

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Newton recommends adoption of the following Program for 2022-2023:

- All positions approved by the membership at the June 2023 Annual Meeting and listed on www.lwvnewton.org
- LWVN members are encouraged, through its board, to make our collective voices heard by advocating for our local legislative priorities and important issues of public policy as [CITIZEN LOBBYISTS](#).

Actions & Priorities in support of our position statements

1. Elections & Voters Service:

- A. Ensure transparency regarding the work of the Election Commission through the implementation of our Observer Corps.
- B. Educate Newton residents on the Votes Act.
- C. Create and implement a 12-month voter registration and Get-Out-the-Vote plan. with a focus on new voters that are representative of the city's diverse socio-economic and racial populations, through attendance at various locations around Newton, including NHA and other housing developments, the Farmer's Markets, Food Pantries, Village Days, high school, and college events etc.
- D. Create opportunities to help Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and other underrepresented members of our community engage in issues and advocacy at local, state, and national levels, e.g. mail-in voting, equal access to all voters, and ranked choice voting.
- E. Organize, manage, and cooperate with LWVMA and other local Leagues to sponsor forums for contested state offices in the 2022 election. We will partner with NewTV and other media outlets to continue updating our approach and incorporate technology into the format.
- F. Continue to recognize and celebrate the work of Newton's poll workers each year.

2. Municipal Government

- A. Transparency: The League strongly believes that transparency and accountability in government—at all levels—is vital for a wide variety of reasons: to encourage civic engagement, to measure goal achievement and evaluate results, to improve services and outcomes, and to track and monitor the actions of governmental bodies and elected officials. In order to evaluate the transparency and accountability of Newton's city government, and to advocate for specific improvements, LWVN has launched a Municipal Transparency and Accountability Initiative to do the following:
 - Assess Newton's municipal transparency and accountability with reference to examples and best practices implemented in other municipalities in the following areas:
 - general information about municipal services, processes, and events
 - fiscal operational and demographic data
 - information about city council activity
 - information that tracks the mayor's initiatives and priorities, and consistent information about boards, and commissions
 - Seek input, through a survey, from Newton groups and organizations regarding their experiences and views about transparency and accountability.
 - Share the results of the study with a final report in 2023

B. Oversight

- Encourage citizen participation in city government by educating the community about how the Executive and Legislative branches set priorities and how the decision-making model impacts budget decisions.
- Review Community Preservation Act (CPA) applications and review how CPA funds are being utilized by the city in relation to the purpose and intent of the CPA. It is our intent to continue a focus on CPA proposals with a flexible and consistent methodology in how we accomplish this goal.
- [Observer Corps](#): Identify members who will monitor governmental bodies for information of importance to the League and the community/state and advise the board of opportunities for action based on League positions.
- Develop a plan that engages a diverse set of community groups, leveraging the National Institute of Civil Discourse and Northeastern University resources, in order to have a thoughtful and impactful conversation.

3. Racial & Social Justice

- A. Develop an Action Plan to advance understanding of racial justice issues by the LWVN
- B. Encourage the education of our members on fundamental aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- C. Utilize and implement tools provided by the LWVUS DEI training modules and other applicable resources to ensure members understand and are committed to achieving racial equity.
- D. Assess our programming, and adjust as needed, to encourage and welcome the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and other marginalized populations in Newton to participate in all of LWVN programs and activities.
- E. Work to create opportunities for meaningful partnerships with the Newton Coalition of Black Residents (NCBR), and any other affinity groups representing underrepresented members of our community through inclusive engagement and community capacity-building.

4. Climate Action & Sustainability

- A. Partner with other local Leagues and community organizations, e.g. Green Newton, Newton's Citizens Commission on Energy, Bike Newton, etc. to educate residents and lobby for environmental state & local legislation.
- B. Educate & update our community on Newton's Climate Action Plan
- C. Educate and update our community on issues related to trash removal, recycling, composting and water conservation.

5. Education:

- A. Build on the successful efforts of our 2020 Civics Challenge by organizing and promoting community-wide civics challenges annually. The goals of the civics challenges are to foster a greater understanding of government, increase voter participation and engagement and build community on a non-partisan basis.
- B. Examine how the Newton Public Schools (NPS) budget and program meet the needs of Newton's diverse student population.
- C. Examine how Newton provides childcare services that are accessible, affordable, and meet the various needs of children.
- D. Engage members on local, state, and national education positions related to goals of the League.

6. Land Use and Housing Production & Stability

- A. Advocate for local zoning reform in harmony with established local, state, and national League Fair Housing positions and criteria.
- B. Stay informed of local land use and housing proposals, be prepared to make comments, ask questions, support or oppose according to LWV positions.
- C. Examine and work with the state League to support state level housing and zoning legislation
- D. Advocate for federal, state and local public funding to develop housing for very low and extremely low-income families. The housing should include services which will enable the families over a period of years to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Those services should be provided by persons training trained in mentoring and counseling and should include (but not be limited to) increased access to health care and childcare; access to transportation; basic or remedial education and job training; and financial literacy training.
- E. Conduct a consensus study in order to update our position on zoning and historic districts.

Amendment – Approved at the 2023 Annual Meeting

Review the Taxation of Newton Golf Courses and Country Clubs\

Under a state law designed to preserve open space ([Title IX Chapter 61B: Classification and Taxation of Recreational Land](#)), properties that meet the state’s definition of “recreational land” can apply to pay property tax at only 25% of the land’s assessed value. Several golf courses in Newton qualify under this law, together saving \$1.75 million in taxes. The initiative committee will explore the topic from all perspectives, seeking to understand the impact and equitability of the law, what public benefit it provides to Newton, and whether there are any changes LWVN would like to advocate for at either the local or state level, or in concert with Leagues in other municipalities that are affected (Belmont, Brookline, and Wellesley all have golf courses that receive significant tax breaks too). The committee will consist of both LWVN members and nonmembers who have expertise on relevant subjects, and it will include members from various villages of Newton.