

Biennial Report



What Is This Report?

This report is a road map of where we have been and where we are going. It is designed to make the most of our valuable time together. This report focuses on information which will facilitate meaningful discussions, fire up our intentions, and drive consensus around what we want to accomplish together. Detailed reports about specific projects and portfolios are available on the blog under “Biennial Report” at LWVC.wordpress.com.

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Let us know what you think of this new report! Comment on the blog or Facebook. Give advice to the board or talk to us one-on-one at convention. You also can send us an email president@lwvc.org.

LWVC convention is a vital component of how our grassroots organization sets a goals and strategies for all levels of League in our state. That vision is reflected in the business of convention: our budget, our slate of nominees, our bylaws and our issue priorities. But the real strength of our convention is in the consensus we build around how the League will make California’s democracy work. We should all be able to take back to our local Leagues the questions, ideas, and commitments from this convention and bring them to fruition in our own communities.

Our Strategy Screen

How do we identify the most effective projects for us to commit to? We must be nimble, and so having a set of guiding questions is more effective than locking ourselves into a very explicit two-year plan.

- Does the project advance our mission and established priorities? Does it further our long-term vision and impact?
- Does it have a positive impact on long-term sustainability? Is the funding there for the project/activity?
- Does it expand our membership, monies, or media?
- Do we have the capacity (staff, volunteers, funds, project management and overhead) to take this on?
- Are we the best organization to take this on? Or is another organization better suited? Should we do this in partnership?
- Does the work leverage and/or enhance our competitive advantage?

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How Are We Doing Overall?

We want to build active and informed participation in civic life. We will engage our communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy. We empower the grassroots, both within the League and in communities across the Golden State. These are big goals!

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Hold ourselves accountable:

- What did we set out to do?
- How did we perform?
- What have we learned?

Has California changed since convention in May, 2011? What examples come to mind? If you trace those indicators back, which shifts can be attributed to the work of the League? Do those successes, failures, and indeterminate outcomes teach us something we can apply to help us do even better work in the future? Read the management reports on LWVC.wordpress.com under “Biennial Reports” for details.

Conventional Wisdom

It’s as true today as ever: the League of Women Voters is the trusted brand for thorough and unbiased education and advocacy for the common good in our state. We see this clearly in how well respected the League is, how sought after as a partner and for endorsements, and in the use of our materials. When we ask others for their opinion, they clearly value the League and know California’s democracy is stronger, thanks to our hard work.



JOHN HANCOCK
President
The California Channel

For twenty years, The California Channel has been proud to work with the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund because of their stellar reputation as a trusted source of unbiased and unfiltered information for California voters.



CARRIE GAN
Executive Director
CAUSE

Every election, CAUSE partners with the LWVCEF to produce and distribute the *Easy Voter Guide* in various Asian ethnic languages. This partnership is crucial to our outreach to the Asian immigrant population and our efforts to get this community more engaged in the political process.



DEAN LOGAN
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
Los Angeles County

The League plays an active and critical role in educating California’s increasingly diverse electorate by providing important election information on measures and candidates. Tools like Smartvoter.org and the *Easy Voter Guide* empower voters with nonpartisan information that helps them make confident decisions.



JOHN HOWARD
Editor
Capitol Weekly

Each election cycle, *Capitol Weekly* unflinching goes to the League of Women Voters for information on ballot measures and races. The League does the heavy lifting in analyzing complex issues, while we – and our readers – reap the benefits of the League’s research. It would be hard indeed to cover a California election without help from the League.

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While we know the general “what” of our mission is absolutely right – and more relevant and needed than ever in this hyper-partisan and hyperbolic modern era – it’s been clear for a while that the detailed “how” needs to evolve based on clear goals and strong analysis. California’s demographics, economy, technology, and political landscape necessitate new ways of doing our work.

Our Key Indicators

Beginning in 2008, our board began seriously questioning whether the LWVC operating model enables the League to effectively address our mission. Since then, changing our operating model has been the hub around which other strategic priorities have revolved. This has been an incremental approach. We are experimenting.

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What is your League’s operating model? How do you do your work?

Examples of key indicators we have focused on are:

- **Be Bold.** Our legacy is from leaders who changed the course of history. Advancing those values in today’s California requires us to have our founders’ courage, fortitude, and ability to take risks. The “No on 32” advocacy campaign is one great example of the League taking a brave stand.
- **Make Choices.** Our Strategy Screen requires us not just to do good work, but to do the work that most effectively moves our mission and organization forward. For example, we are getting better at prioritizing advocacy work to fit our overall strategy.
- **Engage Leaders.** Board members are now recruited for the strategic skills and resources they bring, while off-board roles and committees are taking on a larger role in projects. This makes board roles more manageable and ensures sufficient time is spent on oversight and strategy. It also increases and diversifies the opportunities for people to volunteer, work as contractors, serve as part or full time staff, or work as fellow and interns in the League. Most importantly, it creates a leadership pipeline, connects the state League to a greater number of local Leagues, builds continuity and cross-training, and ensures we delegate detailed work to specialists.
- **Raise Revenue.** We’ve learned a lot over the past year about how we can raise revenue, who we can raise it from, and how our work can be the most valuable to others. At the board and staff level, we’ve changed our recruitment, training, roles, and processes so that generating revenue and building relationships is an integrated part of our work. But even more important, we’ve refined our ability to manage our expenses in relationship to our actual revenues—meaning we can control spending in the event our revenue is lower than anticipated. We are flexible!

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Are We Doing Well?

We're being ambitious, seeing overall positive results, and are optimistic about our future. The proposals we've made for 2013-15 are based on the same strategic commitments the board made for 2011-13. We continue to be committed to growing the impact of LWVC while advancing its legacy

Nominees were selected based on their potential to push forward our strategic work. We will hold ourselves accountable for further reforms to our operating model and how we do our work. We are particularly interested in deepening relationships: between board members, board and staff, committees, levels of League, with partners, with funders, with donors, with advocates, and with the public.

Our program recommendations reflect our grassroots leadership as well as our strategy screen, to ensure that we do not only good work, but also our best work. We are learning more every day about generating stable, sufficient resources for advocacy and education. Breaking down silos between portfolios and projects is creating significant opportunities for collaboration, too.

This path requires more capital to invest in our core work and infrastructure improvements. We've learned a lot about what works and what doesn't over the past two years and are confident in our ability to raise additional funds and to manage our expenses effectively. We must nourish the passion and expertise which make the League special, guaranteeing an infrastructure our people can rely upon.