

## What is Consensus

Before the League can take action, members must agree in broad terms on what they think about various aspects of the policy issue. The nature of the issue will affect how it is studied and how positions are reached. The board usually selects the method to be used: consensus (where agreement is reached using League responses to specific questions) or concurrence (where agreement or a vote on a pre-stated position is required).

The technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement is consensus by group discussion. It is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the *overall sense of the group* as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a meeting of the full membership or a series of smaller discussion meetings.

Regardless of the method used, it is essential that members have an opportunity to become informed before being asked to make decisions on the issue under consideration. It is through this process that League members become educated on a given issue, and this is what makes subsequent League action on that issue uniquely credible and respected. During the study phase, members have an opportunity to examine the facts and key pro/con for the board to consider when it formulates an action strategy after a position is reached.

## Formulating League Positions

In formulating a position, the board must keep in mind the importance of wording the position in terms broad enough to enable the League to initiate, support or oppose a variety of specific legislative and executive proposals over a period of time.

Determining whether consensus has been achieved and how it should be expressed is the responsibility of the board. Through an interpretive process, the board first evaluates the reports of member views and then determines the broad areas of agreement and disagreement that emerge.

Once a League board has finalized a position on an issue, it is announced to members and can be shared with the public. It becomes part of the League's position statements, and the board can begin taking action on it immediately. Like all statements of position, it must be readopted each year by League members at the annual meeting (or biennial convention) in order to remain on the program of issues for possible action.

**CONSENSUS:** Collective opinion of a substantial number of League members, representative of the membership as a whole, after objective study of an issue

**POSITION:** A statement of the League's point of view on an issue, arrived at through member study and agreement (consensus or concurrence), approved by the appropriate board and used as a basis for League action.

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