**League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM)**

**Handbook for Board of Directors**

Approved by the LWVNM Board, July 2022

**About the League**

**Mission** Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy

**Vision** We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.

**Value** We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

**Principles** We believe in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. We believe that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. We believe that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government 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.

We believe every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

We believe efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

We believe responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; 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.

We believe cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

(Source: Impact on Issues 2020-2022, p. 9)

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement** LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

(Source: lwv.org, February 21, 2022)

LWVNM tools for maintaining diversity include the diversity fund and the statewide [JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Committee.](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html)

**Nonpartisanship** The League does not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. However, the League can and does take positions on issues, and can advocate on legislation based on those positions. [State positions](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html) can be found on the website.

**Speaking with one voice** Members may act in the name of the League only as authorized by the appropriate League board.

**Grassroots Structure** Local League members are members of their state and national Leagues. The League builds its positions through involvement of members at the local, state, and national levels. Positions reflect study and consensus on the part of members or concurrence with another League’s position

**LWVUS Resources**

[League brand standards](https://www.lwv.org/brand-standards)

[Federal Action Request form](https://www.lwv.org/federal-action-request-form): All action at the federal level must be authorized by LWVUS

[League Basics](https://www.lwv.org/league-management/leadership-development/league-basics): Essential policy and organizational information for state and local Leagues.

National Positions: [Impact on Issues](https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues), including background on the application of positions.

**LWVNM Board Administration**

**State board structure** The officers of LWVNM are

President

First Vice-President/President-Elect

Second Vice President

Action Chair

Past President

Secretary

Treasurer

The board includes the officers, not more than six appointed members together with the presidents of the local Leagues. The elected board members are elected at the Convention and take office immediately after the Convention. Appointed directors serve as the need arises in relationship to projects adopted by the state board.([Bylaws](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html))

[**Portfolio descriptions**](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html)(job descriptions) appear on the web page, including descriptions for committee chairs, webmaster, voter guide editor.

**Basic Board Responsibilities**:

Mission: take actions in support of the mission of LWV.

Operations: establish goals and priorities; engage in membership development, fund raising, and public relations; approve membership in coalitions.

Financial: execute any financial policies deemed to be in the best interest of the organization, ensure compliance with the financial policies and procedures adopted, ensure that all financial reports are fair and complete with respect to the organization’s financial condition and operations, arrange for biennial review of the organization’s financial records, approve changes to the budget in excess of $250.

Convention: appoint members of the Nominating Committee and the Budget Committee as specified in the bylaws in advance of the biennial convention.

**Legal Responsibilities of the Board**: operate within the parameters of the organization’s articles of incorporation, bylaws, and federal, state, and local law.

**Responsibilities of Individual Board Members**

* Report on your areas of responsibility at board meetings.
* Keep abreast of developments, take actions, make decisions and/or provide recommendations for League action.
* Integrate and coordinate with other activities of the LWVNM and local Leagues to achieve maximum effectiveness, visibility, and service to local Leagues.
* Maintain communications with local League counterparts.

**Absences from Board meetings**: Two consecutive absences from a board meeting without notification to the president or secretary and without a valid reason shall be deemed a resignation.

**Executive Committee** Consisting of the president and four other board members elected by the board, the executive committee acts for the board between regular meetings, provided that any action taken shall be presented to the board for ratification at its next meeting.  Three members of the executive committee shall constitute a quorum to transact business.

**Conflict of Interest:** Each director, officer, and member of a committee with board delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy; has read and understands the policy; has agreed to comply with the policy; and understands that LWVNM is a charitable organization and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes. ([Conflict of interest policy](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html))

**Office Space**: The conference room at 6739 Academy Road, Suite 126, Albuquerque, NM, is available.

**Archives**: The archives are located at UNM.

**Strategic Planning Process** (in development)

**Board Meetings**

Four meetings are required annually. Current practice includes board meetings in January, March, April, July, September, and November. Meetings may be held in person or online or a hybrid. Board reports are due before the meeting so that a packet of materials can be provided in advance. The bylaws also provide for the conduct of business by email and electronic polling.

**First Steps for a New Board Member or New Board Role**

* Connect with previous and current board members about roles and responsibilities and relevant materials.
* Become familiar with the LWVNM website.
* Locate information about your position and resources available from LWVUS (including webinars).
* Attend board meetings, committee meetings, webinars as appropriate.
* Be prompt and make sure that your contributions are appropriate to the agenda.

**Preparing for Board Meetings**

* Prepare a report as needed for the board packet.
* Let the President know if you have an item for the agenda.
* Review all parts of the packet prior to the meeting.
* If you have a proposal to make, think it through in advance and state it succinctly.

**During the Board Meeting**

* Ask questions.
* Don’t be intimidated by what you don’t know.
* Help the group by sticking to agenda items.

**Electronic Voting**

Votes on urgent matters can be taken between board meetings by email, if necessary.

**Communications**

**Board, internal**: official board communications are generally sent by email

**With membership**

[*La Palabra*](https://www.lwvnm.org/newsletters.html), the state newsletter is published four times per year

Constant Contact is used to send messages to members throughout the state.

