

League of Women Voters Observer Corps

What is the League of Women Voters Observer Corps?

The League of Women Voter's Observer Corps is a group of volunteers who agree to attend and observe public meetings. The Observer Corps provides a structured way for citizens to exercise their right to know while providing a valuable service to the community. Observer Corps:

- help ensure that citizens are aware of decisions that impact their lives – how those decisions are made and how citizens can have input on those decisions;
- promote government transparency and accountability; and
- help Local Leagues tie their program planning and advocacy work to timely issues that are relevant to their community.

What is an Observer, and what does an Observer do?

An observer is an individual who attends a governmental meeting, notes what happens at the meeting, and reports back to the League and through the League to the community. By attending public meetings of local governmental bodies/agencies, observers learn more about what their government is doing. They learn about the issues facing their community and learn how issues are being addressed.

Observers also keep elected and appointed officials on notice; they let them know that someone is watching what decisions are being made and how they are being made. They help ensure that the issues facing their community are being handled "in the sunshine," in the open. Ideally, observers are monitoring both the issues being discussed as well as the process by which they are being discussed. While not every item up for discussion will relate to a League's priorities, ensuring that the meeting is being conducted in an open and acceptable way is critical to the League's efforts and the health of our democracy.

Observer programs are not vehicles for individuals to work personal or partisan agendas. Observers generally do not "act" on issues in these meetings unless serving as a designated spokesperson for the League, observers should not provide commentary or testimony on issues on behalf of the League. Instead, observers attend meetings to gather information. Through the process, their presence encourages better, more transparent government.

LWV Lavaca County's Observer Corp:

As a new League in Lavaca County, our plan is to kick off our Observer Corp with a one month "test drive" in April of 2019. With this one month "test drive", we will be recruiting volunteers who will agree to attend just one or two meetings, rather than to make a long-term commitment. We will be seeking volunteers from Yoakum, Moulton, Shiner and Hallettsville to attend meetings in their respective communities. For example, we will be seeking volunteers from Yoakum to attend Yoakum City Council and School Board meetings. We are hoping to identify two volunteers to attend each type of meeting as a team – thus two people from Yoakum would attend City Council meetings together. As a team, two volunteers can talk about what they observed and complete a questionnaire provided by the League to help document the meeting.