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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS AUSTIN AREA
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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INTRODUCTION
The League of Women Voters Austin Area (hereinafter referred to as LWV-AA) adopts policies and procedures to assist the officers and Board directors in directing the affairs of the organization in compliance with member-approved bylaws. Policies are to be reviewed annually, revised as needed, and updated by the Board. Each May, outgoing Board members should submit any recommendations for changes, to be considered and adopted by the newly constituted Board in August.

Originals of important documents such as Bylaws, Policies and Procedures, and IRS Determination Letters are to be placed in permanent files with copies of the most recent documents available in a binder for use by volunteers. This binder, to be kept in the LWV-AA office, should also include a copy of the “League of Women Voters of Texas (hereinafter referred to as LWV-TX) Policies and Procedures”, as the LWV-AA Policies and Procedures include references to the LWV-TX Policies.

I. POLICIES RELATING TO THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNANCE
   A. Nonpartisan Policy
      The LWV-AA endorses the position on nonpartisanship held by the League of Women Voters of the United States, which states, “The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. It shall not support nor oppose any political party or candidate.”
      The spirit of the nonpartisan policy is not to see how much political activity is possible within the policy, but to be actively and honestly nonpartisan. The Board has the responsibility to maintain the nonpartisanship of the organization.
   B. Diversity Policy
      LWV-AA, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of LWV-AA on the basis of gender, race, creed, age (there is a minimum age of 16), sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.
   C. Board of Directors
      Political Activity
      The President, Vice President - Programs, Vice President – Voters Service, Advocacy Director, and Membership Director may neither take an active visible role in a campaign for a political candidate or for a non-LWV-AA issue, nor engage in conspicuous political activity such as:
      i. Leading precinct conventions
      ii. Participating as delegates in county, state or national conventions
      iii. Making any public statements endorsing a candidate
      iv. A social media post supporting or opposing a candidate
      v. Permitting the use of their names in any political advertising
      vi. Working in the campaign headquarters of any candidate

a. If a Board member plans to engage in political activity, that member must seek the Board’s decision as to whether the activity could affect the community’s perception of LWV-AA’s nonpartisanship.

b. All Board members and chairs may:
   • Have party affiliations
   • Make political contributions as permitted by law, as long as names do not appear as public endorsement
   • Attend receptions and coffees for candidates in order to learn about the candidates
   • Attend precinct meetings, caucuses, and precinct conventions
   • Speak as a private citizen before legislative bodies

c. The political activities of a spouse or relative of a Board member shall be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member.

d. Political Fundraising Functions
   In order to ensure the nonpartisanship of the LWV-AA, neither the President, VP - Voters Service, Advocacy Director, nor Finance or Development Chair may attend political fundraising functions. Other Board members may attend fundraising functions.

e. Public Office
   Should a Board member wish to become a candidate for public office, she/he shall submit a written resignation in sufficient time to allow the LWV-AA to publicly announce the change in status. Resignation from the Board does not mean resignation from LWV-AA. A person who resigns to run for public office shall not return to the Board until at least one year elapses. If the person is elected, they are not allowed to serve on the Board until they are no longer in office for at least one year.

D. Board of Directors and Members
   a. League Positions
      Once a League (local, state or national) takes a position on an issue, members may not identify themselves as LWV-AA members in publicity expressing an opinion that is in opposition to an adopted LWV-AA position.
   b. Representing LWV-AA
      Members representing LWV-AA in the community should be sensitive to their responsibilities. When acting in the public as LWV-AA representatives, members must not allow their partisanship to be discernible. These members should be fully aware of LWV-AA positions and remain neutral when asked personal opinion.
   c. Serving on Commissions
      Members may serve on governmental commissions at their own discretion. If the appointee represents LWV-AA, then the appointee should be knowledgeable about LWV-AA positions in relation to the commission’s responsibilities.
   d. LWV-AA Meetings
      Members in the leadership roles at unit and other LWV-AA public meetings have the responsibility to ensure the nonpartisanship of the meetings and environment. Nominating papers, candidate flyers, and other partisan materials cannot be distributed at LWV-AA meetings.
   e. LWV-AA Roster
      The LWV-AA’s roster shall not be made available for non-LWV-AA use without Board consent.
f. **Board Direction**
   If a Board member, off-Board chair, or member becomes involved in a situation in which the nonpartisan policy of LWV-AA might or could be jeopardized, such member shall ask for a Board decision on what is appropriate action.

