

League of Women Voters of Illinois 2017 LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

WHAT?

Each year, the Issues Committee of the League of Women Voters of Illinois encourages local leagues to meet with state legislators for in-district lobbying or legislative interviews. This year we are hoping every League will participate.

The primary purpose of the interview is to strengthen the line of communication with your legislator ... nurture your relationship. The emphasis should be on an exchange of views and information, setting the stage for future contact and action. The interview can also be a stimulating activity for newer League members. Many Leagues deliberately put together interview teams comprised of new and more experienced members

WHEN?

Between now and April 1, 2017.

NOTE: The General Assembly generally is not in session Fridays through Mondays.

Other dates when your Legislator might be at his/her District office are:

January 31 - February 3

February 21 - 24,

March 20 -24

If your legislators represent districts where several local leagues exist, please coordinate your interviews with other leagues in the same district to avoid duplication so that individual legislators need answer the question only once.

Attached are lists of the General Assembly: one for senators, the other for representatives. Each list shows the number of local league members in each legislative district by local league name. The great news is that some local leagues are showing a membership increase; the numbers of members by league is approximate (>5 means between 5 and 10 members of a League are in a district). The League with the largest number of constituents in a district is expected to coordinate the visit, but other Leagues may offer to take the lead.

HOW

Setting-Up the Interview

- Write your legislator requesting an interview, and follow the letter with a phone call a few days later to schedule the interview. Be prepared with several available dates and times to meet.

- Determine how many visitors the office can receive.
- Send the interview questions in advance to help the legislator prepare for your visit. Information about your legislators' district office can be found at <http://www.ilga.gov/>

Your Interview Team (2 to 4 local League leaders suggested)

- Each member of the team should review the issues you will be discussing, but no one needs to be an expert. Background on the LWVIL priority issues is included with this memo.
- Determine ahead of time who will lead the interview and who will ask the follow-up questions. Be sure to have a role for all team members. A short team meeting beforehand is highly recommended.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

The Interview

- Know something about your legislator before you go: What committees does he/she serve on? What prior legislation has he/she sponsored? What do they appear to be interested in? If any relate to our questions, you may want to focus on those.
- Introduce yourself, your League and the reason you are meeting with her or him . . . to share information, share ideas and ask for support.
- Thank the legislator for past support on any issues about which we care and may have in common with them.
- Do not focus on any negatives - keep the interview upbeat!
- If taking notes, be sure to keep the session a discussion, not an interrogation.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" if a question comes up that you are unable to answer.

FOLLOW-UP

- Be sure to send a timely thank-you to the person you interviewed. Include any follow-up information promised or that you think would be helpful.
- Report to your League members what took place during the interview -- accent the positive if you are reporting through your bulletin. **Remember that you must never embarrass a legislator or staff person, particularly in public documents.** Be sure to respect the legislator's wishes about sharing or not sharing his or her views with others.
- Send official report form to the LWVIL Issues Committee. A copy of your report to your members is also greatly appreciated by the Issues Committee. Both may be sent to LWVIL Issues Specialists via email at issues@lwwil.org or send a hard copy to their attention at the LWVIL office, 332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 634, Chicago, IL 60604.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

The traditional format for the League's Legislative Interview is as described above. You may want to consider other ways of meeting the goals of the interview: building relationships, providing the League's view on public policy topics and connecting others in your community to the political process. Your legislator might enjoy attending a public meeting sponsored by the League to discuss the issues, especially if she or he supports the League's position.

MORE QUESTIONS? HAVING TROUBLE SETTING UP AN APPOINTMENT? PLEASE CONTACT:
Jean Pierce or Hilary Denk, Issues Co-Chairs 312-939-5935 issues@lwvil.org

Please return your responses by MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2017.