**Direction To League of Women Voters Berkeley, Albany Emeryville Incoming Board**

For Annual Meeting May 11, 2017

From: Nancy Bickel

**Do you support these proposals? Please email nkbickel@lmi.net. I will forward the list to the current & incoming board.**

**Subject: Use League Funds and People Effectively: Invest in our Future and Maintain Adequate Reserves**

**Background:**

**• LWVBAE offered free first year membership to new members in 2016-17.**

This unique one year experiment produced a flood of new members—with a much wider range of age, sex and incomes than our aging, longtime membership of mostly middle and upper class white women, which has been in steady decline for at least 15 years. Now we have a challenge: retain as many of these new members as possible; invite and encourage them to make the League their own, to adapt it to their concerns and their lives and to become our new generation of leaders.

**• As of February 1, 2017, LWVBAE had to report these new members to LWVUS.** Our Per Member Payments [PMP] to national, state and regional levels of League for the current year are based on the new membership numbers—some at full and some at student level membership. To pay the PMPs for our free members, LWVBAE must withdraw funds from its reserves. This differs from our previous practice, where each member’s $75 dues covered all PMPs for each member and left some funds for LWVBAE to spend on local operations each year. That practice limited our membership to those who felt they could afford $75.

**• Fortunately, LWVBAE, now a 501(c)(3), is in a robust financial situation.** With a good plan to replenish our reserves through fundraising in future, we can afford to invest in subsidizing members and activities as needed.

**Recommendations: LWVBAE should**

**•** **Preserve our core principles, our policy positions and our non-partisan practices. Welcome all who share them.**

**• Put our highest value on active, engaged members**— **they are the League and its future**. They are our primary assets. It does not matter whether members pay the full cost of their Per Member Payments. Active members are not a drain on the League; they are not taking advantage of the League.

**• Continue to invest in member diversity and member development:** Recruit widely in all parts of our community; train, mentor, and retain new members. Develop a new generation of leaders and members who will make the League effective and vigorous now and in future. These investments could include: a range of membership fees that members in different circumstances are comfortable paying; hiring of trainers, consultants and other experts as needed to supplement our volunteer skills and efforts; subsidizing member attendance at conferences, conventions etc. Members will gain skills to assist the League as well as enrich their own skills. Expanding diversity requires special attention and effort.

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**• Plan big bold initiatives and projects** appropriate to current issues and conditions to attract attention, member participation and funding; “what we’ve always done” does not attract new support. Develop one or more projects that will meet our organizational goals and high priority policies. Plan each project in detail and carry it out on a substantial scale. Measure impact and effectiveness. Publicize our work widely.

**• Analyze current and continuing activities; Identify volunteer efforts and spending that have a real impact**: Do they reach or change the behavior of significant numbers of new people? Drop low-impact and ineffective activities. Add and develop activities that will reach, for example, young and under-represented voters; invest volunteer efforts and League funds in these activities. People who “always consult the League recommendations” know where to find us; we need to connect with those who could benefit from, but don’t know about, our resources. In many cases, this will be in collaboration with ethnic and other community organizations which include these audiences.

• **Support the current efforts of our Board and budget and fundraising groups to develop a long range financial plan that matches our priorities and our membership goals. Convene a strategic planning session of League leaders and members to assist their efforts.** The long range plan will include a systematic plan for supplementing membership fee income with individual donations, as well as gifts and grants from businesses and foundations—to ensure a sustainable financial future.