



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF VOLUSIA COUNTY

Observer Corps' Code of Conduct

The following statement is an excerpt from LWVVC's Non-Partisan Policy:

The League is a non-partisan political organization that encourages active, informed participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. The League's non-partisan policy gives the League credibility and effectiveness which is unique. It is, therefore, the responsibility of each League member to guard the League's non-partisan reputation to ensure that the League can render valuable and effective community service.

Only the President of the local League, or the President's designee, is authorized to speak, whether orally or in writing, for, or on behalf of the local League.

The observer serves in a unique and critical position within the League. In keeping with the Non-partisan Policy above, the following guidelines will apply to members of the Observer Corps when carrying out their official function of observing government meetings.

It is incumbent upon the observer to always keep in mind that once s/he has donned that League of Women Voter's button s/he represents the League in the eyes of the observed official. You are permitted to remove the pin, request permission to speak on an issue which is of utmost importance to you. In doing so, you must state that you are speaking for yourself and not the League. And you must bear in mind that the officials will still see you as a League member. You must couch your words in such a way as not to bring controversy to the League. (See examples #1 on page 2 of this document)

There are occasions when an issue on which the League has a position is being addressed and you feel it would be a benefit to the commission to receive a statement from the League. You should let the President of LWVVC know of your concern after the meeting and ask if you can draft a letter for his/her signature. Once the president has agreed with your concern and signed a letter, you may read the letter at the next meeting at the appropriate time in the meeting. If the issue is again on the agenda, you would ask to speak at the time it is brought up. If it is not you will fill out a form before the meeting to speak when citizen input is appropriate. (See examples #2 on p. 2)

There will be other times when the President of the LWVVC will request that a letter under her/his signature be read at the Council/Commission/government meeting. You follow the same procedure as above, reading the letter either when the issue comes up on the agenda or filling out a request form before the meeting to speak during the "citizens input" for issues not on the agenda. (See example #3 on p. 2)

Your main purposes as an observer are:

- to be a visual presence of the LWVVC at government meetings;
- to become informed about issues affecting yourself and the citizens through local government decisions;
- to become the eyes and ears for government in the sunshine; and

- to communicate these issues to the League membership through the VOTER

Example Situations:

1. When you might speak up without the express consent of the President.
 - The town has decided to close off a throughway street just past a nursing home and turning the roadway area into a pocket park. You have a loved one in that nursing home and you are aware of the parking lot traffic issues at the nursing home. You see the small park and cul-de-sac as creating more hazards for visitors coming in and out of the nursing home and the park.
 - As a former member of town committee, you are asked a specific question related to your experience on that committee. Remove your button, state that you are not speaking for the League, and answer the request.
2. When you should wait for the president's permission.
 - The city has decided to openly oppose a county-wide entity to govern water usage. You know that under Natural Resources, the League has a position which states it's support of a county-wide entity to govern water usage. You request from the League President permission to draft a letter including the rationale behind the position. If s/he agrees, prepare a letter for the President's signature and present it in an open meeting of the Committee, Council/Commission at the appropriate time.
 - The School Board has decided that educating immigrant workers in Volusia has become too burdensome and is taking steps to discourage educating them in tax supported public schools. You are aware that the LWVF has a position of a free public school system for Florida with equality of educational opportunity for all, financed primarily by state funds; that the federal government primarily, and the state government secondarily, should be responsible for funding the financial shortfall experienced by communities disproportionately impacted by immigrants. You request from the League President permission to draft a letter including the rationale behind the position. If s/he agrees, prepare a letter for the President's signature and present it in an open meeting of the Committee, Council/Commission at the appropriate time.
3. When the local League President drafts and signs a letter that you will read.
 - Following the meetings of the Charter Review Commission in 2005 it became clear that many of the city commission/councils were openly opposing the recommended revisions; some even advocating sending out letters to all their constituents opposing the recommendations. The League President drafted a letter to be read at the next meeting of every city council/commission, or mailed to those that we had no available reader expressing our support of the amendments.