not sure whether you should ask for a board decision.

How Do You Report?

- If information is extensive, have the president email a summary with the agenda.
- Be brief. Give others their turn on the agenda.
- At the beginning of the report, state what you are going to do (e.g., “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 problems we’ve encountered.”)
- If you want a board decision, state clearly and briefly what led to your request. Tell why the League should act. Do we have a position? What is it? Do we need a policy? Do we have a position already?

Make A Recommendation

- You know more about the possible courses of action than anyone else, except perhaps the president, but the president 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. Help assure that time is not lost at board meetings by discussion and decision-making better handled in committee meetings.
- 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, the board will follow your recommendations, but sometimes Total Board Responsibility dictates another course.

League Tools You Will Need

These basic League tools should be placed in a folder (physical or digital) that can be accessed easily. Get the existing folder/information from the preceding chair.

- Contact information for board members
- Portfolio/job description
- Contact information for your committee members
- Membership list
- League bylaws
- League budget
- Non-partisan policy and your League’s board policies and procedures
- League calendar for the year, including state League calendar
- “Like” local, state and national League Facebook pages
- Follow local, state and national Leagues on Twitter & other social media
- Websites: LWV.org and LWV-VA.org as well as your local League’s site
- A copy of League Basics (available at forum.lwv.org)
- Local, state and national positions (available on websites)
- Contact information for state League board members
- Do enjoy serving on your Board!

League of Women Voters®
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Making Democracy Work

Sign up for the LWVUS Update at www.lwv.org, “Get Active!”

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