

League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico 2011 MEMBER HANDBOOK

This Handbook is dedicated to
JoAnne Ramponi, a passionate member of our League who is very much missed.



MISSION

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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PRINCIPLES

The Principles are “concepts of government” to which the League subscribes. They are a descendant of the Platform, which served from 1942 to 1956 as the national repository for “principles supported and positions taken by the League as a whole in fields of government to which it has given sustained attention.”

Since then, the Principles have served two functions, according to the LWVUS Bylaws: 1) authorization for adoption of national, state and local program (Article XII), and 2) a basis for taking action at the national, state and local levels (Article XII).

The Principles

- 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 believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens 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 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 the development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

From page 83, *League of Women Voters of the United States Impact on Issues 2008-2010, A Guide to Public Policy Positions*

VISION,

BELIEFS, and

INTENTIONS

The goal of the League of Women Voters of the United States is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.

We are a nonpartisan political membership organization.

WE

- **ACT** after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all government levels
- **BUILD** citizen participation in the democratic process
- **ENGAGE** communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.

WE BELIEVE IN

- respect for individuals
- the value of diversity
- the empowerment of the grassroots, both within the League and in communities
- the power of collective decision-making for the common good

WE WILL

- act with trust, integrity and professionalism
- operate in an open and effective manner to meet the needs of those we serve, both members and the public
- take the initiative in seeking diversity in membership
- acknowledge our heritage as we seek our path to the future.

THE LEAGUE AND YOU, THE MEMBER

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is a unique, multi-issue, activist network that derives its strength from the energy and commitment of several hundred thousand members and supporters nationwide. It is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Founded in 1920 at the culmination of the 72-year struggle to gain women's suffrage, the League took as its first charge helping to educate 20 million women on how to exercise their new political rights and responsibilities. Although programs and priorities have changed over the years, the League has remained true to its basic purposes:

to establish positions on public policy issues through member participation and agreement;

to take concerted actions that secure public policies consistent with League positions;

to enhance citizen participation in federal, state and local government decisions, and to increase citizen participation in the election process.

Any citizen over 18, male or female, may become a member of the League. The League is organized to parallel the three levels of government: local, state, national.

As a member of LWVCNM, you are also a member of LWVNM, and LWVUS. As such, you decide through program planning sessions what issues deserve study at the local, state, and national levels. You participate in the studies and add your voice to the consensus. Action is the culmination of this process.

The League also works to help citizens become educated and involved in government through its Voter Service activities. These may include publishing a yearly *Who's Who*, a *Voters' Guide* (prior to general elections), and other timely booklets and leaflets on current community topics.

In addition, the League assists with voter registration, stages candidate debates or forums, and acts as observers at governmental meetings. The LWVCNM has established an Education Fund which accepts tax-deductible contributions. The purpose of this fund is to provide citizen information to members and the community.

The information in this Membership Handbook is meant to assist you in your League activities. Take time to read it. Become an involved League member. Among the rewards will be the pleasure of working with other people, of gaining expertise in a subject of interest, and developing leadership, managerial skills, and political awareness.