

The LWV Making Democracy Work Award

The LWV Making Democracy Work Award is a signature award program. This is a visibility mechanism. It is a way to get media attention and provide your League with an opportunity to talk about its good work.

These recommendations are meant to be a *guide*, not a mandate. We know that “one size does not fit all.” You know your community, your League members and what will succeed in your area. This guide is offered as a resource; it is not meant to limit creative approaches or interfere with existing successful programs.

In order to ensure success, we strongly encourage Leagues to employ the same name for the award, use the same eligibility criteria for awardees, and most importantly, do extensive community outreach to identify nominees and to promote the award.



Overview

The vision for the LWV Making Democracy Work Award is that local Leagues will present a community leader with an award once each year. The award was initially crafted to coincide with the League of Women Voters’ birthday, February 14 to maximize visibility; however, the award can be given at any time during the League calendar. We want to brand the award as our own and in terms that resonate with prospective members. Therefore, all Leagues should refer to it as the LWV’s Making Democracy Work Award. For simplicity, we will refer to it as the MDW Award throughout this section.

This award will recognize a non-member, preferably someone who is representative of your League’s target demographic. This award is not meant to honor a current member as it is designed to be an outreach and recruitment tool.

Each League should review the program outlined and recommendations made in the following pages and feel free to make adjustments as necessary. For example, it is not required that a League host an event at which the award is presented for this effort to be successful in raising the League’s profile among members of the target audience. *This program should be tailored according to the resources available to each League.*

The LWV Making Democracy Work Award program has been designed to both highlight the value of membership to potential League members, as well as to increase the visibility of the League’s contributions to the community.



Benefits of the LWV Making Democracy Work Award

As this might be a new type of event for Leagues to undertake, we thought that it would be helpful for League leaders to understand the benefits to both the League and participants.

To Leagues:

By sponsoring a community award with specific criteria for eligibility, Leagues will be able to:

- Identify and connect with a pool of potential new members
- Gain at least one new member (the awardee) and likely others
- Inform the community about the types of work and activities that the League does
- Increase the League's overall visibility in the community
- Strengthen (or create) relationships with allied organizations through the nomination process
- Strengthen (or create) relationships with the media through promotion of the nomination process and promotion of the awardee
- Brand and establish a *non-election* League event and product
- Gain experience in marketing your League and engaging current members in new and different ways
- Gain a better understanding of leaders in your community through their applications
- Highlight the value of membership in the League to leaders in the community

To the Nominees and the Awardee:

Through the LWV Making Democracy Work Award process, the nominees and the awardee will receive numerous opportunities, including:

- Sharing their experiences and successes with community leaders and with the public
- Networking with League members and leaders
- Joining the League, one of our nation's most trusted organizations
- Receiving visibility and recognition in local media outlets
- Making a difference in their communities through their association with League



Check out the "Tools You Can Use" section at the back of the manual for planning materials to host your own Making Democracy Award event!

Visibility Opportunities for the LWV Making Democracy Work Award

One of the great things about the LWV Making Democracy Work Award is all the media opportunities surrounding this activity. The media can be engaged at multiple stages of the LWV Making Democracy Work Award activity. *Sample media releases, PSA scripts and letter templates (to allied groups) are available.*

Gain visibility for the League by:

- Releasing a call for nominations to the press
- Sending letters to local community leaders from allied organizations asking them to nominate someone for the award
- Creating and distributing a Public Service Announcement (PSA) asking community members to nominate a community leader for the award
- Asking the Mayor, City Councilman or Governor sign a proclamation naming a day for the honoree
- Sending a media advisory announcing the recipient of the award to the press
- Sending follow-up letters to all community leaders nominated for the award, thanking them for their good work and informing them about the League and how to join
- Sending follow-up letters to allied organization leaders thanking them for promoting the award and providing contact information for working together in the future

SUCCESS STORIES:

The **LWV of Beach Cities (CA)** held their Making Democracy Work Award luncheon. The process of finding the recipient of their award began in December when more than 100 letters were sent out seeking nominations from various businesses, school districts, non-profit groups, and government representatives. They received so many nominations that it was difficult to narrow it down to just one awardee—so the committee actually added two honorable mentions! The awards ceremony was highlighted by proclamations from several elected officials including the mayor of Redondo Beach and a state senator. The award was presented by then LWV of California President Janis Hirohama.

The **LWV of Greater Lafayette (IN)** hosted their very first Constitution Day program that they plan to make an annual event. In addition to marking this important date, the League also used this opportunity to present their Making Democracy Work Award to a local community leader. In months leading up to this event, they used their *Voter* to solicit nominations from the community. Their goal was to find a woman age 50-65 that improved their community and mobilized others to help effect a change that has benefited the broader community. The event was well-attended and they look forward to more successful events in the future.



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