



## Preparing for Consensus

Would you like to participate in the Financing Education in Rhode Island consensus? We won't kid you and say, "It's easy," but it's not difficult and you will learn

much about this important topic.

To prepare for consensus, our first stop might be the article by Assemblyperson Edith Ajello on the facing page. Reading it will give you some good background on the vocabulary used when discussing education funding and a basic idea of the new Rhode Island funding formula. Next, head to the League Web site. Click on "Calling All Members: and that will take you to the Education Study Outline. It provides an introduction to the study and links to the articles prepared by the study committee. Don't have access to the Internet? Contact your local League president, who will arrange to get the materials to you. If you're a member at large, contact education study chair, Mickie Boneau at 946-9245.

To further prepare you for consensus, there will be a series of information meetings throughout the state. A study committee member will be present at each meeting to answer questions about the readings. Most Leagues will hold their consensus meetings about a week after the information meeting. You do not have to attend the information meeting in your area; all are open to the public. The consensus meetings, however, are open only to League members.

Must you read all the materials in order to participate? No, not at all. It would be helpful to read the articles that will help you understand the history of school financing, tax

policy and its effects on communities, and the basics of the new funding formula.

The more you know about the topic, the more you will be able to participate in the consensus discussion.

Mark your calendar now and plan to attend your consensus meeting.

### Information Meetings:

**LWVRI: Saturday, February 26, 10:30 A.M. - 12:30 p.m.**  
William H. Hall Library, 1825 Broad St. Cranston.  
Contact Mickie Boneau, 946-9245.

**LWV Newport County: Tuesday, March 1, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.**  
in the Rotary Room at the Newport Public Library,  
300 Spring St. Contact Patty MacLeish, 864-7542.

### Consensus Meetings:

**LWV Providence: Monday, February 28, 7:30 P.M.** at the home of Joan Retsinas, 344 Taber Ave., Providence, 272-0422 First hour, information meeting, second hour, consensus meeting.

**LWV West Bay: Tuesday, March 1, 11 A.M.,** at the home of Marie Hennedy, 56 Marion St., E. Greenwich.  
Contact Marie Hennedy, 884-3176.

**LWV Bristol & Members at Large: Thursday, March 3, 7:30 P.M.,** at the home of Susan Escherich, 133 Terrace Ave., Riverside. Contact: Susan 433-4896. Short information meeting followed by consensus meeting.

**LWV Newport: Monday, March 7, 5 to 7 P.M.,** at the home of Susan Wells, 229 Gibbs Ave., Newport. Contact Susan Wells, 846-9537.

**LWV So. Kingston/Narragansett: Monday, March 7 7-9 P.M.** at Kingston Free Library, 2605 Kingstown Rd., Kingston, Contact Pam Ancheta, 284-0264.

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### Consensus continued from page 1

members have an opportunity to become informed before being asked to make decisions on the issue under consideration.

Since the study began almost two years ago, the financing education committee has been collecting information on the many aspects of the topic—examining the facts and key pro/con points. The committee is now ready to move onto the next phase. The information that has been gathered is now posted on the LWVRI Web site. Members of the education study committee have scheduled information meetings throughout the state to answer questions and describe the nuances of the topic.

League members who wish to participate in consensus are encouraged to attend an information meeting before participating in consensus. At the consensus meeting, League members will answer a series of questions on the topic. Consensus 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. The information meetings are open to all, but

only League members may participate in a consensus meeting. At the end of the meeting, a report is filed with the study committee, and a position is formulated based on the consensus meetings of the local Leagues. Each local board's responsibility is to report its members' areas of agreement and its level of member participation to the study committee.

The study committee will prepare a report and send it to the LWVRI board, who will determine whether consensus has been achieved. 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. The board keeps 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.

It's a very interesting and educational process, but most important, with a position the League can take action.