

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CONSENSUS MEETINGS

## **Consensus Meeting**

Select a consensus meeting date, time, and place that will encourage attendance – a member’s home or a private room in a public facility. The location should be one where members will be comfortable discussing the issues. Make it fun – how about wine and cheese or a potluck meal? Although non-members may attend as observers or visitors, only League members may participate in the consensus process.

## **Moderator**

Recruit the best possible moderator in your League for your consensus meeting. The moderator does not necessarily need expertise on the issues, but should be as objective as possible about the work to be done. The moderator communicates discussion norms (see “Discussion Skills” section below), keeps the discussion focused, gives everyone the opportunity to speak, and recognizes member agreement and moves on, maintaining the recommended schedule. Tip: don’t get stuck on one issue; move on to the next issue and revisit the “sticky” issue later.

## **Member Experts**

Ask several League members to become experts on background information for the consensus questions. They will be able to provide factual answers for assigned questions as needed.

## **Recorder**

Appoint a League member to record participants’ responses to questions and to take notes as a basis for comments, if needed. The Recorder will record responses on the Meeting Report Form included with study materials.

## **Discussion Skills**

Publicize a list of good discussion skills or norms in your League’s *Voter*, reminding members that not everyone will have the same opinions. The goal is to identify the issues on which members can find common ground. Suggested norms include:

- Listen thoughtfully
- Keep an open mind
- Do not interrupt
- Speak in turn
- Keep comments short – do not monopolize the discussion
- Differ with dignity – no personal attacks
- Stay focused – no digressions
- No sidebar conversations