

# HOW TO SET UP AND USE THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO EDUCATION FUND

## INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund (LWVOEF) is a Section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established to hold contributions for both state and local Leagues' voter service and citizen education projects. By establishing an account in LWVOEF, local Leagues may solicit tax-deductible contributions for use in their qualified projects.

A local League may establish a LWVOEF account to deposit tax-deductible **unrestricted** contributions as well as funds **restricted** for a specific project or publication. Unrestricted contributions may be used for voter service or educational projects and publications as well as for payment of up to 25 percent of state and national Per Member Payments (PMP).

This document is designed to answer your questions on how to set up and use your LWVOEF account. If you have further questions, please contact the state office at 1-800-598-6446 or leg@lwvohio.org.

**NOTE: It is very important to carefully follow the procedures detailed below to protect the LWVOEF's tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status.**

## OPENING LOCAL LEAGUE ACCOUNTS

### **Question: How do we open a local League LWVOEF Account?**

Mail a check made out to the LWVOEF to the state office at 17 South High Street, Suite 650, Columbus, OH 43215 and a request that an LWVOEF account be opened in the name of your local League. While there is no administrative or service charge for establishing an account, the interest on funds on deposit accrues to the LWVOEF, not to your local League's account. The interest accrued helps to cover administrative charges incurred servicing your LWVOEF account, except for certain situations discussed in the procedures for starting a project.

### **Question: Are there any requirements?**

Yes. You must:

- Maintain a minimum balance of \$25 with the LWVOEF;
- Ask your donors to make their checks payable to the LWVOEF: mail their checks to the state office for deposit. **Never** deposit Education Fund donations into your local League bank account;
- Keep records of your LWVOEF account and reconcile them annually with records of the LWVOEF;
- Acknowledge contributions from your donors with a thank-you note, making sure that you include the amount of the donation. The IRS requires that all contributions of \$250 or more be acknowledged; however, the LWVOEF recommends that all your donors be thanked.

## **STARTING AN EDUCATION FUND PROJECT**

### **Question: Besides paying PMP, what are typical Education Fund projects?**

Many local Leagues have used their LWVOEF accounts to fund the following:

- Local voters guides
- Other local education publications, including “Know Your Town” publications
- Local candidates or issue forums
- Local DNet administration
- Education forums and panels on topics of local interest

### **Question: We have an idea for an Education Fund project. What steps do we need to take?**

You must get the LWVOEF approval for both your project and fundraising plan before you begin to seek funds or work on the project. The steps are:

- Use the quick approval system for routine voter service projects such as candidates forums and voter guides. See Appendix A.
- Complete the Project Approval Form in Appendix B for all other projects. Forms are also available online at [www.lwvohio.org/memberresources](http://www.lwvohio.org/memberresources).
- Mail, e-mail or fax your proposal to the state office. Every effort will be made to respond to your proposal as quickly as possible; however, in some cases it may take up to 10 days.

### **Question: When do we incur an administrative fee?**

When you require assistance from the LWVOEF for such things as securing funds, administering a grant or conducting a first-time fundraising activity, you will be assessed a small fee in the range of 2 to 5 percent of the proceeds.

### **Question: If we underestimated our costs and don't have enough funds in our LWVOEF account, may we borrow from the LWVOEF?**

No, you must maintain a sufficient balance in your LWVOEF account to cover your bills. There are no reserve funds available to pay for expenses that exceed the funds in your account. The LWVOEF will pay your project bills based on the budget you submitted and will confer with your treasurer or president whenever the bills and the budget do not agree.

### **Question: We want to produce a publication using our LWVOEF account money. What are the rules?**

- When a publication other than a voter guide is funded through your LWVOEF account, pre-publication approval is necessary, using the form in Appendix B. The state office must approve the publication before a final draft is sent to the printer. Approval time depends on the length of the document.
- The LWVOEF should be credited with a statement such as the following:  
**Published in cooperation with the League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund**
- When **restricted** funds are used to produce and distribute a publication, list donors' names unless they have requested anonymity.
- When **unrestricted** contributions are used, your League can decide how to list or thank contributors.

- It is your local League's responsibility to apply for copyright protection of your publication, if you so desire.
- When copies of a publication funded through your LWVOEF account are sold, the proceeds must be returned to LWVOEF to be credited to your LWVOEF account. For example, a *Know Your Town* may be sold at a profit as long as the proceeds are returned to your LWVOEF account at the state office.
- When you sell copies of a publication, you must charge sales tax and remit it to the Ohio Department of Taxation. Contact the LWVO state office for further assistance at 1-800-598-6446 or leg@lwvohio.org.

