

To: State LWV Presidents and Executive Directors
From: Advocacy and Litigation Department, LWVUS
Re: Setting 2021 State and Local Legislative Priorities

Dear State Presidents and Executive Directors:

In 2019, LWVUS launched legislative priorities guidance surveys to state and local Leagues giving them the opportunity to share their policy priorities for the upcoming legislative sessions. Since then, we have seen enthusiastic participation from Leagues across the country and have been able to develop recommendations from LWVUS to assist state and local League’s in their advocacy and lobbying. We are happy to offer this guidance again this year as LWVs establish their legislative priorities for the 2021 legislative cycle.

The Legislative Priorities Guidance program has been successful in strengthening the partnership between LWVUS and state and local Leagues with the goal of developing effective advocacy and organizing strategies to elevate and further our legislative work’s impact. LWVUS will again launch our survey to Leagues regarding the priorities they set and to continue to aid advocacy efforts across the country. During 2020, 26 state Leagues and 13 local Leagues reported to LWVUS what they anticipated working on. The graph below shows the issues that Leagues who reported back wanted to work on.

Value		Percent	Responses
Election Administration Reforms		83.3%	25
Voter Protection		80.0%	24
Redistricting		80.0%	24
Money in Politics		50.0%	15
Constitutional Convention		10.0%	3
Census		46.7%	14

Because of COVID-19, many legislatures cut their sessions short. We know that many Leagues were forced to change their focus or were unable to meet the expectations they set for themselves. The ability of Leagues to be flexible, adjust, and modify their events and priorities was impressive. LWVUS strived to provide resources and assistance to Leagues as they adjusted their goals.

2021 focuses again on the Making Democracy Work® and with a continued focus on the People Powered Fair Maps® campaigns, but also seeks to incorporate urgent issue work and interests from Leagues around the country.

Campaign for Making Democracy Work® and People Powered Fair Maps® Issue Areas

Redistricting and Apportionment

- **Promote model redistricting criteria:** Advocate for fair map drawing criteria. This includes maps that comply with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, districts drawn based on the population living there (see Census position on apportionment), and protections for language and racial minorities.
- **Strengthen protections for communities of color:** Protect communities of interest by determining or assessing core values, needs, or desires of the relevant communities for inclusion in map drawing process.
- **Promote strong transparency requirements:** Require hearing dates and times be accessible to the public to view in advance, held in a public setting and have viewer accessibility across multiple platforms, including virtual and in-person options. Implement a reporting requirement on map drawing process.
- **Defend existing systems:** Protect the independent redistricting processes currently in place. Defend recent reforms that passed with voter support in recent and past elections.
- **Protect state constitutions:** Provisions within state constitutions that promote free and fair elections and redistricting should be protected to ensure an avenue to protect maps through state courts. Leagues with these provisions should monitor activity around these provisions and move to protect any challenges that would roll back this language.
- **Protect apportionment criteria:** Ensure that districts are drawn based on total population. Oppose efforts that change apportionment based on citizens or voters.
- **Support extension of redistricting timelines with data delivery adjustments:** With the changes in operational timelines, the release of Census data to states will also be delayed. Leagues should remain proactive about supporting reforms in their states that ensure ample time to draw maps based on adjusted delivery timelines. The result of this scenario will vary by state but can include calling for special sessions, changing candidate filing deadlines to allow time to draw maps as allowable under state election laws, state constitutional changes, and legislative changes for statutory deadlines.

Note: We will continue to work on Redistricting reform through our People Powered Fair Maps® Campaign.

[Election Administration Reforms](#)

- **Embrace voter registration reforms:** This list includes reforms that make it easier for voters to register and maintain their voter registration, including permanent and portable options.
- **Strengthen [online voter registration](#):** Make online voter registration accessible to all. Allow voters to check their registration and update their information through a secure online portal.
- **Expand online absentee ballot tracking:** Allow voters to track the status of their absentee ballots online upon request as well as after ballots are mailed.
- **Promote election day registration (same day registration):** Allows voters to register or update their information on Election Day and cast a regular ballot.

