

League of Women Voters Glossary

This page lists many specific terms, or “League lingo,” that are unique to the League of Women Voters. Updated 12.31.2019.

- action:** Promoting the League’s positions on local, state, and national public policy issues to government officials, the media, and the public.
- action alert:** A request from the LWVUS or LWVWA sent to members to take action in support of a League position. LWVUS also sends action alerts to LWVWA.
- advocacy:** Recommending public support for a particular issue or policy.
- annual meeting:** Local year-end business meeting to elect officers and directors, vote on bylaw changes, and adopt a budget and program of work for the following year. The League’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Local Leagues hold meetings annually. At the state level this occurs either at the state convention on odd-numbered years or at council meetings on even-numbered years and conducts similar business for the next biennium.
- associate member:** A nonvoting member of the League, such as a person under 16 years of age.
- ballot issues:** Policy items (such as initiatives, referenda, or constitutional amendments) placed on ballot for a vote of the people. LWVWA makes support or opposition statements on those issues where policy positions exist. LWVWA also produces ballot summaries that describe the ballot measure along with pros and cons. The League’s objective information on ballot issues comes separately from the Education Fund (the C3) and the League’s advocacy arm (the C4). LWVWA does not combine the two in either documents or events.
- Board of Directors:** The governing body of the League (national, state, or local), who are typically elected as a group at the annual meeting. The nominating committee presents a slate of directors and officers who have been vetted (evaluated) for service. The League has an Education Fund 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4) board, both nonprofit, and usually include many of the same officers and directors.
- C3:** Refers to a 501(c)(3), which is a nonprofit that the IRS has approved as a tax-exempt, charitable organization. This is shorthand for the League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund, which is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3)—a tax-exempt, charitable organization that provides an umbrella for local Leagues to be able to accept C3 donations. The Education Fund sponsors and supports nonpartisan educational projects that help the public better understand major public policy issues and become active and informed participants in their communities and in their government. These projects include Vote411.org and other voter service projects, the civics textbook *The State We’re In*, and the League’s issue studies and reports.
- C4:** Refers to a 501(c)(4), which is a tax-exempt social welfare organization that the IRS describes as not organized for profit and which operates exclusively to promote social welfare. The C4 refers to the League of Women Voters of Washington, which is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(4)—a tax-exempt social welfare organization. This organization is responsible for all of the League’s advocacy work, including Action Workshops and lobbying

efforts with the state legislature. Donations made to this organization are not tax-deductible. The IRS does not require that a C4 be nonpartisan—it is a League requirement that Leagues are nonpartisan.

caucus: An open meeting to discuss an issue that may or may not lead to presenting a viewpoint, resolution, or motion at a League council meeting or convention.

Centennial: Commemoration of an event that happened a hundred years earlier, specifically commemorating the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

chapter: Do not use this term to refer to a local League.

civil discourse: Engagement in discourse (conversation) intended to enhance understanding. Frequently used with the word civility, and is usually perceived as respectful and nonthreatening.

consensus: Collective opinion of a substantial number of League members after objective study of an issue and which represents the membership as a whole. The opinion becomes the basis of a position. It is not a vote and it does not necessarily mean all members agree with everything.

concurrence: Agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by another League, study committee, task force, or League board. The membership votes on concurrences at the convention or annual meeting following publication of material to provide members with information about the issue.

convention: A state or national League meeting. Local Leagues send delegates to the annual LWWUS and/or LWWVA convention to elect officers and directors for the biennium, adopt programs, make bylaw changes, and adopt a budget. Local Leagues send delegates to the state convention in odd-numbered years, and local and state Leagues send delegates to national convention in the even-numbered years. Members of the respective Boards of Directors are also delegates. The number of delegates is based on the number of members in each local or state League. Leagues typically pay for delegates to attend.

cosponsor: An organization that works with the League to put on an event.

council: An assembly of League delegates held in alternate years of the state and national conventions to assess program developments. Local Leagues send delegates to the state council and state Leagues send delegates to the national council. In addition to delegates, members and guests are welcome to attend the state council, as the council provides training opportunities and encourages networking and the sharing of ideas and actions.

DEI: Abbreviation for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The LWWUS and the state League are committed to DEI. Local, state, and national Leagues have DEI policies and programs for engaging with multiple communities.

delegate: League members designated to represent their group who are informed, but not instructed, about how to vote/advocate at a League convention or council.

Education Fund: The 501(c)(3) tax-exempt arm of national, state, and local Leagues that handles funds to be used only for educational purposes and not for advocacy action on issues.

election tabloid: A paper and online publication for explaining civic information, such as how to vote, election dates, job descriptions of elected officials, and how to learn about issues and candidates. Tabloids are published by the LWVWA Education Fund (usually jointly with another organization) and meant for civic education for all ages.

forum: A public presentation of issues or candidates, typically hosted by the League and which may include others (such as the media) as part of voter education. The [LWVWA](#) and [LWVUS](#) websites provide extensive information on how to stage a forum.

GOTV: Abbreviation for Get Out the Vote. This is a major function of many local Leagues and is designed to encourage all eligible citizens to vote, especially those in underrepresented communities.

honorary life member: A person who has been a League member for 50 years or more. Life members are excused from dues payment and their Leagues pay no per member payment (PMP) for them.

ILO: Abbreviation for Inter-League Organization. This is a group formed by local Leagues within a county, metropolitan area, or region to act on issues that are beyond the local League's scope.

IOI: Abbreviation for [Impact on Issues](#). This is a document that lists all LWVUS positions along with appropriate background information.

issue: The subject of a study.

lobby: Any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of the legislature or government.

local League: Organization of League members who reside in a specified geographical area. It operates somewhat independently of the state and national Leagues and has its own programs and activities. They are not called chapters. A large League (such as in a large metropolitan area) may have smaller groups, called units, based on geography or interests.

