

TIPS FOR TAKING CONSENSUS

Consensus is the process the League uses to reach member agreement on study issues, and is neither a simple majority nor unanimity; instead it is *an overall sense of the group*. In other words, the answers to questions on which members can find common ground and agree. **The Leaders Guide, including consensus questions, will be available September 1.** Group discussion that allows an exchange of ideas and opinions is the preferred way to achieve consensus, but other options include questionnaires and email polis. The following are tips to help ensure successful consensus meetings:

Education To help members educate themselves and their communities:

- Use the *Voter* to publicize LWVUS Immigration Study Committee materials located at <http://www.lwv.org/>, and articles in this year's February and June issues of the *National Voter*, and also in the October, 2007, issue
- Utilize local experts to hold a public forum to learn about the impact of immigration on the community.
- Email consensus questions to each member, allowing them ample time to consider them before the consensus meeting. Leaders Guides with consensus questions will be available September 1
- Publicize the study/consensus/action process in the *Voter* and/or by email. Because the last national study was the Health Care Study, fifteen years ago, many members may never have participated in a national study.

Set a date Select a consensus meeting date, time, and place that will encourage attendance. Have it in a member's home or in a private room in a public facility – make sure the location is one where members will be comfortable discussing the issues. Make it fun – how about wine and cheese or a potluck meal?

Find a moderator Recruit the best possible moderator in your League. Issue expertise is not a requirement for the moderator.

Discussion skills Publicize a list of good discussion skills in a *Voter* article or by email, reminding members that not everyone will have the same opinions

Issue experts Ask several League members to each become an expert on one consensus question. By reading LWVUS Immigration Study background materials thoroughly for assigned questions, they will be able to provide factual answers as needed.

Provide materials Have multiple copies of background materials, especially the one-page articles from the June and October, 2007, issues of the *National Voter*, available at consensus meeting. Power point presentations are also effective.

Allow enough time and stick to a schedule **The Immigration Study consensus will take an absolute minimum of two hours— three hours would be better.** The Leaders Guide will include suggested amounts of time per question. Use these as guidelines and if you get bogged down on one question, move on to another and return to the first one if time allows.

Be a part of history Grassroots agreement on positions is one of the League's greatest strengths. Preparing for and taking consensus is hard work, but worthwhile. The resulting position will allow the organization to effect national policy for years to come, just as we have been doing in other areas for 87 years – it's part of our history.