E. **Advocacy**
   a. **Official Spokesperson**
      The president is the official spokesperson for LWV-AA. Official LWV-AA statements shall be made only by the president or their designee.
   b. **Procedures for Advocacy**
      Advocacy statements shall be approved by the Board. The Board is responsible for the overall strategy for taking action. In specific situations, the president, the vice presidents and the appropriate committee chairs, if any, may approve action by the president regarding established LWV-AA positions; the president is to report back to the Board at the next meeting.
   c. **Action Alerts**
      The president or their designee responds for LWV-AA to state and national action alerts, if taking any action on behalf of LWV-AA.
   d. **Participation with Other Organizations - Definitions**
      1. **Coalition**
         A group the LWV-AA works with as an equal partner, with an equal opportunity for input into the group’s agenda and activities. Coalitions should be reviewed every year.
      2. **Collaboration**
         A group with which the LWV-AA may conduct a single activity, such as a forum or a survey.
      3. **Affiliation**
         The LWV-AA belongs to the group (or may cooperate in activities of the group) or receive information or publications from the group but does not determine its agenda.
   e. **Coalitions**
      1. Consideration of LWV-AA participation in any coalition will require LWV-AA Board approval. LWV-AA’s representative to the coalition will require Board approval as well. Consideration of membership in coalitions shall be reviewed annually and LWV-AA members are to be informed of coalitions joined.
      2. The coalition’s major issues are to be in accord with LWV-AA positions on every issue of coalition concern. The coalition’s aims must be nonpartisan and must not conflict with LWV-AA positions.
      3. The major goals of the coalition should be in accord with the LWV-AA adopted program.
      4. The coalition’s activities should bring added effectiveness to the overall efforts to achieve LWV-AA’s organization, advocacy, or educational goals.
      5. The members of the coalition should be organizations with which LWV-AA can work effectively. LWV-AA should have confidence in the leadership of the coalition and may serve in a leadership capacity.
      6. There should be a clear understanding of any LWV-AA expenditure required to participate in the coalition and the volunteer commitment required.
7. The LWV-AA representative to a coalition of which the LWV-AA is a member must have the prior approval of the LWV-AA president or designee before making any formal or public statement of the LWV-AA’s position on a specific issue. If the LWV-AA disagrees with a majority opinion of the coalition, a public statement of LWV-AA dissension should be issued by the president.

8. If the coalition in any way participates in partisan activity, (i.e. supporting or opposing a candidate or party) the LWV-AA shall withdraw from the coalition.

9. When working with other groups, if the LWV-AA name is to be used on a letter or public statement, the text of such documents must be approved by the LWV-AA president and advocacy chair prior to publication.

F. Voters Guide

1. Voters Guide Editor
The Voters Guide editor is an off-Board position serving under the direction of the VP of Voters Service. The Voters Guide editor will follow LWVUS and LWV-TX Voters Guide policies and requirements. [http://lwv.org/member-resources/voter-guides;]

2. Instructions to Candidates
As soon after the filing deadline as possible, explicit instructions are sent by certified mail or other appropriate mail, along with questionnaires, to candidates with a specific deadline for completing the candidate questionnaire entry on VOTE411.org.

3. Candidates’ Responses
Candidates’ responses are published in the Voters Guide as received, including spelling and grammatical errors.

4. Inappropriate Responses
If a candidate’s response includes negative reference to his/her opponent or another candidate, or is otherwise deemed inappropriate as explained in the instructions sent to the candidates, the entire response to that question will be deleted.

5. Copies
Any group that requests more than 500 copies of the Voters Guide will be asked for a donation to cover the cost of printing.

6. Campaign Website Addresses
Candidates may provide campaign website addresses to be printed along with other candidate contact information.

7. Translation and Scope of Voters Guide
The LWV-AA-produced Voters Guides will be translated into Spanish unless future Board action is taken. The geographical scope of elections to be included in the Voters Guide will be set by Board action.

8. Development of Proposition Pros/Cons
The Advocacy Chair shall develop or assign development of the pros/cons for each ballot proposition. Ideally, the lead Observer Corps for the entity will draft the text, observing the LWV-TX and LWVUS directives. Final approval of the text shall require consensus of the Director of Advocacy, VP-Voters Service and President.

G. Candidate Forums and Debates
Candidate forums and debates will be conducted in accordance with requirements set out in the LWV-TX Policies and Procedures and covered in the Guide to Candidate Forums. [http://www.lwvtexas.org/files/PublicationsGuideToCandidateForums2011.pdf]
II. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES
A. Pictured below is a generic League organizational chart. Structure changes from year to year based on the President’s understanding of the abilities and interests of officers and directors. Additionally, it is desirable that the immediate past president and the next president serve on the Board in some capacity.
B. **Generic Job Descriptions for Officers of the Board**

**President**
The President presides at all meetings of the organization and of the Board of directors, can sign checks, etc. in absence of treasurer, serves as ex officio member of all committees except the nominating committee, signs contracts and other legal instruments.

