



# League *of* Women *Voters of* Anne Arundel County, MD



# Principles of the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.



*“The vote is the emblem  
of your equality...  
the guaranty of your  
liberty...a power, a  
weapon of offense and  
defense, and a prayer.  
Understand what it  
means and what it can  
do for your country.  
Use it intelligently,  
conscientiously,  
prayerfully.... That  
vote has been costly.  
Prize it!”*

— Carrie Chapman Catt,  
LWV Founder 1920

Source: *The Woman Citizen*,  
September 4, 1920

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

## Mission

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political 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.

---

### League Organization and Nonpartisan Policy

- The League of Women Voters (LWV) is organized into three tiers that parallel our levels of government—national, state, and local. However, the League distinguishes itself from other similar organizations by its strong grassroots system. League members at the local level help to determine League positions and future direction, and volunteer their time and expertise to realize League goals.
- The League has a strong nonpartisan policy. It does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. As a neutral organization, its voice is heard above the tumult of party politics and respected by voters and government officials alike.
- Outside of the LWV's work, League members are encouraged to be active in the political process. They may seek election to public office and/or support candidates, partisan or otherwise. Such activities, however, must not be undertaken in the name of the League.



### League Membership Requirements

- League membership is open to women and men.
- Voting members must be U.S. citizens and 18 years or older. All others who join are associate members.
- Individuals who have been league members for 50 years or more are life members and excused from the payment of dues.
- Annual dues provide membership to the League at all levels, national, state, regional, and local.



## League of Women Voters of the United States

The U.S. League is organized into two major work areas: program and action; citizen education and voter services.

### Program and Action

Program is a general term used to describe the process by which the League formulates and adopts its public policy positions. Positions are reached through member study discussions and consensus. The U.S. League's positions fall into four broad categories: representative government, international relations, natural resources, and social policy.

Action is taken upon positions derived from consensus. Actions include lobbying national and state legislators, testifying at hearings, monitoring projects, and submitting letters to newspaper editors to influence public policies.

### Citizen Education and Voter Services

The League works to protect and expand voting rights; improve and reform the election process, and educate and register voters. The League operates one of the largest and longest running nonpartisan voter registration efforts in the nation. VOTE411.org, a popular League program begun in 2006, provides 24/7 online access to nonpartisan election-related information. At this site, the public may view general and state-specific information on absentee ballot and early voting options, election dates, polling locations, ballot measures, and verbatim responses to League-posed questions by candidates in national, state, and local races.

## League of Women Voters of Maryland

The state League assists local/county leagues in a variety of ways. It provides web-based support; produces several publications (*Maryland Voter*, *Report from State Circle*, *State Board Letter*, *Legislative Priorities and When You Go To Annapolis*); conducts instructional workshops, hosts an annual Legislative Day at the Maryland legislature; and conducts consensus studies and informational programs. It also serves as a voice for the county Leagues when advocating within the state on League positions.

## League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County

- To be affiliated with the national League, a local league must: (1) have bylaws; (2) establish and maintain a nonpartisan policy; (3) hold an annual business meeting of the membership; (4) hold regular Board meetings; (5) meet financial obligations to the state and national levels of the League; and (6) plan for membership growth and retention.
- The League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County (LWVAAC) is made up entirely of volunteers who help to accomplish the national league's mission at the grassroots level. We do this by advocating for change, encouraging voting, creating opportunities for political discussion, and helping citizens to understand how government works and the tools available to them so they can make a difference.





## LWVAAC Member Involvement

It is within the local League that a member learns what it means to belong to the LWV.

- The local League is the vibrancy, diversity, and strength of its members—the League’s greatest asset. Therefore, the LWVAAC strives for continuous membership development aimed at providing each member with opportunities for a meaningful league experience.
- Members have opportunities to attend a variety of planned educational events and get involved in League activities (using honed skills or developing new skills). Participation helps to increase members’ knowledge of the League.
- New League members have the option of being paired with a veteran League member who acts as a mentor. A mentor is available to answer questions, accompany the new member to League events, and to help the new member identify League activities that would benefit from their skills or spark their passion for an issue or topic. Getting involved with the help of a mentor ensures that new members move comfortably to higher levels of participation, such as chairing a committee or serving on the Board as a League officer or director.
- The local League offers several levels of membership: (1) individual, (2) household, and (3) student. The local League membership year is July 1 through June 30. At the end of the fiscal year, members have until October 1 to renew their membership by paying dues. After that date, members who have not renewed are designated inactive.
- When a person joins the local League, their name and contact information is entered into a national membership database of all League members in the United States. At this point, the member also is enrolled at the Maryland and U.S. League levels.
- An active member who recruits three (3) or more new members to the local League in a single fiscal year will be awarded a scholarship equal to one-half of the subsequent year’s annual dues. It is usually through members that others learn of the League and decide to join.

## LWVAAC Programs

- Local Leagues address local issues of compelling interest; often building relationships in the community and alliances with other organizations. At the local League level, the word “program” is used to describe a variety of events, including, but not limited to, speakers, panel discussions, candidate debates, and other educational activities for members and the public. A program or meeting at the local level may be planned around an issue without undertaking a study or having a position. Examples of recent Anne Arundel County League programs include:
  - » **Coffee & Conversation**, a members’ meeting with the Anne Arundel County delegation in the Maryland General Assembly to discuss upcoming legislative priorities;
  - » **Expert panel discussions** on current topics such as gerrymandering; public transportation, voting in the digital age, the effects of global warming locally, and more.

