Members' Handbook

The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad (LWVPT) is a nonpartisan, grassroots civic organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. With over 100 years of experience, the League is one of America's oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations.

Our Mission: Empowering voters. Defending democracy.

Our Vision: We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.

League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad
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What is the League of Women Voters?

The League of Women Voters was formed in 1920, just after the ratification of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. Just like the U.S. government, it operates on the national, state and local levels. The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities.

The suffragettes, those women who worked so hard and for so long to earn the right to vote for women, realized, as with every other right or privilege, voting came with responsibilities. They knew it wasn't enough just to vote. People needed to learn how government works; they needed to learn about the issues and the candidates so each individual voter could choose the candidates whose positions align with their own.

So, they formed the League of Women Voters, an organization dedicated to promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

The League is ***nonpartisan*** in that we do not support or oppose any candidates or political parties. Read LWVPT Nonpartisan Policy on page 8.

Over the years, the national and state Leagues and our local League have developed policy positions on a broad range of governmental issues after thorough study and member consensus. The studies and the resulting positions derive from the principles, or concepts of government, to which the League subscribes. Review the League's policy positions using the links on page 10.

We are ***political*** in that we engage in advocacy based on these policy positions.

Our vision is of a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate. Therefore, we honor the principles and practices of **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

How Do We Work?

Goals, or strategies for action, and the supporting League Principles and policy positions are called the League Program. The national and state Leagues adopt a program every two years at convention.
LWVPT adopts a program every year at the annual meeting in May.

When we speak on behalf of the League–or any member does so–we speak in accordance with the principles and policy positions which have been agreed on by the LWV at the national and state levels. We talk about this policy as **"speaking with one voice.**"

In addition to activities in support of our core work of voter registration and voter education, our League program includes goals for action and advocacy based on these local, state, and national policy positions.

Some examples of our advocacy are calling, emailing, writing to elected officials; attending meetings of City Council or Board of County Commissioners and speaking about an issue; letters to the editor; marching, demonstrating; attending and speaking at press conferences; and lobbying at the State legislature.

In addition to the action goals, any member may propose a study with the ultimate intention of developing and adopting a new policy position.

We invite members to present ideas for action, advocacy, or study for the coming year in preparation for the annual meeting in May. We encourage all members to do so at any time.

How Can You Participate in LWVPT Activities?

Orientation Meetings

We recommend that you attend an LWVPT Orientation meeting. These programs are a great opportunity to meet the leaders of LWVPT and other new members. You will hear information about:

- The history of the League, and the local, state, and national structure
- The mission and methods of the LWVPT, our nonpartisan policy, and our tax-deductible status that allows both for education and advocacy
- Voter Services and Candidate Forums
- The initiatives of the 6 LWVPT Roundtables: Criminal Justice, Environment, Fair Elections, Health, Immigration Reform and Public Education.

Orientation meetings are generally held twice a year, in Spring and Fall. Watch your email for details!

Voter Education and Voter Registration

To vote for candidates that will represent their interests, voters must register to vote and understand how the government works, what governmental and societal issues are facing us, and where candidates stand on the issues.

Since the formation of the League, voter registration and voter education have been our fundamental objectives. The Voter Services Committee is the focus for these activities.

A candidate forum is generally held each election year at the September or October Lunch with the League program. LWVPT may sponsor additional forums in conjunction with other non–partisan community organizations.

The LWVPT promotes the Vote411.org web site and its nonpartisan information about voting, a schedule of candidate forums, and answers to pertinent questions from the candidates running for office.

In addition to numerous community voter registration drives, the LWVPT has registered voters following every naturalization ceremony in Guilford and Forsyth counties.

