

Summary of the LWVMN Briefing Paper Concept – May 2012

Goal of the Briefing Paper: to provide a basic primer on the topic and give enough information to introduce and outline answers to the above, without going into significant detail.

Instead, the paper should provide links to *accessible* resources where the reader might go for additional information or in-depth investigation if desired; allowing the paper to be short, concise, and well documented with both pertinent and timely (w/in the last 2 to 3 years) information.

Objective of the Briefing Paper: to teach the reader enough about the designated topic so that he/she feels equipped to talk with a legislator, legislative staff person, or interested citizens about the status of the problem. The goal is to equip the reader to be able to answer the following questions:

- What exactly is the problem?
- Who and how many in Minnesota are affected and/or involved?
- What is currently being done about it?
- What other measures are being suggested by experts in the field?

Selection of Briefing Paper Topics: When selecting a topic of primer summary, it is important to reflect on the initial purpose and creation of the Briefing Paper concept. Historically, LWV has used the 2-year program studies to help form policy positions. According to definition provided by LWVUS, "*The League's program consists of those governmental issues that the League has chosen for concerted study and action at the national, state or local level.*" Program is based on League principals, which according to our bylaws are the means for authorizing program adoption and our basis for taking action.

More recently, (within the last four years) the LWVMN board and members decided that the current platform upon which our call for political action is determined, already allowed our organization to address relevant issues concerning our base principals. Born out of that belief was the concept of the Briefing Paper, meant to shorten the investigative process, but still concentrate on the main relevance of LWV program, i.e.: to address policy and governmental issues.

When choosing a topic for the briefing paper, the same criteria used to address a topic of study should be employed. Those criteria as spelled out in the LWVUS publication "In League" are as follows:

- Support of League Principles
- Does LWV already current positions?
- Is government action needed or possible?
- Member interest
- Timing
- political realities
- appropriate level of the League (State vs. Federal or Local)
- unique impact / increase influence and credibility
- prospects for funding
- allies

It is not a requirement that the briefing paper be used for lobbying; however, that is one of the criteria that should be taken into consideration. For example, the election law paper (compiled in 2010) was not for lobbying purposes, but for the education of our members and the public; however, the paper did concentrate on a governmental and policy related issue.

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Criteria to Consider when Compiling the Briefing Paper:

- The study or briefing paper is to be non-partisan.
- The conclusion our outcome of the paper should NOT be known before the investigation has been conducted and the paper has been written.
- This is to be an educational paper, based only on facts, no personal opinions, and must have endnotes to locate the source.
- It is highly recommended that an expert on the subject is included on the study committee.
- When referencing information, an equal amount of liberal and conservative sources should be represented, such as quotes from legislators.
- When you use web sites be sure you are using web sites that will not disappear in a year.
- This is NOT to be considered an action paper.

A Basic Outline of Information to be Present when Compiling the Briefing Paper:

- I. Applicable LWVMN position(s)
- II. Necessary background information on topic
- III. Major significant issues
- IV. Arguments and data on important aspects of issues
- V. Conclusions (or you may not have a conclusion)
- VI. Supporting Endnotes and Documentation

An outline of the Briefing Paper Process:

1. Topics are to be generated by usual LWV grass-roots process, where suggestions are gathered from local LWVs across the State.
2. LWV Minnesota board will review the topics, and recommend a slate of topics to be voted on at Convention.
3. Any topic that is NOT recommended by the Board, but submitted to the Board of Directors at least three months before the Convention, may be adopted by the Convention provided consideration is ordered by majority vote and at a subsequent session the proposal for adoption receives a three-fifths vote.
4. The LWV Minnesota program chair will invite members across the state to volunteer as task force members for the topic(s) passed at convention.
5. Task force members will work together—possibly done via e-mail and conference call if members do not reside near each other, with perhaps initial and/or final face-to-face meeting as needed.
6. The study group will need to be facilitated by a Chair, and will be expected to determine meeting times and compile a timeline for completion of the document.
7. Topic paper will be sent to an Editing Committee for review, and returned to the study committee for alterations and clarification if needed.
8. The edited document will then go to the LWV Minnesota Board for more editing related to policy and position if need be, prior to final approval.
9. The briefing paper(s) are to be disseminated by LWV Minnesota in ways appropriate to the document and the topic, to include but not limited to: listservs, LWVMN website, presidents' mailing, flyers, memos to legislature, testimony before committees.
10. Presidents will receive a copy of each paper in the Presidents' Mailing from which hard copies can be made for members that don't have e-mail access.
11. Once LLs have received the finalized versions of the paper(s) produced by the committee and approved by the Board, it will be up to the LLs to promote our publication to the public through public meetings or distributing it to interested parties.