**First Vice President**
The First Vice President is responsible for the policy and advocacy program. This includes overseeing studies, advocacy efforts, the Observer Corps, and the presentations and discussions at general and unit meetings.

**Second Vice President**
The Second Vice President is responsible for community relations and coordinates and supervises public relations and publicity, all development (fundraising) campaigns and special events, and the speakers’ bureau.

**Third Vice President**
The Third Vice President is responsible for organization and is primarily a coordinator supervising membership, distribution of The VOTER monthly newsletter, publications and office administration. The latter involves finding and setting up rules for office volunteers as well as scheduling office use, maintaining supplies and working with other Board members on filing and records retention.

**Fourth Vice President**
The Fourth Vice President is responsible for coordinating and overseeing voters service activities which include voter registration, the publication and distribution of Voters Guides, sponsoring candidate forums and interviews, and get out the vote activities, including information on registration and voting procedures. The voters service V.P. is also responsible for collaborating with other organizations on voter service projects.

**Treasurer**
The Treasurer collects and receives all monies due; deposits money in a bank designated by the Board of directors, disburses monies upon order of the Board, presents statements to the Board at regular meetings and an annual report to the annual meeting. The Treasurer will be responsible for submitting the following documents to the LWV-TX no later than June 30 of each year:

a. Budget adopted at the May Annual Meeting
b. Year-End Financial Report
c. IRS Form 990 Report

**Secretary**
The Secretary keeps minutes of the Annual Meetings and Board meetings. The Secretary is responsible for submitting the following documents to the LWV-TX no later than June 30 of each year:

a. Annual meeting materials: Workbook and/or proposed local budget, bylaws, program, policies, and slate of officers and directors or leadership team.
b. Bylaws: Amended bylaws as approved at annual meeting.
c. Officers and Board members/leadership team: Names and contact information for all current local LWV-AA officers and Board members.
d. Organizational structure changes: For example, change of name, geographical coverage or LWV-AA organizational status (i.e., from/to local LWV-AA or LWV-AA-at-large).
e. Publications: Voters Guides or other major documents (study reports) issued during the year.
C. **Board Meetings**
   Board meetings are generally held once a month at a time and place determined by the Board. The bylaws require that there be nine regular meetings of the Board during the League year of June 1 - May 31.

D. **Record Keeping**
   a. **Official Minutes**
      Minutes of regular Board meetings and Annual Meetings shall be maintained in the LWV-AA office for a seven-year period, after which they may be transferred to LWV-AA archives.
   b. **Financial Records**
      All financial records of the treasurer shall be maintained for a period of seven years in permanent files in the LWV-AA office. These records shall include, at a minimum, records of deposits, invoices, bank reconciliations, and financial reports provided to the Board.
   c. **Contracts**
      Contracts are to be filed at LWV-AA office as a part of the Treasurer’s records.
   d. **IRS Authorization and Tax-Exempt Status**
      Copies shall be maintained in the LWV-AA office for seven years beyond their termination.
   e. **Records Retention**
      The VP for Organization is responsible for overseeing and maintaining the retention program in accordance with the records retention schedule developed by LWV-TX (see LWV-TX Policies & Procedures).
   f. **Calendar Requirements**
      The VP for Organization maintains the Board calendar and the calendar of events for public viewing. The VP also will coordinate the inclusion into the online posted Board calendar of deadlines and activities contributed by each of the Board leaders. This includes items or deadlines that assure LWV-AA compliance with LWV-TX requirements. Not only does it insure compliance, but it institutionalizes recording those dates for the benefit of new Board members learning their positions. The calendar should be broadly reviewed each year in August and reviewed each month.

E. **Membership Meetings**
   Bylaws of the LWV-AA require at least four meetings of the general membership each year. Policy has established that two of these shall be the annual Kick-Off Meeting, held in September, and the May Annual Meeting. A minimum of two additional general membership program meetings are also expected.

III. **FISCAL POLICIES**
   A. **Board Budget Guidelines**
      1. **Special Event**
         Special Events expected to result in $3,000 or more in expenses must have a budget presented to the Board in advance for approval.
      2. **Tax Classification**
         LWV-AA is classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization and is exempt from paying federal taxes. Dues and contributions to LWV-AA are tax deductible to the donor as charitable contributions. LWV-AA is also exempt from State Sales Tax and State Franchise tax.
      3. **LWV-AA Contracts**
         Contracts of $3,000 or more must be approved by the Board. Contracts are signed by the President and/or the Treasurer.
4. **Insurance**
   Insurance is to be purchased to provide property and liability coverage and directors’ and officers’ coverage.