- **Implement automatic voter registration:** Automatically register voters at state assistance agencies including the DMV unless they opt out. Reforms should also include safeguards that address the accidental registration of non-citizens (e.g. must be showing of intent) and ensure that protections are in place due to clerical errors.
- **Protect early voting and absentee voting:** Consider legislation or reforms that would expand early voting hours, especially weekend hours before Election Day, and provide voters with the opportunity to request an absentee ballot. Additionally, work to make absentee voting more accessible through removing notary requirements, witness signatures requirements, and mailing all active voters their ballot.

Voter Protection

- **Weaken voter ID laws:** Voters should not be required to show photo ID when voting.
- **[Reject proof-of-citizenship requirements](#)** in voter registration.
- **Reform voter list maintenance/voter purges:** These processes should be done in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). List maintenance is necessary and important and must be done responsibly. Large scale voter purges without safeguards or an appropriate remedial mechanism often result in wrongful disenfranchisement and should be avoided.
- **Enhance voting security and upgrade equipment:** Advocate to replace outdated electronic voting equipment with new systems that are secure and accessible and can provide for an accurate, recountable, and transparent count.
- **Support emergency preparedness for elections:** Support legislative efforts that expand no excuse absentee voting, and election contingency plans if elections cannot be held in person or if doing so poses a serious safety risk for voters.

Money in Politics

- **Institute public financing systems:** Advocate for [public financing systems](#) that put value on small donors, not big donors or secret money, in our electoral process.
 - **Require disclosure:** Voters deserve to know who is trying to influence their vote. Leagues should be advocating for transparency with regards to funding of political campaigns, advertisements and expenditures.
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Other Urgent Issues

Climate Change

- **Strengthen protections for impacted communities:** Support ending current, preventing further, and repairing historic environmental injustice against indigenous people, communities of color, de-industrialized communities, migrant communities, and de-populated rural communities.
- **Curtail air, water, and land pollution:** Work to remove health hazards from communities and implement carbon pricing, climate smart agricultural practices, and green transportation. Oppose the construction of new oil pipelines without the express consent of impacted communities.
- **Expand renewable energy:** Support public investment that builds on renewable portfolio standards to move the country towards majority renewable energy production.

- **Secure climate and community resiliency:** Support community ownership of and access to new renewable energy jobs and infrastructure. Invest in local governments to identify and mitigate climate-related risks.

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

- **Support ratification at the state level:** Push for final ratification of the amendment in states where ratification has not occurred.
- **Support inclusion of state ERA's in state constitutions:** Work with legislators to include state Equal Rights Amendments in state constitutions.

Justice Reform

- **Strengthen accountability for the criminal justice system:** Use LWVUS positions including Individual Liberties and Citizens Right to Know to support the establishment of local citizen review boards and other modes of public accountability for police and the courts.
- **Enact comprehensive policing reform:** Address and adjust use of force standards, ban racial profiling and proactive policing, and halt the use of predictive analysis tools in sentencing. Establish robust data collection on police-community encounters, use of force, and other law enforcement activities, disaggregated by demographics. Support data sharing through a national police misconduct registry.
- **Demilitarize the police:** Support legislative efforts to prevent police forces from becoming militarized including legislation that prevents accessing funds to purchase military equipment, using military-grade weapons, conducting no knock raids, and using neck and chokeholds.

National Popular Vote (NPV)

- **Establish popular election:** Support the popular election of the President through a compact among the states governing how they would cast their votes in the Electoral College.
- **Utilize the National Popular Vote Compact:** Support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.
- **Replace winner take all laws:** Respect the right of state legislatures to replace winner take all laws.

Reproductive Choice

- **Protect an individual's right to make their own reproductive choices:** Support legislation that protects a person's right of privacy to make reproductive choices, this can and should include rights to accessible birth control and healthcare access.

LWVUS recognizes that there are many opportunities to defend voting rights, protect our democracy, and support pro-voter reforms in states across the country. We also understand how limited resources are in the field, and we want to offer more support to Leagues lobbying within the MDW and PPFM campaigns with a focus on issues that will impact our communities or have a negative impact on underrepresented communities. We encourage LWV's to use the updated list above to determine and

focus what your League will concentrate on when your legislature convenes in January. And we look forward to learning about the priorities you set!

All Leagues will receive a survey to complete regarding their planned legislative agendas on or around October 22, 2020 and will close November 30, 2020. The advocacy and litigation team will send information about survey in League Update and via email to let leaders know when the survey has launched.

We cannot thank you enough for all you do!

In League,

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