



How to Conduct a State Study

Adopted July 8, 2006; Revised January 10, 2009; March 17 & July 20, 2013, April 5, 2014, July 1, 2017

Proposing a Study:

- 1) A local or state League Board votes to propose a study for LWVNM.
- 2) A short description of the scope and objectives of the proposed study is submitted for review and recommendation by the Board at its March meeting and published in the Spring issue of *La Palabra* prior to the state convention. The scope of the study will explain the extent and limits of the study.
- 3) At the March state Board meeting a member of the local or state League presents the proposal to the Board. It is reviewed with the following questions in mind:
 - Are there people (drawn from several local Leagues) available to work on the issue?
 - Is the problem one that can be addressed by governmental (as opposed to private) action?
 - Is the issue one in which the League is likely to make a difference in the outcome?
- 4) Studies recommended by the Board require a simple majority for adoption. If the study is not recommended by the Board, it is listed in *La Palabra* as “not recommended” and a majority vote on the first day of Convention is required for the study to be placed on the agenda during the Program Planning session on the second day. In this case, a 2/3 vote is required to adopt the study.

Proceeding with a Study after Adoption at Convention

- 1) If the study is adopted, the proposing League names a leader to form a Study Committee. All LWVNM members shall be invited to join the committee. It is advisable to have at least one member of each local League serve on the committee.
- 2) The Study Committee is responsible for
 - carrying out the research;
 - presenting the questions and a discussion of the intended process (e.g., literature search, interviews, meeting attendance, surveys) to the state board for approval at the July board meeting;
 - providing resource materials to be posted on the LWVNM web site;
 - compiling a study guide including pro and con perspectives;
 - contacting the local Leagues to schedule unit meetings to educate members about the study and reach consensus or, if the Study Committee finds an appropriate position, concurrence.

- 3) For a two-year study, the goal of the first year is usually to educate the members generally about the issues through articles in *La Palabra* and unit meetings. For the second year of a two-year study, or the first year of a one-year study, the Committee will frame and present to the state Board a set of specific consensus questions or a proposed concurrence position that will be used to help formulate the final position. Whether the study is a one or two-year study, the same steps are followed.
- 4) A round of unit meetings for each local League should be scheduled for each year of the study. Prior to the consensus meetings, the study guide should be compiled and disseminated. A recorder must be chosen at each consensus meeting to report on areas of agreement, areas where there is no agreement, level of member participation, and other information relevant to the study. The consensus, or lack thereof, about each question must be recorded. No votes should be taken.

Formulating and Adopting a League Position

- 1) The Study Committee presents to the Board a proposed position, reached by either consensus or concurrence; a report of the recorded views of the members at the unit meeting discussions that includes areas of agreement and areas where no agreement was reached; number of member participants; and a report of the study process and findings.
- 2) The committee is responsible for ensuring that the proposed position does not conflict with any LWVUS position.
- 3) The Board is responsible for approving the wording of the proposed position.
- 4) The Board must keep in mind the importance of wording the position in terms broad enough to enable the League to initiate, support or oppose a variety of specific legislative and executive proposals over a period of time. The positions should address policies unless governmental procedures are within the original scope of the study.
- 5) The committee should submit a report for the Archives that includes:
 - history – why the study was done, study committee members, time period
 - issues and topics studied
 - data and information sources
 - study committee activities
 - consensus questions
 - results

Disseminating a Position and Using a Position for Advocacy

The LWVNM officers are responsible for reviewing and approving all public releases of information on positions, advocacy actions, and policies in advance of their release to assure that the League speaks with one voice and to protect the League's reputation for trustworthiness, reliability, and consistency.

- 1) Once finalized and approved by the state Board, the position is announced to members, becomes part of the League's position statements, can be shared with the public, and can be

used as a basis for action. Like all statements of position, it must be readopted at each convention in order to remain the basis for action.

- 2) Final reports, study research, or recorded discussion notes may be shared with the public only after approval from the Board, a Board Executive Committee, or, in the case of taking legislative action, by the Action Committee Chair and one Board officer.
- 3) Testimony before government entities may be given by the Study Committee chairs or members after approval has been received from the Board, a Board Executive Committee, or the Action Committee Chair and one Board officer.

It is important to remember that the study process is a cooperative effort between the LWVNM Board and the Study Committee. It is the Board's responsibility to monitor the entire process to ensure that the membership is able to come to consensus or concurrence in an unbiased and nonpartisan atmosphere.

Definitions

A Study is the process of formally investigating an issue, its supporting or contravening facts, and its policy implications. In League, study can take place at the local, state or national level in order to form a **Position** designed to provide the League with a basis for future political action or advocacy. A position statement emerges through group interaction and the exchange of views on topics raised by careful research and analyses.

Consensus is an agreement among a substantial number of members, reached after study and group discussion at face-to-face meetings called unit meetings. No voting takes place to reach member agreement. Consensus is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions. In the consensus process, the Study Committee does not produce a statement with which members agree or disagree. Rather, the Study Committee uses questions to guide discussion, after providing background materials prior to a consensus meeting. (Non-members may not participate in consensus meetings though experts may be available to answer questions.)

Concurrence is the act of agreeing – or concurring – with a previously formulated statement or position. Leagues may concur with a statement or position arrived at by another League, a position stated by a study committee based on its research or reflecting widely held views, or a position of long standing that they wish to reaffirm. In preparing for Concurrence, the Study Committee and Board must approve the statement before it is sent to members for consideration; the study committee presents the statement and background material.

From the viewpoint of League members, the simplest distinction between the consensus and concurrence positions is that in reaching concurrence they discuss and agree on a statement; in reaching consensus they discuss and agree on answers to questions. Both require a thorough examination of facets of the issue by a Study Committee.