Member participation is central to successful voter registration and voter education. The following are some of the activities that require the work of many volunteers:

- Identifying and planning voter registration events
- Registering voters
- Developing questions for the candidates
- Communicating with candidates
- Planning and implementing candidate forum(s)
- Coordinating online voter guide
- Distributing VOTE411 materials

Roundtables

The **Criminal Justice Roundtable** (CJRT), formed in January of 2017, takes authority from LWV national policy, "Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans."
The CJRT defines Criminal Justice as articulated by American political philosopher John Rawls:
. . . *Whether something is just or unjust depends on whether it promotes or hinders equality of access to civil liberties, human rights, opportunities for healthy and fulfilling lives, as well as whether it allocates a fair share of benefits to the least advantaged members of society.*
CJRT members voted to make their first direct effort a study of aspects of Criminal Justice in Greensboro. Another goal is to restore driver's licenses to tens of thousands of Guilford County residents who have lost their license due to their inability to pay fines/fees. Contact: cjrt@lwvpt.org

The **Environment Roundtable** (ERT) To educate our members and the public, the Environment Roundtable invites experts to address climate change and its effect, including speakers taking local action for solutions. We attend civic and governmental meetings to observe how decisions are made, we take field trips to see solutions in action. We partner with other nonpartisan environmental groups to strengthen climate advocacy at all levels –from the neighborhood to wider decision -making bodies. For more information, inquire at: environment@lwvpt.org

The **Fair Elections Roundtable** believes the survival of our democracy requires two actions that are fundamental to all others we seek as engaged citizens: (1) Ending gerrymandering through nonpartisan redistricting reform, and (2) promoting and protecting voters' access to the polls and challenging efforts and tactics that limit the ability of voters to exercise their right to vote. Accordingly, we seek to educate the public and advocate for the NC General Assembly's approval of a nonpartisan redistricting process and laws that expand voter access to the polls, including generous early voting; automatic, online, and same-day registration; and accessible vote-by-mail. Contact: fairelections@lwvpt.org

The **Health Roundtable** supports the League's position of promoting equal access to a basic level of quality health care for all residents of the US paid for by general taxes based on income and including effective cost control measures. To that end we seek to educate ourselves and the public concerning deficiencies in our current health care system, proposed solutions, and where candidates for public office stand on health care issues. We support reproductive rights as a necessary component of women's healthcare. Contact: health@lwvpt.org

The **Immigration Policy Reform Roundtable** is a comprehensive reform roundtable with broad membership from the league and from the wider community, including those impacted by immigration policy. It supports just and humane immigration policy in the Triad, in North Carolina, in the United States and in our world. It presents educational programs to faith and community groups, conducts

community-based research on how immigration laws impact immigrant and refugee lives, creates policy recommendations, speaks with legislators, and advocates for specific individuals in certain cases. Its work is heavily informed by immigrant-led and immigrant-serving organizations across the Triad.

Contact: immigrationreform@lwvpt.org

The **Public Education Roundtable** believes that for quality education to exist and thrive locally for all children pre-K through 12, these principles must be adhered to: funding equity, integration, high quality teachers and principals, support services to include teacher assistants and small class size especially in poverty schools, and that public tax dollars must be used only for public school education with accountability and transparency required in all educational settings. Contact: publiceducation@lwvpt.org

What if I don't have that much time?

There are many other opportunities to participate in League activities. Below are ongoing opportunities to engage with LWVPT.

Learn with the League

The "Learn with the League" is held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month September to April. The programs are promoted in *Connections*, the LWVPT website, and announcements made by the roundtables. Generally, the presentation is 30-40 minutes, with an additional question and answer period of 15-20 minutes. The meetings cover topics related to fair elections, criminal justice, immigration, health, public education and the environment.

Watch your email for detailed announcements!

Bi-Monthly *Connections*

These emails describe League activities, events announced by partner organizations, and, when the need arises, calls to action.

Annual Meeting

At an evening meeting in mid-May, members select new Board members and officers, approve the LWVPT Program and budget for the coming year and enjoy happy hour, dinner and entertainment. The *LWVPT Annual Report and Meeting Workbook* is sent to all members in mid-April to document accomplishments of the past year and to provide the information you will need to vote at the meeting.