LWV lobbyists: Persons in the League who advocate, or lobby, for League positions with government bodies. The League has both contract lobbyists and a Lobby Team. The contract lobbyists are hired specifically to lobby state legislators and provide strategic guidance to the Lobby Team. The Lobby Team is composed of League volunteer lobbyists who advocate for legislation based on League positions that have been adopted after study and consensus or through concurrence.

LWVUS: Abbreviation for the League of Women Voters of the United States.

LWVUS Update: The biweekly newsletter from LWVUS on national League issues. Subscribe on the [national](#) site.

MAL: Abbreviation for member-at-large. This is a League member who resides outside the area of, and is not enrolled in, a local League.

MAL unit: A state-recognized group of members-at-large in an area where there is no local League. Also referred to a Unit-at-Large (UAL).

MELD: Abbreviation for Member Engagement Leadership Development. Five networks of about four local Leagues (called a pod), led by a MELD Coach and joined by a LWVWA board member who meet (virtually) monthly to exchange information and ideas. MELD is an expansion of the LWVUS Membership Leadership Development (MLD) program.

MOU: Abbreviation for memorandum of understanding. A type of agreement between two or more parties that provides the details of an intended common line of action.

nonpartisan policy: The LWVUS policy states that the “League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.” Leagues take positions only on policy items. Each League must adopt a policy that describes how this specifically applies to members of a League’s board.

partner: A person or group that is working with the League on the same activity. On a program, a partner would be a group that jointly plans and executes a program, and is different than a cosponsor.

partisan: A supporter of a party, cause, or person.

PDC: Abbreviation for Public Disclosure Commission. In Washington State, the PDC provides public access to information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates. It also ensures compliance with and enforces state disclosure and campaign finance laws.

PIA: Abbreviation for *Program in Action*. The [LWVWA document](#) that lists all of the LWVWA positions along with appropriate background information.

plenary: A meeting or session attended by all participants at a conference or assembly.

PMP: Abbreviation for per-member payment. The payments that local Leagues make to LWVWA and LWVUS based on the number of members registered by the end of January each year. Payments are made starting July 1 of the ensuing fiscal year and can be paid quarterly or in full. A local League may make payments to the LWVUS Education Fund from its own Education Fund account for up to 50% of its PMP and receive credit for the PMP.

pod: A subgroup of local Leagues that are part of the MELD network.

position: A statement of the League's point of view on an issue, which is determined through member study and agreement (consensus or concurrence), approved by the appropriate board, and used as a basis for League action. In applying LWVUS positions to national, state, local, and regional issues, each appropriate League board—depending on the level of action—is responsible for determining whether member understanding and agreement exists and whether the action makes sense in terms of timing, need, and effectiveness. The position statement after board evaluation is the means to allow a League to take action to support or oppose specific legislation, ballot measures, or governmental activities.

principles: Standards and policies supported by the League as a whole for running the League. They constitute the authorization for adopting programs at all levels. Principles are published in two documents, the LWVWA [Program in Action](#) and the LWVUS [Impact on Issues](#).

program Selected governmental issues that League members at the local, state, and national levels choose for study and action (position). Also referred to as Program of Work.

programs: Plans for speakers, discussion, or other activities placed on calendars for League meetings.

resolution: A formal expression of opinion or intention that an organization, legislature, or club makes, usually after voting.

sponsor: An individual or organization that pays some or all of the costs involved in staging an event in return for advertising.

suffragist: Women in the United States who advocated and lobbied for women's right to vote in elections, and who became part of a national organization that believed in campaigning for the right to vote in elections. Prior to 1920, when the 19th Amendment was ratified, women in the United States could not vote in national elections.

suffragette: Term used in the UK to refer to a suffragist. In the United States, it is considered negative and therefore is not used.

supporter: A person or group that approves of and encourages someone or something.

study: A careful examination and analysis of a question or issue. The [Guide to Effective Studies](#) is available on the LWVWA website to help Leagues create well-researched, nonbiased, and informative studies.

The Voter: The League publication sent once a month to members and supporters with articles about local, state, and some national activities and issues related to LWVWA interests. Members are automatically subscribed to this when they join the LWVUS. LWVWA and most local Leagues publish *The Voter* for their respective organizations. Many local Leagues call their newsletter *The Voter* also.

toolkit: A set of materials used to accomplish a specific project, such as a GOTV campaign or voter registration.

TRY: Abbreviation for *They Represent You*. The TRY is a League's annual directory of elected officials, and is published by the local Leagues.

TWIL: Abbreviation for *This Week in League*. The TWIL is LWVWA's weekly email newsletter sent out three times a month to provide information and updates about local, state, and some national activities and issues. Members are automatically subscribed to this when they join the League and become members of LWVUS.

unit: Subgroups of members within a geographical area that are part of a larger local League. The units allow members to work together at the local level and within their geographical

communities. Units may meet at varying times (day, evening, lunch hour) throughout the month.

VOTE411: The League's [website](#) that provides online ballot information about candidates and issues for an election. Candidates and campaigns about certain issues prepare their own statements and those statements are posted as submitted, unedited by LWVWA.

voter's pamphlet: Nonpartisan publication that provides candidate qualifications and information on ballot issues. It is published by local jurisdictions for local races and the Washington Secretary of State for state and federal offices and state ballot measures. LWVWA publishes additional information on state ballot issues.

voter services: Year-round activities that help citizens be politically active and that encourages participation in the political process. Basic voter service activities include registering voters, Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities, and presenting factual, nonpartisan information about candidates and election issues.

voting members: All individuals who are at least 16 years old who join LWV. A person who joins LWV is a member at the local, state, and national levels.