

## **HOW THE LWVUS WORKS TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY**

Every year the state and national League boards decide on the priority issues that will be followed and perhaps lobbied on. We consider the positions we hold and the timeliness and urgency of the issue.

Effective congressional lobbying on national legislative issues depends on a partnership of League lobbyists in Washington and member constituents lobbying at home.

In Washington, the LWVUS president testifies on Capitol Hill, and, with members of the board, lobbies members of Congress through phone calls and office visits.

Day-to-day lobbying of the staffs and committees of congressional delegates is carried out by the League's professional staff of lobbyists. The LWVUS volunteer Lobby Corps lobbies each month when Congress is in session. Each Lobby Corps member is assigned specific state congressional delegations.

Lobbying in Washington is important, but direct lobbying of members of Congress by their constituents—such as you—often is the key to persuading them to vote for the League position.

The LWVUS grassroots Lobby Corps provides another way for Leagues to keep in contact with their members of Congress. This network of state and local Leagues and individual LWV members acts as a rapid response team to get the League message to Congress very effectively.

Members of the network receive email lobby requests from the LWVUS and are asked to respond by sending targeted—and sometimes last-minute—messages to members of Congress on priority issues before key votes. League members can join the Grassroots Lobby Corps via the Take Action section of the League's website [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

League positions may be found at [lwv.org](http://lwv.org), [palwv.org](http://palwv.org), and [lwvpgh.org](http://lwvpgh.org). Some state Leagues offer subscriptions to Action Alerts, which substantive and political background information and ask Leagues and individual members to take action on key issues.

## HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT DECISIONS

As a member, you add strength to the League's voice in political action such as lobbying for or against a government policy or proposed legislation. However, League members are encouraged to also act as individuals by contacting their specific elected representatives to express their personal views. Making your voice heard can be effective at any level of government because elected officials are sensitive to the views of their constituents—especially when those views are expressed thoughtfully and articulately.

There are several ways to contact your representatives or other government officials: An email, a physical letter sent by mail, a telephone call, a fax, or even a personal visit. When you communicate, please keep these tips in mind:

- Address the elected official properly.
- State your name and address clearly.
- Be brief and to the point; limit a letter to one page and use your own words.
- Don't send a form letter or forward someone else's words (e.g., a newspaper clipping).
- Be as specific as you can, citing how a bill or action will affect you or your community.
- If possible, suggest a compromise or an alternative to proposed legislation.
- If you have a question or problem, be specific on what you would like the official to do.
- Communicate early on issues that have not yet been introduced or come up for a vote.
- Your legislators need to hear your views *before* they vote and not just complaints afterward.

Here is a helpful infographic: [www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=741434](http://www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=741434)

Please use these same guidelines when writing letters to the editorial page of a newspaper.

To find out your state and federal district numbers and the names and addresses of your representatives:

- Check *Facts for Citizens* at [www.lwvpgh.org/FFC](http://www.lwvpgh.org/FFC)
- Visit [vote411.org](http://vote411.org)
- Contact your local library.

To find out who your local elected officials are, check your municipality's or school district's website, call their office, or contact your local library.