

## HOW LEAGUE POLICY COMMITTEES WORK

### Policy Committee Subject Matter

The League has seven (7) policy committees, each with its own subject matter jurisdiction. You may refer to the “*Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*” booklet to find the subject matter for each committee. This document is updated every two years. Policy in the *Summary* is used to determine League legislative and regulatory positions. The *Summary*, in its entirety, is located on the League’s Web site at [www.cacities.org/summary](http://www.cacities.org/summary).

### Policy Committee Legislative Agenda Items

League policy committees review bills or regulatory proposals on issues for which the League does not have existing policy, or for which staff members feel a policy discussion needs to occur for greater clarity or background on an issue. Staff will lobby legislation, funding proposals, or regulatory changes where existing policy provides clear direction.

### Role and Responsibility of Committee Members

The strength of the League’s policy process and ability to effectively engage in the legislative process is based on the active involvement of and the expertise of city officials. We rely on your technical and policy knowledge, thoughtfulness, strategic thinking, and political savvy. Your role is to engage in thoughtful discussions at the meeting. Members should review the agenda and background material prior to the meetings, attend each meeting, and stay for the entire duration of the meeting.

### Committee Recommendations on Positions on Bills

The committee’s actions or positions are a recommendation to the League Board of Directors for a formal League position. Possible committee recommendations can be:

- Support
- Oppose
- Support-if-amended (as appropriate, specific amendments may be requested)
- Oppose-unless-amended (as appropriate, specific amendments may be requested)
- No position
- Neutral

There are nuanced differences between some of these positions. For example, “*support-if-amended*” sends a very different message than “*oppose-unless-amended*.” Both positions might seek the same change but the support-if-amended position means that the League would be listed with the “supporters” of the bill in most legislative analysis. In addition, “*no position*” and “*neutral*” have different meanings and require different actions from staff. Selection of one or the other depends in part upon what type of message or political posture the League needs to take. Staff will advise the committee about the implications of each on a case-by-case basis.

**Approval by League Board Needed for All Committee Recommendations**

All committee actions are recommendations to the League Board, which has the final say on all positions. Under no circumstances are individual committee members or the committee itself authorized to speak on behalf of the League. When a committee action is supported by a large majority (e.g., 32 to 3), the recommendation is placed on the Board's consent calendar. When the committee vote is split (e.g., 15-13), the item will be presented as an action item for the Board's discussion. Staff will also provide information about the reasons behind the committee's recommendation to the Board.

Most of the time, the Board adopts the recommendation of the policy committee. When the Board adopts a different position, staff will notify the committee members of the reason for the different position. This likely will be done in the next regular communication with the committee.

Some issues cut across more than one committee. When this occurs, staff will coordinate and bring a bill to more than one committee for review and recommendation. The recommendations are then forwarded to the League Board and if there is a different recommendation, the League Board resolves the difference.

**Role of the Committee Chair**

The chair's role is to balance the often competing needs of the membership to have a full and thoughtful discussion on the issues within the very real time constraint. The chair will often limit debate – either in the number of speakers or the amount of time each speaker has – in order to ensure that we can move ahead on our agenda and cover the items included. We ask that when you make comments on issues before the committee that you be brief and concise and that you not repeat what has already been stated. Also, if you have already spoken on an issue, the chair may ask you to hold your comments until after new speakers are able to share their comments.

**Committee Schedule and Process**

Committees generally meet three times a year plus an abbreviated meeting at the Annual Conference to review resolutions, if any are assigned to it. Meetings begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude by 3:00 p.m.

**Agendas/Disseminating Information**

A meeting notice is emailed to committee members about a month in advance of the meeting, containing travel and logistical information. An agenda packet is emailed about one week before a meeting. Highlights that summarize committee actions are prepared by staff and emailed to committee members about four weeks after the meetings. All materials are also available on the League's website: [www.cacities.org/polcomm](http://www.cacities.org/polcomm).

We encourage you to visit the League's website: [www.cacities.org](http://www.cacities.org). In addition to containing committee materials, the website contains information on the League's priorities and a link to track individual bills and the League's position on them. You should also subscribe to the League's electronic newsletter *CA City Advocate*."

For meetings that are heavy in legislative review (generally in April and June), staff will try to find a balance between getting the agenda packet out early and the need to delay finalizing the agenda packet in order to include as many legislative items as possible and in their most current version. At some meetings, staff may use a supplemental agenda for last minute legislative issues. We will use e-mail as appropriate to send out late-breaking information or to gather committee input throughout the year. It is important that we have your preferred e-mail.

**How to Get an Item on the Agenda**

Because staff prepares background material in advance of the meeting, and prepares the agenda in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, it is difficult to add items at the last minute. In addition, the League tries to comply with the spirit of the Brown Act in its meetings. If you wish to have the committee discuss an item, you should contact staff well in advance of the meeting in order to determine the feasibility of including it on the agenda, and if so, allow staff time to prepare the appropriate background material. Because of time constraints and a full work program before the committee, it may not always be possible to respond to such requests.

**Issues Should Have Statewide Impact**

Although some of you may represent your division, your department, your affiliate organization, or simply yourself, we should all keep in mind that the League must address issues of statewide impact and interest. Thus, while an issue or bill may be of interest to your city or region, if it does not have broader, statewide implications, the League likely will not engage in that policy discussion or take a position. You should keep this in mind if you wish to suggest an item for discussion.

**Brown Act and Roberts Rules of Order**

The League tries to comply with the spirit of the Brown Act. Thus, when the committee discusses items not already on the agenda (e.g., supplemental legislative agenda), the Chair will ask for a vote of approval to add that item to the agenda. The League also follows Roberts Rules of Order and provides a brief overview of key procedural steps in Roberts Rules as they apply to committees.

**Staffing for Committee**

Each committee has a staff lobbyist assigned to it. This individual is your main point of contact for logistics or questions about the agenda. Generally, each lobbyist has a “main” committee and will remain with the committee throughout the meeting. Occasionally he/she may leave the meeting to make guest appearances in other committees to discuss issues or bills.

**League Partners and Other Guests**

The League Partners have a non-voting representative assigned to each policy committee and are seated at the table with other committee members. In addition, city officials, other members of the League Partners Program, and interested members of the public are welcome to attend the meetings. We provide an opportunity for our League Partners and other members of the public to offer comment on items before the committee during the designated public comment period on the agenda.