Point of contact for messages: Judy Williams (?)

**With Local Leagues**: local League representatives membership on the state board, local League websites.

**With members and the public**: LWVNM website. Point of contact: webmaster@lwvnm.org

**State League Program and Positions**

The program of LWVNM consists of those governmental issues chosen by the Convention for concerted study and advocacy on issues for which the League has positions. The program is adopted by majority vote at state convention. LWVNM Council is authorized to change program only in an emergency.

Positions are adopted or revised either by a study and consensus, or by concurrence with another League’s position.

In Consensus, a group of members studies an issue in depth, typically for one or two years, reading articles and books and speaking to experts in the field. After conducting an investigation, the study committee prepares a set of Consensus Questions which are approved by the LWVNM Board and then presented to all the local Leagues in Consensus Meetings, at which each question is discussed and one person at the meeting records the group’s answers to the question. Consensus is the process whereby members, through discussion, decide the "sense of the group." After all the consensus meetings, the study group drafts a new position, or amends an existing one; this is presented to the Board for approval and then must be confirmed by a vote at the next state Convention.

Concurrence is the act of agreeing with the position reached by another League after studying similar issues.

Positions: LWVNM can advocate based on either state or national positions. [State positions](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html) can be found on the website. National positions can be found at LWVUS [Impact on Issues](https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues).

[Recently Completed Studies and Reports](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html) Topics include transfer of federal public lands, health care, charter school regulations, reducing alcohol-related deaths, land use.

[Program History](https://www.lwvnm.org/Positions/ProgramHistory2014-09-20.html) can be found on the website.

**LWVNM Committees**

All committees except the Budget, Nominating, and Executive Committees, as defined in the [bylaws](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html), are open to all members. Descriptions of the Budget and Nominating Committees appear in the Convention section while the Executive Committee is listed with the Board Structure.

[**Action Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/Action/): consists of members of the League who are interested in following the actions of the legislature and perhaps testifying on behalf of the League. The committee meets weekly during the session to discuss bills and coordinate advocacy. Go to the action tab on [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org) to add yourself to the LWVNM action list.

**Action Steering Committee**: Co-Chairs of the Committee set the agenda.

[**Education Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html): follows developments in federal and state policies and advocates based on the League position. (Co-chairs: Meredith Machen and Eileen VanWie)

[**Health Care Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html): tracks developments in health care legislation and advocates for or against state health care legislation. (Judy Williams, Dick Mason, Akkana Peck)

[**Immigration Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html): follows developments in federal and state policies and advocates based on our position. (Chair: Meredith Machen)

[**Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html)**:** dedicated to ensuring that LWVNM is welcoming and actively supports full participating membership from all parts of NM society, especially those not traditionally affiliated with LWVNM. The committee fosters activist membership that opens doors to dynamic, nonpartisan participation in civic life. (Coordinator: Rebecca Álvarez)

[**Natural Resources Committee**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html): follows developments in the state and advocates on the basis of our position. (Co-chairs: Barbara Calef and Judy Williams)

[**Nuclear Waste Storage**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html)**:** advocates for safety in nuclear waste storage**.** (Chair: Karen Douglas)

**Current Studies**

[**Judicial Selection**](https://www.lwvnm.org/programs.html): a study of judicial selection in the lower courts was approved by the 2019 Convention. (Chair: Suzann Ronneau)

[**Tribal Law**:](https://www.lwvnm.org/studies/2021/triballaw/) a study of tribal law was approved by the 2019 Convention. (Chair: Rebecca Álvarez)

**Convention/Council**

**LWVNM Convention** is held biennially. The Convention is responsible for electing officers and directors, approving a balanced biennial budget, approving changes in positions, adopting state program, and conducting other business as needed. The first call to Convention is issued at least four months in advance. Convention is currently held the last weekend in April. The location rotates among the four local Leagues, or (in time of COVID) it can be held online.

Budget Committee: The state board shall appoint a budget committee at least four months in advance of Convention. The treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the committee but shall not serve as chair. The committee shall prepare a balanced budget for the next two fiscal years and present it to the state board for approval during the state board meeting preceding the convention.

State Program: a recommended program is developed by the state board with input from individual members and Local Leagues

Bylaws Committee

Nominating Committee: five members with the chair and two members being elected by Convention and the remaining two appointed by the board.

**LWVNM Council** is held in the interim year between conventions and provides guidance to the board on program and methods of work. It may confirm or modify the budget for the coming year and transact other business presented by the board. The location rotates among the four local Leagues, or (in time of COVID) it can be held online.

**LWVNM Education Fund**

The Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization and will be able to accept tax deductible contributions to be used for educational purposes.

The governing board includes the LWVNM President.

**Resources**

[Bylaws](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html)

[Policies and Procedures](https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html)

[Positions](https://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html)

[League History](https://www.lwvnm.org/history/): materials from the 2020 Women’s Vote Centennial. See also [About the League of Women Voters](https://www.lwvnm.org/about.html).

State League Calendar**:** see the “[Events](https://www.lwvnm.org/calendar.html)” button on the website.