5. **Purchasing and Contracting**
   a. Board Approval
      Payments of $1,000 or more must be authorized by the President.
   b. Bids
      Generally, three bids are desired for expenditures in excess of $3,000, unless a reason for sole source or only two bids are presented and agreed upon by the Board.

IV. **FISCAL MANAGEMENT**
   A. **Banking Arrangements**
      Board action is required for selection of the LWV-AA depository bank.
   B. **Financial Reserve**
      During each annual budget preparation, the budget committee should consider maintenance of a fiscally responsible financial reserve to be included in the budget that is considered for approval by the Board and subsequently the membership in the Annual Meeting.
   C. **Check Signatories**
      Checks are to be signed by the Treasurer, or upon absence or disability, by the President. The President may also designate one additional member of the Board to sign checks. Upon a change in any of these positions, the bank requires new signatory cards.
   D. **Reimbursement**
      In order to receive reimbursement for expenses, members must complete the LWV-AA voucher form and attach a receipt to be submitted to the Treasurer.
   E. **Financial Audits/Financial Reviews**
      The LWV-AA Audit Committee of LWV-AA members reviews the financial records. Should the need arise to engage a financial auditor, the Board would contract for these services using a bid process. The Audit Committee, consisting of the Audit Chair, Budget Committee Chair and Secretary, with the Treasurer as ex officio, reviews financial records in a systematic manner at year end, with an in-depth look at reconciliation of at least two months of banking records.
   F. **Conflict of Interest**
      No paid staff of the LWV-AA shall serve on the Board of directors nor shall any director be paid for service to the LWV-AA. Members of the Board of directors are required to file a LWV-TX-required Conflict of Interest Statement each year. Compliance is the responsibility of the Treasurer.
   G. **Donations**
      1. All donations are recorded by the Treasurer in the financial accounting system and acknowledged in the monthly VOTER newsletter the month after they are received. Individual donor amounts are not published unless considered substantial enough by the President to recognize individually and with the permission of the donor.
      2. The Development Chair is to maintain a database of previous and potential donors.

V. **PUBLICATIONS**
   A. LWV-AA routinely produces the following:
      1. The VOTER, the monthly newsletter (distributed by e-blast, posted on the website, and mailed to the few members who do not use a computer)
2. **Voters Guide**, prior to each election (posted on the website, with an e-blast forwarding the link to members and supporters; in print version distributed in a local newspaper and distributed to public libraries and individuals wishing to reserve copies for pickup to take to other locations)

3. Various other voter education items to provide voter information, such as a Handy Dandy Guide, bookmarks with election dates, voter ID requirements, etc.

4. Whenever an LWV-AA study is undertaken, the study report is printed, following LWVUS and LWV-TX guidelines.

**B. Review of Publications**

The President, and at least two other persons, one of whom should be the appropriate Vice President, should review and proof major publications prior to printing of documents. The same procedure applies to major website posts, e-blasts and major social media posts. The social media posts requiring prior review include those making statements of LWV-AA actions or policy positions, advertising major initiatives (such as the annual Kick-Off meeting). Review of social media posts using text already reviewed for e-blasts or web postings is unnecessary.

LWV-AA information about local LWV-AA events, activities, offerings, and positions will be posted on the website and social media sites (e.g. Facebook), and included in email blasts in a manner consistent with LWV-AA’s general principles and guidelines for nonpartisanship.

Information about non-LWV-AA sponsored activities may also be posted and e-blasted provided they also adhere to the same LWV-AA principles and guidelines. Likewise, public service information about voting and upcoming elections will be provided to encourage the public to be informed voters. Other information regarding membership, donations, officers, contacts, and similar topics may also be provided, as deemed appropriate.

**VI. DEVELOPMENT AND ANNUAL FUND RAISING DINNER**

Each year LWV-AA’s major fundraising event is a dinner known variably as the State of the City Dinner or State of the County Dinner. In making the speaker selection and award winner selection, the following criteria is to be considered.

