

Direct Per Member Vote of National Officers and Directors

Please note that although the supporting rationale for this bylaw amendment speaks of the advantages of electronic voting, the LWV of Saratoga County is not wed to electronic voting. The key objective is direct voting by the members. We would be open to other alternatives to accomplish this objective.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO LWVUS BYLAWS FOR CONSIDERATION AT CONVENTION 2008 by LWV Saratoga County, NY:

ARTICLE VII

Officers

Sec. 1 Election, Qualifications and Term. The officers of the LWVUS shall be a president, a first vice-president, a second vice-president and a secretary-treasurer. They shall be voting members of the LWVUS and shall be elected by **[the convention] direct per member vote** to hold office until the close of the next convention or until their successors have been elected and qualified.

ARTICLE VIII

Board of Directors

Sec.1. Selection, Qualifications and Term. The board of directors shall consist of the officers, eight directors elected by **[the convention] direct per member vote** and not more than eight directors appointed by the elected members of the board. All directors shall be voting members of the LWVUS. They shall serve until the close of the next convention or until their successors have been elected and qualified. Vacancies other than the presidency may be filled by vote of the remaining members of the board.

ARTICLE IX

Convention

Sec. 4. Powers. The convention shall adopt a program, **[elect officers and directors,]** adopt a budget and transact such business as may properly come before it.

ARTICLE XI

Nominations and Elections

Sec. 1. Nominating Committee. The nominating committee shall consist of seven members, of whom four shall not be members of the national board. The four to be elected by **direct per member vote [the convention]** shall include a chair or co chairs. Promptly after the convention, the national board shall appoint three of its members to the committee. Vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the national board.

Sec. 2. **[Suggestions for] Nominations. The nominating committee shall solicit names of nominees from all state and local Leagues as well as the ILOs beginning the month following LWV Presidents Council [request suggestions for nominations], by advising them of the offices to be filled, and the address to which [suggestions] names of nominees are to be sent. [Any LWVUS member may submit suggestions for nomination.] The nominating committee shall verify that all nominees are members of the League in good standing and that they have agreed to accept the nomination. The nominating committee may also offer nominees. Nominations shall be closed on November 30, or such later date as is fifteen (15) weeks preceding the date set for counting the ballots. The Nominating Committee shall require the nominees individually to submit a statement on behalf of their candidacy no later than two (2) weeks after the close of nominations. The committee shall then file the nominations and statements with an officer of the LWV Board.**

[Sec. 3. Report of the Nominating Committee. The report of the nominating committee containing its nominations for officers, directors and four members of the next nominating committee, including a chair or co-chairs, shall be sent to the presidents of state and local Leagues and ILOs, The report of the nominating committee shall be presented to the convention at its first session. Nominations may be made from the floor immediately thereafter provided the consent of the nominee has been obtained.]

[Sec. 4] Sec. 3 Election. [The election shall be the responsibility of an election committee appointed by the president at the first session of the convention. Election shall be by ballot except that if there is only one nominee for an office it shall be by voice vote. A majority of those present and voting shall constitute an election.]

The board of directors of the League of Women Voters will be determined by direct per member vote prior to the convention. At least four weeks before the date set for counting the ballots, a ballot containing the names and photos of all nominees, in alphabetical order, shall be electronically sent to each member of the League eligible to vote. All members without an email address shall be sent the ballot via post. The ballot shall be distributed with the statement of each nominee. If no statement has been received from a nominee, it shall be so indicated, but the nominee's name and photo shall remain on the ballot. The Nominating Committee shall indicate the nominees that they have nominated by placing a notice next to each name or photo on the ballot.

Each qualified voter shall be allowed to vote for the number of director, officer and nominating committee vacancies that are open. Ballots shall be returned to the principal office of the League or to such other place as is designated by the Inspectors of Election by the date specified. No ballot shall be counted if received later than 12:00 o'clock noon on the date set for counting the ballots.

Sec 4. Election Inspectors. The Board shall appoint three (3) Election Inspectors and a number of alternates from the membership of the LWV, who shall supervise the

election, oversee the counting of ballots, tabulate the results, and report to the Nominating Committee and the National Board in writing the number of votes for each candidate and the names of those elected to serve as officers, directors and members of the nominating committee. No current director, officer or nominee may serve as an Inspector of Election or alternate.

Sec 5. Election Results. The Nominating Committee shall notify the nominees of the results of the election in a timely manner. At convention the nominating committee shall report the number of votes cast for each nominee and indicate the successful candidates.

Rationale

We propose that all members of the League must have the opportunity to vote for national officers and directors. Attendance at national convention is costly and difficult, and many local leagues cannot afford to send their allotted delegates to convention. It simply is unacceptable that only those members who can afford to attend convention and who attend as delegates are given the right to vote for the national board.

We have found that potential and new members are astounded to learn that every League member does not have the right to vote. They see our method of electing our national board at convention by delegates as both archaic and undemocratic. Changing our by-laws in order to allow each League member the opportunity to vote for the national board reflects our beliefs and will strengthen our organization. Direct election of officers and directors is appropriate at the national level, but individual states and local leagues should determine their own election processes based on the realities of the area that they serve.

We have determined that nominations should be made from the boards of state and local Leagues as well as ILOs as we do for program planning. This would allow another layer of vetting of the nominees assisting the nominating committee in their work. We also believe that it is crucial for all nominees to appear on the ballot. This respects the individuals who are willing to run for office and has the potential to provide a larger selection from which to choose. Voting members will utilize the statements on behalf of their candidacy written by the nominees in order to cast their votes.

We propose the use of secure electronic ballots with allowances for ballots via post for those members requiring it. We have found web-based companies that provide secure on-demand voting that we could utilize. For example, Votenet Solutions found at <http://www.votenet.com/about.cfm> was recently used with great success by a trade organization to which one of our board members belongs. Any additional cost associated with direct per member vote could be covered by grants and/or donations.

It is our intent that the proposed time line for the election will ensure that the election is completed early enough in order to allow the candidates who have been elected to make plans to attend convention. A major benefit of conducting the election prior to convention is that it allows more time for program planning, budget and other business of importance. Also, newly elected national board leaders would be able to fully participate in the business of convention and will have the opportunity to interact with outgoing and incoming national board members.

Our proposal leaves in place the system whereby the newly elected members of the board may appoint up to eight directors. This system ensures that the national board is comprised of members who have the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to fulfill the organizational needs of the Board. Also, it allows the board to make appointments that fortify geographic, racial, ethnic and gender diversity. Once we have the opportunity to experience an election cycle or two, we may wish to adjust this system so that a higher percentage of directors are elected by the membership.

In summary, it is crucial that the structure and policy we use to conduct our business reflects the mission of the LWVUS *to encourage informed and active participation in government*. We believe that direct per member vote of national officers and directors will align our practices with our beliefs, encourage more participation at convention and has the potential to increase membership. We respectfully request your support of our proposal.