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POLICY ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ENTITIES

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PURPOSE: It is the purpose of this policy to promote relationships with other entities that share interest in and commitment to values that are consistent with those of the League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME), the League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund, Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) and MCCE Action (the organizations). These relationships may involve supporting the activities of other entities or becoming members in coalition with other entities.

DEFINITIONS:

- Supporting the activities of other entities may include endorsing, joining with or promoting such activities.
- Joining a coalition means having a representative of one or more of the organizations, responsible to the boards of directors of the organizations, on the governing body of such entity.

The guidelines to consider when asked to support the activities of another entity are whether:

- The activity is consistent with existing positions of the organizations.
- It will further current priorities or otherwise contribute significantly to the mission and vision of the organizations.
- Resource demands are compatible with efforts to achieve current priority goals.
- The activity will contribute to the strength of the organizations by positioning them as leaders in civic engagement, campaign finance reform and on other good

government policy issues, by building visibility, stimulating membership growth, or attracting long-term funding resources.

- The organizations have previous history and/or knowledge of and confidence in the leadership of the sponsoring entity.
- Activities co-sponsored or promoted by the LWVME Ed. Fund and MCCE must be consistent with their tax-exempt status and with the charitable purposes as enumerated in the Ed. Fund and MCCE bylaws.
- The boards of the organizations may also consider the overall context: whether they will be conspicuous by their absence or if there is an opportunity to provide solidarity or mutual support to other issue-based entities.

If the program or activity relates to a question of federal policy and meets other criteria for LWVME/MCCE participation, LWVME will seek approval from LWVUS.

Membership by the organizations in any coalition is subject to approval by the boards of the organizations and is reviewed for renewal on an annual basis.

Consideration of membership is contingent upon having a board representative, responsible to the boards of the organizations, on the coalition.

The boards of directors will consider the following questions when asked to join a coalition with another entity:

- Do the aims of the coalition mesh with the priorities of the organizations? This should be yes, recognizing that some coalitions may deal with many issues, some of which are not part of the programs of the organizations. But the major thrust of the coalition should be part of the programs of the organizations.
- Are the issues and goals of the coalition timely on the state or national agendas? This should elicit at least a qualified yes, acknowledging that some 'back burner' issues should be timely national issues.
- Are other members or proposed members in harmony with the positions of the organizations? This can have a variety of answers. It's an important consideration because it helps us evaluate old alliances and forge new ones.
- Will coalition activity be more effective than the organizations acting alone? While coalition activity by no means precludes the organizations from acting alone, coalition membership should enhance the ability of the organizations to achieve the ultimate goal.

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- Are we confident in the leadership of the coalition? The answer should be affirmative.
- Will the organizations be visible members of the coalition? Do we have expertise to provide? Preferably yes. But there are exceptions in cases where the organizations may deliberately enter a coalition as a lowkey participant in order to gain information about an issue which is not presently a top priority of the organizations.
- Will the demands on staff and volunteer time in the coalition be worth the effort? This is critical. We have to recognize that staff/board involvement in coalition activities means less time devoted to something else.
- Will any cash or non-personal in-kind donations to the coalition be worth the investment? We have generally been more receptive to coalitions that are 'free' than those that require money. But the importance and effectiveness of the coalition, rather than the monetary considerations, shall be the decisive factor.
- Will the membership in this coalition make the organizations stronger? Will working on the coalition strengthen the reputation of the organizations, enlarge our network of relationships, build public recognition for the work of the organizations, or generate new fundraising opportunities? Preferably yes, but there may be exceptions.
- The representative(s) of the organizations to a coalition in which the organizations are a member must have the prior approval of the state board president before making any formal public statement of the position of the organizations on a specific issue.
- If the coalition is taking public action in a matter where the position of the organizations is contrary to the position of the coalition, the organizations may request that a footnote be included stating that the organizations do not endorse the position of the coalition.
- Where the organizations have taken no position, the organizations may request that a footnote be included to indicate that the organizations do not have a position on the matter.
- In the absence of such footnotes, a public statement of the dissent or lack of position by the organizations may be issued.

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