**A. Recommended SOC Speaker Criteria**

In order of preference:

- Mayor of Austin
- City of Austin or Travis County elected official or staff member who represents the entire city or county and not a particular district. (Examples: city manager, Travis County Judge, Travis County sheriff, police chief, fire chief, AISD school superintendent)
- Department head from City of Austin or Travis County, leader of nonprofit with broad perspective of Austin area needs, or an individual engaged in efforts that support League positions with a community wide perspective. (Examples: Assistant City Managers or heads of city departments; United Way Success by 6, Jolt, Sustainable Food Center, E3 Alliance, Integral Care; professor, researcher, author)

**B. The speaker should:**

- Provide a broad perspective of the current state and/or future of Austin and the greater Austin area or focus on a particular issue that impacts the majority of residents of Austin and the greater Austin area
- Be consistent with the League’s nonpartisan values (not promote a particular candidate or political party)
• Not be actively running for election or reelection
• Be engaging and a strong speaker
• Be visionary or have expertise in areas of concern to the LWV-AA
• Speak for no more than 20 minutes in length
• Be aware no honorarium is included [if one is required, and the Board chooses to make the request, a sponsorship may be necessary]

B. Making Democracy Work Awards and Selection Criteria

• Purpose of awards - Recognize individuals or organizations who have made significant contributions of time, effort, and/or funds to support the League or its policy positions within the past 12 months prior to the nomination deadline
• Have categories of awards that recognize specific areas of work that advance LWV-AA priorities or support LWV-AA
• One or more individuals can receive the same award in multiple years, although this should be discouraged
• Awards do not need to be granted in all categories; if no one stands out as deserving, award can pass, allowing award to be seen as valuable
• The SOC Committee may recommend the board create an additional category as deemed needed for special circumstances or individuals. This category would be for someone, a group, or an organization that does not fit into one of the other three assigned categories, yet there is strong consensus there should be recognition.

C. Selection Process

• LWV-AA will solicit nominees for awards through its newsletter, website and social media. Members, organizations, and individuals may nominate themselves, as well as others. The nomination deadline will be a minimum of three months prior to awards ceremony
• The State of the City Committee will recommend to the Board two nominees per category, with a recommendation of the priority nominee
• Recommendations are due to the Board at least one week prior to the Board meeting occurring a minimum of two months prior to the awards ceremony
• The Board will make the final selection of the award winners
• The President will notify the award recipients

D. Recommended Award Categories (Typically one award in each category per year)

Friend(s) of the League: An individual or organization that provided a significant amount of time or money to the League of Women Voters Austin Area, positively influencing its ability to achieve its mission; not a League leader (may be a dues paying member).

Volunteer(s) of the Year: A member or specific group of the League of Woman Voters Austin Area, with an emphasis on member(s) of two years or less, who have dedicated a significant amount of time and effort supporting the LWV-AA and its goals. LWV-AA officers and Board members are not eligible as individual honorees. Honoree must be an active LWV-AA volunteer and dues paying member.

Democracy in Action: An individual or organization that made a significant impact in advancing or promoting one or more of the LWV-AA’s areas of focus or policy positions (registering and educating voters, advocating for voting rights, or one of the many LWV-AA positions (p. 18-29); not a League leader (may be a dues paying member).

Examples of Potential Award Recipients by Category:
1. Friend(s) of the League: Tim League (owner of Alamo Drafthouse) for promoting voter registration at all Austin area theaters and donations to LWV-AA; posthumously to a large legacy donor to the League; Bruce Elfant (Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar) for ongoing collaboration and support of League activities.
2. **Volunteer(s) of the Year**: Capitol Corps volunteer(s) for work during Legislative Session; new member(s) who have committed a significant amount of their time, taken on a major task, taken initiative, and/or revamped a much needed area, for example: redesigning and updating the web page, increased visibility of LWV-AA with other organizations, taken a lead role and gone above and beyond the norm.

3. **Democracy in Action**: Amy’s Ice Cream voter registration drive; a nonprofit that collaborates with LWV-AA, such as NAACP, Planned Parenthood, Sustainable Food Center, JOLT, TX Votes, etc.

**VII. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

In May each year, individual members of the Board are to review the current Policies and Procedures and forward any suggested revisions to the Bylaws Committee. The Bylaws Committee should, in turn, forward a copy of the manual to the new Board for approval by the October meeting each year.

**VIII. CONTACT SOFTWARE**

Contact information for League members and supporters shall be maintained in computer software accessible for LWV-AA purposes only. The VP of Organization shall have oversight of the system to be used, be responsible for assuring its updating and availability to others as needed. The contacts are not to be used for non-LWV-AA purposes.

**IX. PROCEDURES AND RELATED FORMS**

Over time, additional procedures and any related forms should be added to this document as they are developed. Each Board member is encouraged to document their tasks to be used in case of the unexpected inability to perform them or to make for smoother transitions when leaving office.