## LWVAAC Studies, Positions, and Actions

- **Studies** are the anchor of all League work. The League is known for its capacity to study an issue. A League study is thorough in its pursuit of the facts and details, stating the pros and cons. Ideas for issues to be considered for study originate with the membership. New studies are adopted by a vote of the members at the LWVAAC's Spring annual meeting.
- **Positions** are determined through consensus of the membership. The study committee develops a fact sheet through research and fashions consensus questions that are then discussed only among the membership. When a consensus is reached, the committee and the Officers of the Board write a consensus statement, which becomes the position on the issue.  
  
In the past, studies undertaken by the LWVAAC have led to public policy positions on immigration, transportation, planning and zoning, solid waste management, Board of Education, County Charter, affordable housing, and waste management, to name a few. Also, local Leagues may utilize positions taken by the state and U.S. Leagues. Each year, all local Leagues review the relevance of their current positions.
- **Action** describes an event that promotes the League's position on an issue to government officials and the public, often using the media as a communication tool. Such actions may include lobbying or advocating for a cause while simultaneously educating the public for support.

*A league study  
is thorough in  
its pursuit of the  
facts and details....*

## LWVAAC Voter Services

- The League holds voter registration drives throughout the year to encourage all eligible citizens to vote. Two annual opportunities are the naturalization ceremony at the historic Paca House in Annapolis on July 4th and National Voter Registration Day in September of each year.
- Informing voters is an important part of the League's services. In major election years, the LWVAAC contributes information to VOTE411.org and publishes the Anne Arundel County Voters' Guide, a popular booklet known for its nonpartisan candidate profiles and ballot question explanations. Both VOTE411.org and the Voters' Guide are offered free-of-charge to assist voters in making informed decisions before they go to the polls.
- For elections that are relevant to the county, the League sponsors candidate forums and debates, following strict nonpartisan national League rules.



## LWVAAC Board of Directors

- The LWVAAC's Board consists of elected and appointed directors. At a Spring annual meeting, League members elect officers, which include the president or co-presidents, treasurer, and secretary, as well as six directors, to two-year terms. Terms are staggered to provide continuity. After the annual meeting, the elected directors may appoint up to six additional directors to serve one-year terms.
- Directors may take responsibility for a portfolio (usually an ongoing League activity), or serve at-large. Several off-Board members work closely with the Board of Directors to handle publicity, the newsletter, and Board nominations.
- The Board meets at least seven times a year. The date and place are announced via email and in the LWVAAC newsletter, *Voter*, and on the LWVAAC website: [aa.lwvmd.org](http://aa.lwvmd.org). Board meetings are open to all members.

## LWVAAC Financial Administration

- A proposed League budget for the upcoming fiscal year must be adopted by the general membership at the Spring annual meeting. The budget reflects the goals, priorities, and activities of the League, including funds for sending several delegates to the state and national League conventions.
- The Board of Directors can adjust or revise the budget to respond to changed circumstances within the League during the fiscal year.
- The local League's Board of Directors bears the legal responsibility for the League's funds. Financial records are audited annually.
- At all levels, the League has two distinct roles and, therefore, maintains two tax-exempt, nonprofit entities. Local Leagues are 501(c)4 nonprofit organizations because the League is established as a lobbying organization and plays an influential role in politics. But, politics must not become the primary focus. In practice that means the League must spend less than 50 percent of its money on politics. **As a result of the 501(c)4 status, contributions made directly to the operating costs of a League are not tax deductible. Moreover, membership dues cannot be deducted on income taxes as charitable contributions.**
- The general membership must approve any change in individual membership dues at the Spring annual meeting. Dues levels are as follows:
  - » **Individual member:** \$65
  - » **Household:** \$30 (subsequent member of an individual member's household)
  - » **Student:** free (aged 16 to 30 and enrolled in an accredited institution)
  - » **Life Member:** no charge (an individual who has been a member of 50 years or more)
- All local Leagues are obligated to support the state and U.S. Leagues through per member payments (PMP). The PMP is assessed on the dues of each member based on their membership level. No PMP is owed for life members. A local League's PMP is based on the number of active members it has enrolled in the U.S. League's database as of February 1.



## Fundraising

The LWAAC organizes a fundraising campaign annually to solicit contributions from members and the public to support programs and activities.

## League of Women Voters of Maryland–Education Fund

- A separate Education Fund is classified as a 501(c)3 entity. **Contributions made to this fund are tax deductible to the donor. Donors may designate the League of Anne Arundel County as the recipient of these funds to be used for educational purposes only, including voter services.**
- The League, at any level, cannot accept contributions for the Education Fund from candidates running for elected public office.

## For Additional Information

The League of Women Voters is represented in 50 states, as well as DC, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In addition, local Leagues represent counties, cities, areas, and regions.

### League of Women Voters of the United States

1730 M Street, NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20036  
Telephone: 202-429-1965  
Email: [lwv@lwv.org](mailto:lwv@lwv.org)  
Website: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

### League of Women Voters of Maryland 121 Cathedral Street, Suite 2B

Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-269-0232  
Email: [info@lwvmd.org](mailto:info@lwvmd.org)  
Website: [www.lwvmd.org](http://www.lwvmd.org)

### League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County

317 Eatons Landing  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
443-672-8270  
Email: [lwvaacmd@gmail.com](mailto:lwvaacmd@gmail.com)  
Website: [lwvaacmd.org](http://lwvaacmd.org)  
Facebook: [@lwvaac](https://www.facebook.com/lwvaac)

