

League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico Local Advocacy Committee

Advocacy Guidelines

The Local Advocacy Committee (LAC) supports the advocacy efforts of the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico (LWVCNM) by assisting members who believe that the League should advocate on a local public issue. We are a resource to help members understand when and how the League can engage in local advocacy as a nonpartisan and impartial organization. Advocacy on national and state issues is outside the purview of this committee. However, it is valuable to understand the national guidelines for advocacy and lobbying as they pertain to our responsibilities. The national League takes advocacy very seriously as can be seen in detailed guidelines on national, state, and local advocacy found in *LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2020-2022* (Attachment). Critical points that pertain to our work on the LAC include the following:

- The national League sets priorities for advocacy every year.
- Local and state Leagues are encouraged to advocate and lobby for these priority issues under LWVUS guidance.
- A local League that wants to advocate or lobby on a non-priority issue must get support from both its state and the national Leagues. The online Federal Action Request Form asks for the following information:
 - The proposed action and the message to be conveyed.
 - The LWVUS position on which the action is based.
 - The timeline for sending the message or signing the letter.
 - Evidence that the issue is a priority for that state or local League.
 - Any relevant additional supporting documents.

In addition to the national guidelines, LWVCNM has several important bylaws and policies that pertain to local advocacy:

- The LWVCNM may act only in conformity with, or not contrary to, the position by the LWVUS and of the LWVNM. (Bylaws Art. IX, Sec. 4)
- Members may act in the name of the LWVCNM only when authorized to do so by the proper Board of Directors. (Bylaws Art. IX, Sec. 5)
- All statements made in the name of LWVCNM require approval of the President/Co-Presidents. (LWVCNM Policies on Statements)
- Upon entering coalitions, LWVCNM shall present in writing its nonpartisan position and request that the LWVCNM name not be used by the coalition without prior approval. (LWVCNM Policies on Coalitions)

It is clear that, while local advocacy is encouraged, it requires careful consideration about the significance of the issue and the likelihood that LWVCNM advocacy will have an impact.

Here is where to find League positions: National positions are briefly described in the Member Handbook. The complete text and historical applications of positions are found in the *LWVUS Impact on Issues: A Guide to Public Policy Positions, 2020-2022*. The 149-page document can be viewed or downloaded at <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>. State and local positions are found in the annual Member Handbook.

What to do if no national, state, or local positions exist for an issue, or existing positions are outdated: A member may propose the issue for in-depth study in the Program Planning

process. The Program Planning meeting is held in January of each year, and proposals for studies are approved at the annual membership meeting. Questions about this process to initiate a study should be directed to the 3rd Vice President.

Process for local advocacy:

Members who want to propose a LWVCNM action to advocate on a local issue are urged to review these guidelines and consider the following eight LWVUS questions for local advocacy:

- Does the League have a position that supports the proposed action?
- Is there broad member understanding and agreement?
- Is it a priority for the League?
- Does the League have a unique role to play or a chance to take the lead?
- Are other organizations or a coalition already working on the issue?
- Is this the best use of the League's resources (time and money) or would they be better spent on other activities?
- Is the timing right? Is action likely in the present time frame?
- What kind of community involvement would best support the League's efforts?

Additionally, the request/proposal should contain a clear, concise statement of the issue and should contain the results of the research of current LWV positions, as listed above (National, State, and/or CNM) or a statement that this is a new issue (no existing League position).

If a person is a member of the LWVCNM Observer Corp, they should proceed as follows:

- Observer submits report of meeting to the Committee and to The Voter.
- The informational report submitted to the Committee should include a request for advocacy action, including any relevant league position(s)
- If action is requested, committee discusses options. The options are
 - Letter to appropriate body
 - Permission from board to speak on issue, using League position
 - Work with other groups to achieve desired action (will require board approval)

If a person who is not member of observer committee requests advocacy, they should proceed as follows:

- Submits a request/proposal to the Committee.
- The Committee will have an informational meeting with member to learn about issue and discuss.
- Vote of the Committee to determine what advocacy action is appropriate. Options are
 - Letter to members of relevant board;
 - Public statement before group; or,
 - Work with other groups to achieve desired action (will require board approval)
- The Committee is not the final word. If the member believes the request should go to the board, the Committee will facilitate that.