

Program FAQ

1. *Positions, Programs, Actions—what are the differences?*

The League takes positions on issues of public policy at all levels (national, state, and local) through a process of education and consensus. The Washington State League, LWVWA.org, has adopted positions under the following broad policy areas: government, transportation, natural resources, and social policy. A complete list of these issue areas can be found on the [state website](#).

Program is a slate of issues a League elects to devote time and resources to each year in support of the League position related to the issue. This list of program issues is selected according to a process described below. This program work then becomes the basis for action and education on that issue. Each League has a list of program topics which form a large part of its activities for a year.

Activities extend beyond “Program” to all the various activities and organizational tasks League members are involved with. For LWVSC, this includes such activities as educational forums, voter services tasks, participation in the Observer Corps, the website, public testimony, collaboration with partners, and its KSER radio program.

2. *How is the LWVSC Program chosen?*

Members are asked to review existing programs and make recommendations for any changes or deletions, as well as to suggest new topics for the next program year. This is typically done at the January unit meetings. Since the selection of new programs, particularly studies, can benefit from some thought and pre-planning, it may be helpful to start thinking about the process and developing ideas before January.

The Board collects and reviews suggestions from the members at its February and March meetings and makes recommendations on which of the topics should or should not become part of the official Program for the next year. These recommendations are then sent to the membership in April for review and discussion.

At the May general meeting, the membership decides which issues will constitute the official Program for the next program year, September to June.

The Four Program Options

Once a topic has been chosen, there are four options to develop a Program:

- *Update a current position*—Is the position still useful? Have there been significant developments not reflected in the current position? What is the scope of the update?
- *Education*—Is it more important at this time to help citizens understand an issue rather than advocate? Do citizens need help understanding the issue?
- *Study*—Does the issue fall under an existing League position? Is there a role for government? Is there enough time to study the issue?
- *Action*—Do the members understand the position and action goals? Are the timing and political realities right for success? Can League action make a significant difference?

3. What Does a Study Entail?

Because the goal of a study is action at a future date, it is important to keep the following guidelines in mind when proposing a study:

- *Unbiased*—A study should not be crafted to favor a particular outcome or conclusion. It should be as unbiased as possible.
- *Report*—The study report should be presented to the Board and the members for discussion and consensus.
- *Consensus*—There must be member consensus before action is taken, or a position is adopted, as the result of the study.

The President appoints a study committee chair who can be objective and provide balance of multiple viewpoints without imposing a personal opinion.

League studies typically are expected to take up to two years since it is important to solicit multiple, even conflicting, viewpoints; to conduct thorough research into the topic; and to reach consensus for action.

After a study is adopted as an official Program, its scope can be narrowed but not expanded.

4. Can We Work on Any Issues League Members Want?

Local League advocacy and programs are intended to apply to issues at the city and county level. Local Leagues can act on state positions if a state position applies to its local government jurisdiction. If an issue

affects more than one county League, the state League must be consulted. If there is any question whether an action is authorized, the state League must be contacted for clarification. Leagues can differ in their interpretation of issues.

In choosing a Program topic, the following questions should be taken into consideration.

1. Is there a real possibility citizens can effect change at the local level?
2. Can there be a benefit from League's special expertise or perspective?
3. How will the results be evaluated?
4. Is there a potential for collaboration with other groups?

Outside of the official Program process, a local League can provide information on issues of public interest, including those for which there is no League position, or which would deal with issues larger than the local League's sphere of influence. An example is the educational forum on immigration law in which the League participated in 2017.

Educational forums should focus on issues and not the merits of specific legislation. They should not be for the purpose of lobbying or be a call to action, which must follow the processes of study and consensus.