

**LWV**<sup>®</sup>



**LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS**<sup>®</sup>  
MINNESOTA



**LOCAL LWV  
LOBBY  
CORPUS**

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**These materials are intended for  
internal LWV Minnesota use only.**

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# Lobby Corps Job Description

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The Lobby Corps is made up of members who act as volunteer lobbyists. Local LWVs may lobby on issues at the local level while LWV Minnesota Lobby Corps focus on state-level boards and the state legislature.

Volunteer lobbyists may lobby on any issues within the Program for Action, including issues like natural resources, healthcare, and housing.

There are very few requirements for Lobby Corps members:

- Must adhere strictly to the Member Code of Conduct and be courteous to not only government officials but also other meeting attendees
- Must have an interest in and willingness to learn about how government bodies conduct their business
- Must have an interest in and willingness to learn about the substantive issues they will be lobbying on
- Must not engage in personal or partisan agenda while serving as a Lobby Corps member; individuals who serve as volunteer lobbyists may still remain civically engaged and active in their individual capacity
- Should be comfortable with public speaking, advocating on Program for Action, and interacting with elected officials
- Are encouraged to serve as an “ambassador” for LWV by talking about the organization to other meeting attendees

# Member Code of Conduct

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**PURPOSE:** As we join together to advance the work of LWV Minnesota, we believe it is important to establish a Member Code of Conduct so that we have a common understanding and shared expectation of how we, a collective of individual members, will operate in the best interest of the organization.

**CODE:** All members who join LWV Minnesota agree to the following:

1. Abide by the rules of the LWV Minnesota or the member's local league as set out in its Bylaws, Mission Statement and Shared Values;
2. Uphold the reputation and good standing of LWV Minnesota;
3. Act with integrity, show respect to others, and value alternative points of view;
4. Refrain from any behaviors or actions that are harassing, physically threatening, or physically or verbally abusive toward any LWV member, employee of LWV, or any attendee at any LWV sponsored function or event;
5. Do not commit LWV Minnesota to any action unless authorized to do so;
6. Refrain from making any statement on behalf of LWV Minnesota or purport to represent LWV Minnesota through any public medium, including digital social media, unless specifically authorized to do so by LWV Minnesota's President;
7. Act within the boundaries of relevant legislation;
8. Refrain from using the position of membership to unfairly benefit themselves;
9. Pay membership fees on a timely basis as part of continued membership.

**POLICY:** LWV Minnesota reserves the right to review any membership for validity and conformity to the Code of Conduct and other applicable policies. If a member fails to meet the expectations in this Code of Conduct or other applicable policies, LWV Minnesota, in its sole discretion, will decide on the appropriate action to take, up to and including disassociation of membership. Local LWVs should bring all membership concerns to LWV Minnesota for resolution.

LWV Minnesota reserves the right to update, replace or rescind this Member Code of Conduct policy as well as develop additional policies as may be warranted. By applying for membership with LWV Minnesota, members indicate acceptance and agreement with these terms of membership.

*Approved by the LWV Minnesota Board of Directors January 24, 2017.*

# Being an LWV Ambassador

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## STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT IS REQUIRED.

Observers should strive to be most courteous and respectful to not only committee and board members, but also to other meeting attendees. Some specific points for proper conduct at meetings:

- Arrive early, so that you do not interrupt or distract from the meeting by arriving late.
- Turn your cell phone and other mobile devices on silent or off. This is very important because a loud, ringing phone is the quickest way to draw unfavorable attention to yourself. Cell phones are technically not even allowed in most legislative hearing rooms.
- Gather copies of the agenda or handouts if possible.
- Do not talk during meetings; if you must say something, please whisper very quietly. But even whispering can sound very loud in the meeting rooms. For example, the Senate Building hearing rooms carry sound and even a whisper can sound loud to other attendees. A better option would be to bring extra notepaper so that you may write notes silently to others.
- Do not eat during meetings. If you bring a drink, please ensure it is bottled or has a lid. Accidentally spilling a drink can cause a major distraction to the meeting. Note: some government meeting rooms do not allow beverages of any kind, lid or not.
- Local Observers are not authorized to speak for LWV Minnesota. Observers typically do not speak for local Leagues, either, but may be authorized to do so by a local LWV president or board. Observers may state facts that are generally known to the public, e.g., LWV Minnesota is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to civic engagement.
- Before or after meetings, Observers are encouraged to promote local Leagues and LWV Minnesota to other attendees.
- Observers are strongly encouraged to wear LWV-branded clothing or accessories, such as a button, lapel pin, or patch.



**Be very, very sure that all your electronic devices (cell phone, tablet, laptop, etc.) are on silent or turned off.**

# Who, When and Where to Lobby

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There are many types of councils, boards and committees in your local community.

County boards, city councils, school boards and other local committees and councils are generally subject to Minnesota's Open Meetings Law and Government Data Practices Act. Under the Open Meetings Law, these governmental bodies must notify the public ahead of time regarding when and where the meeting will take place and what is on the agenda.

Under the Government Data Practices Act, these local governmental bodies must also make their records available for public inspection or upon request, unless the information within the record is protected as nonpublic or private under the law. On rare occasion, these boards may go into "closed" or "executive" session. This means that they may exclude the public from the meeting to discuss information that is highly confidential and not public, like legal advice or personnel issues.

To learn when and where to lobby, a Lobby Corps member can find a calendar of meetings, along with agendas, on the county, city, school district, etc. website. Most county boards, city councils, etc. have a set meeting schedule where they meet once a month, e.g., every second Monday. But you should confirm with that government body when its regular meetings are and whether there is a listserv to join. Typically the town, city or county clerk can point you in the right direction.



