

Committee Section Voter Service

National Board Report September 1969

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

VOTERS SERVICE

THE YEAR OF THE VOTER. Here it is: the ultimate challenge to Voters Service in every community! Elsewhere in this Board Report, you will read about 1970 as the Year of the Voter -- the 50th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters, the 50th anniversary of woman suffrage, and the 100th year of Negro suffrage. As election work will be determinative, so will the nonelection focus have particular relevance -- for the League aim is an informed voter and citizen education IS non-election Voters Service.

You will need the help and cooperation of your board in planning a calendar of activity appropriate to the Year of the Voter emphasis, in projecting the importance and excitement of Voters Service work to your membership, and in providing the tools with which you and your committee will need to work.

You, in turn, can contribute substantially to total board thinking in bringing to its attention the many new vistas for Voters Service the Year of the Voter opens ahead of us. The interaction should be continuous and mutually beneficial, since a good Voters Service blueprint has important implications for finance, for public relations, for membership involvement, and for future action on program.

We remind you of three nonelection areas of concentration often neglected in the press of election work but enhancing its effectiveness:

1) Community survey

We suggested in the May National Board Report that a community analysis be done to determine voting patterns, areas needing League service, number of registered voters in relation to voter potential. (For maximum effectiveness this should be done before and after specific elections.) Because this kind of survey enables you to do the most effective Voters Service work in all fields, it is fundamental to planning for and assessing the success of the Year of the Voter program in our 50th year. Specific measures of after-the-fact evaluation include tabulations of:

- League-registered voters
- number and type of candidates meetings and audiences reached thereby
- types, methods of distribution, and circulation of publications
- service to absentee voters and to other special groups such as youth, new citizens, new residents, and minority groups
- instruction in technique (poverty elections, voting machine demonstrations, poll watching)
- practical politics courses
- forums for the discussion of issues on a pro/con basis (public affairs meetings, radio and TV programs)

The Annual Report questions for 1969-70 will accordingly be designed to tabulate these specific statistics necessary for evaluating the entire scope of

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Voters Service activity. (Knowing this now should help you to plan and to keep more purposeful track of things accomplished.)

2) Observers Program

Many Leagues have instituted the portfolio of Observers Chairman on their local boards, but if your League has not done so the job could be undertaken by Voters Service. Take a look at how the objectives of such a program could contribute to a successful Year of the Voter:*

- to gain a better understanding of the structure and function of the various units of local government by watching them in action
- to keep abreast of trends, issues, and problems in the community with a view to communicating these to the membership
- to find areas in which the League may want to take an interest either through local program, Voters Service, or action on previous positions
- to better understand the cross currents and differing attitudes in the community which influence governmental decisions
- to increase one's appreciation of the variety of demands upon the time, energy, and skill of public officials
- to encourage the best efforts of government officials by regular, continuing, friendly interest in the grass-roots conduct of government

Then ask the board to consider:

Have priorities been established as to which governing boards and commissions observers could be sent?

Do you have clear guidelines to follow in choosing personnel for the program?

Have policies been established as to expenses incurred by observers (transportation, lunches, etc.)?

Are forms available for adequate reporting by observers?

Are there regular channels for information obtained by observers to be funneled to the membership (regular column in the Bulletin, reports at unit meetings, etc.)?

Have previous methods been successful in adequate recruitment of observers?

For more detailed information and guidelines, Observe the Observer may be ordered from the League of Women Voters of Kansas, 3127 Huntoon, Topeka, Kansas 66604. 30¢ including postage and handling.

*Thanks are due to the League of Women Voters of Kansas for their excellent booklet Observe the Observer from which much of our advice was lifted!

3) Legislative profile

A legislative profile of each elected official in your League area (U.S. Congressmen and Senators, state legislators, local school board members, city councilmen, mayor, selectmen, commissioners, etc.) is necessary and useful for a number of purposes. Voters Service can do this in cooperation with the Action or Legislative chairman. For example, when your elected state or national officials come home between sessions you could help your program chairmen to arrange contacts and interviews to learn from them their interests and views and to keep them informed of those of the League. (Such interviews are reported to the state board with a copy to national when Congressmen are interviewed. See p. 35 of the Local League Handbook.)

The following information (with additions as appropriate) should be included:

- name, address, phone
- political party
- legislative district
- brief biography, with personal interests if known
- political interests including vote on key issues if known
- attitude toward the League
- does he receive League publications?
- is his wife or secretary a member of the League?

Personal acquaintance with community leaders at any legislative level pays off for public relations and future action. The League's Year of the Voter is a natural for opening the doors! What public official could ignore it!

New Publications

Here are three exciting new tools available now from the national office for immediate and long-term use for the Year of the Voter. We urge that serious budget consideration be given to investing in both types of television messages. You have been asking for them. Both are a first for the League and can be used over an extended period for any type of election. They are done with an appealing and attention-getting light touch that will intersperse well with the more serious party, candidate, or issue-oriented material produced by others.

The first League television spots, in color, professionally produced for your local TV station. Packaged as a set with instructions for use: two 16 mm. spots (60 seconds and 20 seconds) carry one message -- VOTE! Usable for any election -- now and in next year's primaries and general elections. Price: \$17.50 a set, \$16 if you buy three or more, \$15 for five or more.

The first Voters Service color slides for local TV station use. Package of four cartoon-type slides with suggested copy for 10 and 20 second spots. Message -- VOTE! Use before any election. Price: \$4.00.

Vistas for Voters Service, October 1969. 16 pp. In-depth examples of nonelection Voters Service.

(For other Voters Service publications, see the Publications Catalog or May National Board Report.)

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