

# **Policies & Procedures: A Manual for State and Local League Boards**

*Adopted as revised by the League of Women Voters of Texas Board of Directors  
□ July 2005, Revised 2008, 2009, 2011*

## **Section 1.5 Voters Guides**

### **1.5.1 Local and State League Responsibilities.**

**1.5.1.a** LWV-TEF will produce a *Voters Guide* which includes all statewide candidates and/or ballot issues. LWV-TEF may also cover candidates for regional office whose regions cover large areas, such as Courts of Appeals judges and State Board of Education members. When reproducing the LWV-TEF *Voters Guide*, local Leagues may exclude those regional candidates who will not be on their local ballot.

**1.5.1.b** Local Leagues will produce a *Voters Guide* which includes candidates and/or ballot issues which will be on the ballots in its designated area. These will include candidates for U.S. Representative, state Senator and Representative, county, city, school board, and/or other district elections. If any jurisdiction overlaps two or more local League areas, those Leagues should work together to eliminate confusion. Refer to *League Handbook and Directory* (LWV-TX) for a list of shared U.S and state districts.

**1.5.1.c** For additional information and policies, refer to *A Guide to Voters Guides for Local Leagues* (LWV-TEF), *Voters Guides Best Practices* (LWVUS), and *Handbook for Local League TEF Projects* (LWV-TEF). Note that local *Voters Guides* for candidates may be paid for with Education Fund money and do not require prior approval or supervision by TEF, but *Voters Guides* for local ballot issues published in a pro/con format do require prior approval and supervision by TEF.

### **1.5.2 Other Policies Relating to Voters Guides.**

**1.5.2.a Nonpartisan policy:** The League's nonpartisan policy should always be printed in a prominent place on the front page of the *Voters Guide*. Questions for candidates should be fair, balanced and nonpartisan.

**1.5.2.b Presidential candidates:** A *Voters Guide* for these candidates may be produced only by LWVEF and is copyrighted; therefore it may be published only within the guidelines required by LWVUS. LWV-TEF will publish the LWVUS Presidential *Voters Guide* only if LWVUS guidelines allow LWV-TEF to tailor it to conform to the Texas ballot.

**1.5.3 Instructions to candidates:** As soon after the filing deadline as possible, explicit instructions and questions are sent to candidates in a traceable form (USPS delivered, signed mail receipt, or email request return receipt option). Clearly articulate the ground rules for inclusion in the League's *Voters Guide*, e.g.:

**1.5.3.a** Word limitations so candidates know that any responses over the word/character limit will be truncated at that number (include rules for counting/printing words, numbers, symbols, abbreviations, dates, caps, boldface, italics). If the answer is cut, it is indicated with slash (///) marks.

**1.5.3.b** No editing for spelling or grammar mistakes so candidates cannot say their answers were changed by the League.

**1.5.3.c** What will be printed if the candidate does not respond, i.e. “No response from the candidate.”

**1.5.3.d** References to opponents or specific persons are not allowed. General references to other political parties may be allowed. If a response is deemed inappropriate, the entire response will be deleted. The candidate will be notified in advance of the *Voters Guide* publication and given the opportunity to amend the response before the publication deadline. In place of the inappropriate response, the guide will state, “Candidate’s response did not meet the criteria listed in this *Voters Guide*.”

**1.5.3.e** References to a candidate’s website address should not be allowed as part of the candidate’s response. However, a League may publish a complete list of all candidates’ website addresses in their *Voters Guide* in the interest of providing information to the voter.

**1.5.3.f** These rules should be summarized in the *Voters Guide*. A copy of the LWV-TEF’s instructions to candidates may be requested by contacting the state office.

**1.5.4 Unopposed candidates:** Leagues should decide in advance whether to include unopposed candidates. Space limitations may dictate their exclusion, but their responses may be important in providing information to the voter, especially in *Voters Guides* placed on League websites.

**1.5.5 Write-in candidates:** In statewide races, write-in candidates must file a declaration of write-in candidacy with the Secretary of State and their names are posted in the polling place. However, their names are not on the ballot; so their responses are not included in the LWV-TEF *Voters Guide*. Local Leagues may develop a policy to include local write-in candidates in their *Voters Guide* if the filing deadline permits the inclusion of all candidates. This local policy will not apply to regional candidates included in the LWV-TEF *Voters Guide*.

**1.5.6 Membership ads:** A membership ad for the League should be included in the *Voters Guide* and paid for with general League funds, not tax-deductible funds. For example, if a *Voters Guide* is 5 pages and the membership ad is a half page, general League funds would cover 10% of the printing and distribution costs.

**1.5.7 Candidate ads:** If advertising is used to fund a *Voters Guide*, ads from candidates, political parties and advocacy groups shall not be allowed. In addition, membership information or announcements from political groups shall not be allowed. Other ads (products, services) may be used, but a disclaimer should be displayed, such as “Reference herein to any specific commercial product, process, or service does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation or favoring by the LWV of XX.” Candidates shall not be listed as donors in the *Voters Guide* but may be recognized elsewhere.

**1.5.8 Ballot-issue Voters Guides:** League positions on Constitutional Amendments or ballot issues must not be included in the *Voters Guide*. If the League publishes a fact sheet on its position, it should not be distributed so that it appears as a supplement to the *Voters Guide*.

**1.5.9 Publication and distribution:** *Voters Guides* may be published and distributed in hard copy and should also be made available online through local League websites, the LWV-TX website, and the LWVUS website on [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). Send *Voters Guides* to the state League at [lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org](mailto:lwvtexas@lwvtexas.org), and to LWVUS at [voterinfo@lww.org](mailto:voterinfo@lww.org).