LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MARYLAND

Advocate Training
November 17th, 2023
Today we will learn about:

- Issues that LWVMD will likely work on in 2024
- Strategies to be a good advocate
- How our advocacy work is accomplished by teams
- Communications (within Teams and to LWVMD members)
- Other advocacy resources and how to access them
League of Women Voters Advocacy Structure

Local Leagues
Advocate on City and County Issues
Use Policy Positions adopted following local Study and Consensus

State Issues before State Legislatures or State Agencies
Uses policy positions adopted following:
State Study and Consensus or Concurrence
Maryland Positions at https://www.lwvmd.org/positions

Federal Issues before Congress or Federal Agencies
Uses policy positions adopted by LWV Members following:
National Study and Consensus or Concurrence
National positions at https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues

Advocates on Regional Issues
Uses Policy Positions adopted following:
Study and Consensus by Member League
LWVNCA Positions at www.LWVNCA.org

A League can utilize positions from by any parent LWV - e.g. LWVMD can use an LWVUS position to support advocacy, but not vise versa. Local Leagues may be able to advocate at the state level, with permission from the LWVMD Advocacy Team. To seek approval to advocate on national issues, LWVMD must seek permission from LWVUS.
Action Team and Advocacy Teams

**Action Team:**
- Co-Chairs and other high level members
- These members do not necessarily engage as Team Leads
- Approves testimony and sign-off letters
- Office Hours to provide guidance and feedback

**Advocacy Teams:**
- Teams that are formed around one issue area.
- They track the bills, and decide which ones to act on.
- They have one lead or co-leads who manage the portfolio.
- They manage the advocacy and communications around bills they track.
LWVMD Issue Advocacy Teams
Roles and Responsibilities

- **Team Leader** – Convene regular team meetings, coordinate and review communications and testimony, act as resource for Team members. Interact with Action Team.

- **Team Members** – Assist with tasks such as: writing communications and testimony, setting up legislator meetings, attending coalition meetings, briefings and press conferences, create or share social media content (FB/Twitter/IG)
WHAT ADVOCATES DO:
Research, Write, Collaborate & Communicate

- Meet in teams to discuss legislation to support
- Collaborate with Allies
- Interact with legislators
- Prepare/present testimony
- Share “sign-on” letters for approval
- Engage LWVMD members
SELECTING BILLS TO FOLLOW

Teams are asked to be judicious. Teams should consider bills that:

- Align with a DEI lens
- The League has a position allowing teams to support or oppose
- Will make a positive/or negative difference – per LWVMD’s position
- Are timely / have a chance to pass
- Have a Coalition and/or grass-roots support
Legislative Priorities

• Survey sent to all Local League Presidents and the LWVMD membership at large.
• Each League determines who/how to complete the survey.
• Action Team compiled a report for the LWVMD Board with recommendations.
• Recommendation based on:
  • Input from Leagues
  • DEI impact
  • Possibility for success
  • Volunteers willing to work on the issue
• LWVMD Board votes on priorities.
League of Women Voters of Maryland
2024 Legislative Priorities

Making Democracy Work
- Protecting Voting Rights
- Local Election Accountability & Reform
- Enhancing Transparency and Public Access

Social & Economic Justice
- Promoting Affordable Housing
- Equity & Accountability in Education
- Expanding Behavioral Health Services
- Equity in Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice Reform

Protecting the Environment
- Reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Advancing the renewable energy transition
- Promoting Environmental Justice
Maryland General Assembly - Overview

• **January** – bill drafting, bill introduction, briefings – budget submitted one week after the session opens

• **February** – committee hearings, start to vote

• **March** – last committee hearings, voting, begin hearing bills from the other chamber

• **April** – Budget needs be approved by the 83rd day. Final push to pass bills at Sine Die – midnight on the 90th day. If there is no budget, the session will continue, but only the budget may be considered.
Who Can Help You Pass a Bill?

• What About Your Friends?
  • Other organizations and coalitions

• Legislators
  • Bill sponsor(s)
  • Committee Chairs and members

• Caucuses
  • Asian-American & Pacific-Islander
  • Maryland Legislative Black Caucus
  • Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
  • Veterans Caucus
  • Women Legislators of Maryland
Building Buzz
This is more feasible to do if you have coalition partners

Strategies:
• Literature Drops
• Lobby Night
• Legislative Day
• Rallies/Press Conferences
• Opinion Pieces
Testifying at Hearings

• Know the rules of the Chamber.

• Submit written testimony on a bill your team is supporting, opposing, or providing informational.

• Verbal testimony can be more powerful.

• If you are testifying verbally, try not to read your testimony. Try not to repeat what others have said. Appeal to the humanity of the bill.
Best Practices for Issue Advocates

- There’s no one way to be an important LWVMD Advocate!

- Attend Issue Team meetings and give feedback

- Prioritize and track key bills in their issue area
  - Researching key bills
  - Comparing movement of similar bills

- Engage in a coalition(s) working to pass/oppose the bill(s)
  - This could be attending meetings and reporting back to your team

- Write and help present testimony at legislative hearings

- Meet with legislators and/or staff about the bill(s) or assist with scheduling of such meetings

- Complete Communications responsibilities
Advocacy Communications

- **Issue Papers** – Due December 22nd, provide background on the topic, why League supports and likely goals for 2023 session
- **Testimony** – verbal and/or written
- **Legislative Updates** – e-blast and blog produced when bill has made progress
- **Action Alerts** – messages sent to our database requesting some action to help pass a bill
- **Social Media** – used to create understanding of/support for bill
  - LWVMD Blog
  - Twitter
  - Facebook
Bill Tracker

A platform shared with Advocacy Team leaders that houses all the bills LWVMD is tracking for the session. The bill tracker does the following:

• Provides a comprehensive list of all the bills we are interested in
• Monitors the bills movement
• Allows other Team leaders to know what bills other teams are taking on
• Allows teams to take notes about actions they have taken
Resources

- LWVMD Advocate’s Manual
- Maryland General Assembly Website
- Legislator’s Handbook
- The LWVMD Action Team
- Coalition Partners
- News Outlets
  - Maryland Matters
  - Marylandreporter.com
What’s Next?

• You will receive a survey on which issue areas you are interested in working in

• The Action Team will work with those who volunteer to create Issue Area Advocacy Teams

• Supplemental training for those who want it on using the General Assembly Website, bill tracker and protocol for approval of Advocacy Communications

• An update on Maryland General Assembly protocols and calendar for the 2024 Session
The League of Women Voters depends on a cadre of volunteers to carry out its work at all levels of the organization.

Please consider being a LWVMD Volunteer Advocate. Email us at NTyree@lwvmd.org and NSoreng@lwvmd.org