

Grant Funded, Issue Driven Advocacy Vs. Lobbying

It is common for Leagues to support their advocacy activities with only non-charitable contributions. However, this is unnecessary. Leagues may, and are encouraged, to use charitable contributions to support their non-lobbying advocacy activities. Advocacy encompasses pleading for or against causes, as well as supporting or recommending positions.

LWVUS policy recommends against using charitable funds for any lobbying even though it is legal within strictly defined limits. Therefore, it is important to understand the difference between the broad concept of advocacy and lobbying, which is a specific advocacy technique. While lobbying can be part of an advocacy strategy, advocacy does not necessarily include lobbying.

Lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation, including both legislation that has already been introduced in a legislative body and specific legislative proposals that the League may oppose or support. There are two types of lobbying: direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying.

To constitute direct lobbying, a communication must either:

- 1) be directed to a legislator, their staff or other governmental employee who may participate in the formulation of legislation,
 - a. AND refer to
 - b. AND express a view on specific legislation;

OR

- 2) Be directed to the general public,
 - a. AND refer to
 - b. AND express a view on a specific referenda or other ballot measure.

To constitute grassroots lobbying a communication must be:

- 1) Directed to the general public,
 - a. AND refer to
 - b. AND express a view on specific legislation,
 - c. AND include a statement that directs readers to contact their legislators or include the contact information for a legislator or employee of a legislative body.

Most other activities promoting League positions that do not fall within the strict definitions of lobbying noted above are general advocacy and may be funded by charitable contributions. One important caveat is Leagues are advised to keep clear lines between voters' service activities and advocacy activities. For example, Leagues that have taken a position on a ballot measure should not include that position in their Voters' Guide.

Additional information is available in "The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide" by Bob Smucker: available online at http://www.independentsector.org/lobby_guide.