

PROGRAM PLANNING

What: What's "Program"?

The positions a League has adopted through consensus or concurrence and new studies adopted to inform members and (usually) with the goal of reaching new positions. (Sometimes, just with the goal of learning enough about current conditions to speak knowledgeably, based on positions you already have.)

More What: So what's "program planning"?

The process for reaffirming support of existing positions (or dropping some positions) and for adopting new studies at the local level, or recommending new studies at the regional (LWVNCA), state (MD,VA) or national level.

Why: What's the big deal with "positions"?

A position is a statement agreed to by most of the members present when it was adopted. It enables the League to say in testimony, a letter to elected officials, a letter to the Editor "Our members support....Our members believe..."

When:

LWVUS has conventions and adopts program in even numbered years; LWVMD and LWV-VA has conventions and adopts program in odd numbered years. LWVNCA has annual conventions, but in the past has considered program in odd numbered years. Most local Leagues have annual meetings and consider program every year or every other year.

Many local League do local program planning at the same time we consider recommendations for state, LWVNCA, or national program – but that doesn't have to be done that way. To meet LWVUS deadlines, we begin with an article in our December Voter, asking members to think about the issues they wish the League would speak to and bring those thoughts to General Meetings (one day, one evening) in January where we talk about those ideas, whether we already have positions on which to base action, and take straw votes to assess member interest in the various topics suggested. Those results go to the board level and the local board decides (based on the input from those January meetings) what to recommend to LWVUS, LWVMD, LWV-VA and or LWVNCA and to our own members at our Annual Meeting.

Who:

We invite all our members to come to our Program Planning meetings. It's often a mix of long-time and brand new members (who learn a lot about how "multi-issue" we are). We alert them in a timely manner so they are prepared to discuss it. The date of Annual meetings or Convention dictate the timeline when decisions and recommendations are due.

We urge all our Board members and Committee Chairs to come; most do come.

How:

Individual members come with recommendations. Committees come with recommendations. There was a program planning meeting years ago in Montgomery County when the program chair had

everyone present count off around the room: 1,2,3,4, 1,2,3,4, etc and then sent all the ones to one corner, all the 2s to another, etc, and told each group to come back with a recommendation of what they'd like the League to be able to act on. And, incredibly, they all came back with the same recommendation: the unmet needs of children in the county....

However, you build your list, the key questions are:

1. Do we already have positions on which to base action? (Can we truthfully say we know what most of our members think about it?) If so, do we know enough about the current situation to apply the position we have to it?
2. If no to either or both, we'd need a study.
3. Do we have members willing to work on it?
4. Do we have someone willing to chair the work?

The recommended program is voted on at Annual Meeting or in the case of states at Convention. Another way to amend our positions is the Concur with another position from another League. Concurrence can only be done by agreeing on the stated position exactly as written.