**It is recommended that Corps members sign up for any available listservs, as meetings can happen outside the normal schedule.**

# Testimony Overview

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## TESTIMONY FORMATS

There are three testimony formats (instructions and examples of each follow):

- SCRIPT – the speech you read and present in person
- SUMMARY – a handout in bullet format summarizing your testimony
- LETTER – a form letter that includes a bulleted summary of your testimony

## WHEN TO USE EACH FORMAT

IF YOU WILL BE...	SCRIPT	SUMMARY	LETTER
PRESENT (giving testimony in person), then prepare...	X	X	
NOT PRESENT (emailing written testimony), then prepare...			X

# Etiquette for Verbal Testimony

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**REHEARSE YOUR TESTIMONY.** It's good to rehearse your testimony a few times before you actually give it. This gets you familiar with saying the words, rather than just reading it.

**ARRIVE EARLY.** This ensures that you are on time for the hearing and are aware of any changes to the agenda or meeting space.

**DON'T BE INTIMIDATED.** The elected officials are your neighbors. They are everyday people like you and me. They are just regular humans, not gods or monsters, so there's no reason to be nervous or afraid.

**SPEAK CLEARLY INTO THE MICROPHONE.** Do not be afraid to pause testifying to adjust the microphone if needed. Feel free to ask the Page for assistance.

**SIGN IN AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF.** Often witnesses must sign in on a sheet, which is usually on the testifier's podium or held by the Committee Page. Your first statement into the microphone should be, "My name is [First & Last Name], and I am here on behalf of the League of Women Voters [local League]."

**THANK THE CHAIR AND THE ELECTED OFFICIALS.** "Thank you [Madam/Mister] Chair for allowing me to testify on this important issue today."

**GIVE A SHORT BACKGROUND ON LWV MINNESOTA.** "LWV [local League] is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy."

**CLEARLY STATE SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO THE PARTICULAR ACTION.** LWV may oppose only part of a bill. "LWV [local League] supports this resolution."

**GIVE YOUR TESTIMONY, BUT DON'T REPEAT POINTS ALREADY MADE BY OTHERS.** Provide the testimony that was approved. If another witness has already made one of your points or stated some of your facts, do not repeat that point at length. Instead state, "LWV [local League] agrees with other witnesses that..." and quickly move to your next point.

**IF YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER, SAY "I DON'T KNOW."** While Lobby Corps members tend to be knowledgeable about important issues, elected officials understand that Lobby Corps members are volunteers, not paid policy experts. Very few elected officials expect Lobby Corps members to have every answer (nor should they). If an elected official asks a question and you do not know the answer, simply reply, "Unfortunately, I don't know the answer to that question, but I will find the answer and get back to committee members with an answer as soon as possible." **DO NOT GUESS.** The worst response you can give is to make something up on the fly or potentially give incorrect information.

**AVOID DRAMA.** Do not argue with elected officials or people giving opposing testimony.

# Guidelines for Drafting Testimony

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**HONESTY, INTEGRITY, AND REPUTATION ARE THE MOST VALUABLE CURRENCIES AT THE LEGISLATURE.** All interaction with elected officials and staff, including committee testimony, must reflect this basic tenet. Every statement made by a Lobby Corps member must be truthful.

**TESTIMONY SHOULD BE TACTFUL AND DIPLOMATIC.** While Lobby Corps members should always be truthful, that does not give license to Lobby Corps members to be aggressive or rude. Lobby Corps members must also be courteous to legislators, legislative staff, and even other members of the public at the Capitol. Lobby Corps members can and should assert LWV [local League] positions on issues while also remaining respectful and civil.

**BREVITY IS KEY.** Time is extremely limited and valuable at the legislature. Lobby Corps members might only have as few as 1-2 minutes to testify during a busy committee hearing. Keep this in mind when drafting your script. When submitting written testimony, know that legislators do not have time to read lengthy testimony in paragraph form. Instead, bullet points of the most important facts and arguments is best.

**USE FACTS AND DATA AS EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT.** Provide citations in footnotes whenever possible and include charts/graphs as appropriate.

**USE A SHORT PERSONAL ANECDOTE, IF RELEVANT.** Testimony is most effective from your unique perspective. Your personal story provides a narrative for important facts to latch onto and give context and meaning to the data you have provided. Do not use personal stories that aren't immediately relevant to the issue, as that will not be useful to legislators.



Honesty, integrity, and reputation are the most valuable currencies for advocates.

# The Lobbying Checklist

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- Find the website and contact information for an administrative board by using a search engine (like Google).
- Sign up for the board or committee listserv/email list, if available.
- Draft your testimony and submit for approval as early as possible. Once your testimony is approved, be sure to print out your testimony script and summary and bring it with you.
- Rehearse your testimony so you get used to saying the words, not just reading them.
- Arrive **10-15 minutes early** to the meeting location; be sure to allocate **time in addition to this** to find parking or use public transit.
- Wear an LWV insignia.
- Turn off or silence your cellphone prior to entering the meeting location.
- Always be courteous and respectful to others; never distract others.
- You may pick up committee or board meeting documents, usually available at the front of the room on a table. Public copies are limited, so arrive early to ensure you get a copy.
- Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to board/committee members or other members of the public before or after the meeting if you can do so without interrupting them from other work. Feel free to talk up LWV to other members of the public as well.
- Speak for your local League only as authorized.



**If you have questions about procedures and practices, please contact your local Lobby Corps coordinator.**