#### **PUBLICATION CHECKLIST:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Statement crediting LWVOEF is included
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contributors are listed
- \_\_\_\_\_ LWVOEF has approved final draft
- \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Copyright regulations have been observed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sales tax is being collected and paid to the Ohio Department of Taxation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Income from sales is deposited into your LWVOEF account

### **OPERATING YOUR LOCAL LEAGUE ACCOUNT**

#### **Question: How do we use our LWVOEF account for Per Member Payments?**

You may pay up to 25 percent of both your state and national PMP with **unrestricted** funds. Either request a transfer of unrestricted funds from your LWVOEF account to be credited toward your PMP or solicit **unrestricted** funds. Send the checks, along with a copy of your PMP bill and a note that the checks are to be applied to your League's state or national PMP, to the LWVOEF, 17 South High Street, Suite 650, Columbus, OH 43215.

#### **Question: How do the project bills get paid?**

LWVOEF will either pay the bills directly for you or reimburse bills paid by you. See Appendix D. Treasurers are asked to:

- Submit itemized statements of your costs, including receipts, invoices, or other appropriate documentation;
- Make sure vendors' invoices are correct before you send them to the LWVOEF;
- Send multiple bills for processing all at one time when possible;
- If a project is to be funded from both your LWVOEF account and your local League's bank account, pay expenses with two checks--one from your LWVOEF account for the approved expenses and the balance from your local League checking account.

#### **Question: How do we keep track of the money in our LWVOEF account?**

You will receive quarterly reports from the state office reflecting the transactions that have taken place in your LWVOEF account.

**Question: What if we do not use all of the funds on deposit for a project?**

Unspent funds and proceeds from the sales of publications are retained in your LWVOEF account at the state office. Surplus **restricted** funds may only be used for purposes the donor designated, but surplus **unrestricted funds** may be used for another project or to pay PMPs.

**Question: What do we have to do when our project is completed?**

Within a month of project completion, send a report to the LWVOEF detailing what you did, audience served, and any deviations from your original proposal. Along with the report, send samples of the materials and publications you developed and any media notices. For grant-funded projects, you may use the foundation's final report.

## Appendix A

### QUICK TELEPHONE/E-MAIL APPROVAL REQUEST

If your proposed project is for a voter guide that will be distributed free of charge or for a public candidates forum program, you may e-mail or phone in your request for project approval. Otherwise, use the Project Approval Form at Appendix B.

Please call LWVO Executive Director at (614) 469-1505 between 10 AM and 4 PM Monday through Friday or e-mail to [leg@lwvohio.org](mailto:leg@lwvohio.org).

The information you provide will be reviewed immediately. In most cases, you will receive approval no later than the next business day.

Be prepared to outline the following aspects of your proposed project:

- Name of local League
- Contact person
- Contact phone, day and evening.
- Contact fax and/or e-mail
- Project description (Who? What? Where? When? Why?)
- Does this project focus on LOCAL issues?
- Is this project aimed at the general public?
- Date(s)/time frame
- Total anticipated cost
- LWVOEF funds already in your account for this project?
- Amount to be raised
- Description of fundraising plans
- Will you solicit restricted funds? How?
- Will you solicit unrestricted funds? How?

**Appendix B**

**PROJECT APPROVAL FORM**

League of Women Voters of \_\_\_\_\_

Submitter's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Submitter's Title \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Day \_\_\_\_\_ Evening \_\_\_\_\_ Fax or E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_

Project Purpose

Proposed Cost of Project \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Attach detailed estimate of cost.)

**ADDITIONAL PROJECT QUESTIONS**

Does this project address a LOCAL issue?    Yes    No

Is this project aimed at the general public?    Yes    No

Does the project advocate a pro or con LWV position on a community issue?    Yes    No

Will you request contributions that are RESTRICTED to this project?    Yes    No

Will you request UNRESTRICTED contributions for this project?    Yes    No

Will your project involve any sales of publications or products?

    If yes, your League's state vendors license number \_\_\_\_\_

Projected selling price of the publications or products \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### EDUCATION FUND DEPOSIT FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_

League of Women Voters of \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address

City

Zip

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

List all checks:

<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Amount of Check</u> \$	<u>Donor's Full Name</u>	<u>Restrictions, if any</u>
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**TOTAL  
DEPOSIT**      \_\_\_\_\_  
\$

Please acknowledge all donations on your local League letterhead

**Appendix D**

**PAYMENT OR REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST FORM**

Please attach receipts, invoices or other appropriate documentation. **Use one form for each payee.**

League of Women Voters of \_\_\_\_\_

Project Title \_\_\_\_\_

Payee \_\_\_\_\_

Send check to payee \_\_\_\_\_ or other (provide full name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City Zip

List all attached receipts, invoices or other documentation:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
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\$

Total amount of check requested \_\_\_\_\_  
\$

Local League approval for payment signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_