We encourage you to visit these web sites for more information on the issues and policies that our League follows:

LWVUS Impact on Issues 2024-2026

LWVNC Public Policy Positions

LWVPT Nonpartisan Policy

(Approved by the LWVPT Board of Directors (BOD) September 24, 2012; amended and approved August 1, 2016; amended and approved December 5, 2016; reapproved March 6, 2017; amended and approved December 5, 2017; amended and approved May 1, 2018; amended and approved August 22, 2019, readopted August 8,2020, readopted August 7, 2021)

The purpose of the League of the Women Voters (League) is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government at all levels. The League is nonpartisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate; it is political in that it takes positions on selected governmental and other issues after study and consensus and advocates on behalf of those issues.

The League recognizes the role of political parties in government and believes that participation in the activities of parties is an essential ingredient of citizen responsibility. While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary to maintain the nonpartisanship of the League as an organization. The BOD of the League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad (LWVPT) has established the following guidelines. The LWVPT nominating committee shall talk with prospective BOD members about the implications of the League's nonpartisan policy.

The President/Co-presidents/Management Team (President), Vice President, and the Voter Services Chair may not engage in partisan politics during their BOD term or sponsor fund raising for political purposes, host functions or distribute partisan material.

All other members of LWVPT, including other members of the BOD, are encouraged to participate fully in the political process as individuals without implying or receiving League endorsement. Thus, they may participate in party activities, including precinct meetings. They may display yard signs, bumper stickers and the like, but they may not wear candidate buttons or insignia of any party or distribute partisan information at League meetings.

Once the League (local, state, or national) takes a position on an issue, members may not identify themselves as League members while publicly expressing an opinion that is in opposition to a League position.

At any League-sponsored activity, including informal social events, members should not engage in partisan discussions or activities. In contrast, policy discussions are encouraged. Policy analysis and evaluation are intrinsically political but must remain nonpartisan.

Members representing the League in the community should be sensitive to their responsibilities and fully aware of League positions. When acting as League representatives, members must not allow partisanship to be discernible.

Members may serve on governmental commissions at their own discretion. If an appointment is League-related, the appointee should be fully aware of the League's positions as they relate to the commission's responsibility. Representatives of the League must keep the BOD informed and shall consult with the BOD before making any commitments for the League.

A BOD member shall not run for, or hold, any elective office at any level of government.

A BOD member shall not indicate her/his political affiliations or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, including on social networking sites or other public venues that also identify her/him as a member of the BOD.

The political candidacy of a spouse, partner, or immediate relative of a BOD member shall be considered separate and distinct from the activities of the BOD member.

Members shall present questions about specific situations to the President and the BOD in cases where the foregoing policies do not resolve the question.

This policy shall be reviewed and amended or readopted by the BOD at the beginning of each fiscal year at BOD orientation.

LWV Organization, Membership, Financing

Membership in LWVPT, our local League, automatically confers membership at the state and national levels. Any person 16 or over, male or female, may become a voting member of the League.

The League is financed mainly through membership dues. Beginning in February 2025, joining and renewing membership with the league will be a standardized process.

LWV membership renewing process includes the following:

- All members will receive a renewal reminder email 60 days prior to their expiration date.
- Members who do not renew in response to the first email will receive a second renewal reminder email.
- After the second email the LWVPT will reach out directly to the member to remind them to renew.
- If the member does not renew before their expiration date, they will receive an email on the expiration date.
- Unrenewed members will receive a final reminder email 45 days after their expiration date.
- There is a 60-day grace period after a person's expiration when they are still considered an active member of the League. After 60 days, they will be considered inactive.

Donations

LWVPT has begun fund-raising efforts to provide higher profile informational events on current issues to a broader audience. *Your support is important!*

Donations can be made either on our website or by check mailed to: LWVPT, PO Box 9721, Greensboro, NC 27429

Tax-deductible Status

All contributions to the League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad are tax deductible as LWVPT has 501(3)c status.

Social Media information

We can be found on the following social media platforms. Follow us to keep up on current issues and events.

Facebook

Bluesky

Threads

Instagram