League of Women Voters Style Guide
May 2013

In general, the League follows Associated Press (AP) Style, which is widely used and recognized by the press and public alike. AP style provides fundamental guidelines for spelling, language, punctuation and language usage.

In order to maintain consistency and accuracy, **all written materials** produced by the League should follow the LWV Style Guide. Staff should refer to the guide whenever writing or producing content for the League, including website content, press statements, templates for state and local Leagues, etc. It is the role of the Communications staff to ensure that the Guide is followed and enforced.

Below are some important points on AP style as well as some guidelines specific to the League.

Use of the League Name(s)

The name of the League, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF), or any local or state League is **always** capitalized.

"The League" is generally our preferred term. "LWVUS" should only be used when referring to something specific to national that is not applicable to all state and local Leagues.
> **Example:** *The LWVUS signed onto the amicus brief.*

When used as a noun in a sentence, any version of the League name **always** takes the article
> **Example:** *"The LWVUS will petition"* **NOT** *"LWVUS will petition"*

State Leagues should use the format "LWV[State abbreviation.]"
> **Examples:** *LWVSC, LWVWA, LWVNV*

In order to identify the location, local Leagues should include the state name. (See "Cities/States" for specific rules on naming states.)
> **Examples:** *LWV Of Baldwin County (AL), LWV Of Bridgeport Area (CT)*

Punctuation

Use a single space after a period. **Background:** Two spaces after a period is an outdated practice that stems from the manual typewriter, for which the extra space helped ensure that the end of the sentence was clear if the typewriter did not strike properly. Digital media has enabled the switch to modern fonts, and it is widely accepted that two spaces after a period diminishes, rather than enhances readability.

Do not use commas before a conjunction in a simple series (called the "serial comma").

> ***Examples:*** *In art class, they learned that red, yellow and blue are primary colors.*
> *His brothers are Tom, Joe, Frank and Pete.*

Cities/States

Abbreviate the names of states when used after the names of cities and towns, but spell out when referring to the state generally.
> ***Examples:*** *He is a voting rights advocate based in Wilmington, DE.*
> *He is a voting rights advocate based in Delaware.*

The eight states that are not part of the contiguous United States or have five letters or fewer are **not** abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Utah, Texas.

Use a comma between the city and the state name and another comma after the state name.
> ***Examples:*** *I lived in San Jose, CA, for 20 years.*

The state may be omitted in references to the following 30 major cities, known as dateline cities, when the city alone is adequate for identification:

Atlanta	Detroit	Minneapolis	Salt Lake City
Baltimore	Honolulu	New Orleans	San Antonio
Boston	Houston	New York	San Diego
Chicago	Indianapolis	Oklahoma City	San Francisco
Cincinnati	Las Vegas	Philadelphia	Seattle
Cleveland	Los Angeles	Phoenix	Washington (not D.C.)
Dallas	Miami	Pittsburgh	Denver
Milwaukee	St. Louis		

Capitalization

Personal, professional and other titles are capitalized when used before a name.
> ***Example:*** *LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara.*

Titles are lowercased when used alone or after a name. One exception: "President" is always capitalized when referring to the President of the United States.
> ***Example:*** *Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League.*

Capitalize the formal names of congressional committees, specific courts, government agencies, etc.
> ***Examples:*** *Senate House Legislature, Parliament, City Council, Supreme Court, Foreign*
> *Relations Committee*

Numbers

Write out numbers under 10 and use digits for numbers over 10.

Spell out numbers when they begin sentences.
> ***Examples:*** *The Senate took seven votes on the budget.*

Over 4,000 letters were sent to the Senate on the budget.
Four thousand letters were sent to the Senate on the budget.

For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated.

    Examples: *A 21-year-old student.*
                The student is 21 years old.
                The girl, 8, has a brother, 11.
                The contest is for 18-year-olds

Don't use apostrophes when describing an age range.

    Example: *He is in his 20s.*

Percentages are always expressed as numerals, followed by the word "percent." (Spell out "percent" rather than using the symbol.)

    Example: *Voter turnout increased by 8 percent in the past year.*

Dates

With the exception of months with five or less letters (March, April, May, June and July), abbreviate the month when listing specific dates.

Do not add "th" to numerals.

    Examples: *Dec. 15, 2013*
                 May 15, 2013

Spell out the month when listing the month and year only. Do **not** use a comma to separate the two.

    Example: *The February 2013 rally for climate change was a success.*

When writing a full date (day, month, year) within a sentence, use a comma **before and after** the year.

    Example: *Do you have a copy of the May 3, 1998, issue of the National Voter?*

Times

Use numerals for times and "a.m." and "p.m. "(lower case, with periods).

Use a colon to separate hours from minutes. Do not use ":00."

Always spell out noon and midnight.

    Examples: *1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.*

Titles of court cases

Do not place in quotation marks. Italicize.

List the names of both parties involved in the court case, separated by a "v," which stands for "versus," or against.

       Example: The case is *Jane Doe v. John Smith.*

If one of the parties is an organization, name the organization.

       Example: The court is preparing to hear *Acme Corporation v. John Smith.*

If there is more than one plaintiff or defendant, name the first party and add the abbreviation "et al.," which means "and others."

       Example: They are about to rule on *Jane Doe, et al., v. John Smith.*

Job titles

Job titles are generally capitalized when they appear before a person's name, but lowercased after the name.

       Examples: *LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara*
                  Elisabeth MacNamara, president of LWVUS

                    President Barack Obama
                    Barack Obama, president

                    All senators, governors, lieutenant governors, and attorneys general will attend. Senators James and Twain, Governor Clark, Lieutenant Governor Smith and Attorney General Dalloway will attend."

Titles of newspapers and magazines

Capitalize the titles of magazines and newspapers, but <u>do not</u> underline or use quotation marks.

Unless ""magazine" is in the title, do not capitalize it.

       Example: *I read Time magazine.*
                I read O, The Oprah Magazine.

Titles of books, articles, lectures, poems, speeches, TV shows

Put quotation marks around the title.

Capitalize only the first word, last word, all proper names or proper abbreviations (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.,), and all words longer than three letters.

Examples of words that would **NOT** be capitalized:
       a, an, and, at, but, by, for, in, nor, of, on, or, so, the, to, up, yet

Examples of words that **WOULD** be capitalized:
Either, Beyond, Because, Their, Our, His, Hers

Author Porter Shreve read from his new book, "When the White House Was Ours."
They sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the game.

Common political terms

Congress, congressional
Capitalize when referring the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives together. The adjective is lowercase unless part of a formal name.

congressman, congresswoman
Not formal titles, spelled lowercase.
Note: "Representative" or "Rep." is the preferred title before the name of a U.S. House member.

Democrat, Democratic Party, Republican, Republican Party
All terms are capitalized.

Election Day, election night
The first is capitalized, the second is lowercase.

House and Senate
Both terms are capitalized.

majority leader, minority leader
Capitalize as formal legislative title before a name (ie, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor), otherwise lowercase.