

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ILLINOIS 2005-2007 POSITIONS IN BRIEF

The following are the *Positions in Brief* for the League of Women Voters of Illinois. Prior to application of the state positions at the local and/or regional level, Leagues should refer to the complete position, including background and previous action.

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWWUS positions: citizen rights, including citizen's right to know/citizen participation, individual liberties and public policy on reproductive choices; Congress and the Presidency; election process, including apportionment, campaign finance, and selection of the President; and voting rights.*

CONSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION AND AMENDMENTS: The League supports implementation of provisions for governmental change in the Local Government Article, and amendments to achieve merit selection of judges, a progressive, graduated income tax, the indirect statutory initiative and the recall of elected judges. The League maintains its support for positions already achieved in the Constitution but which may require effort to preserve.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE: The League supports expanded citizen initiative powers to change the structure of county government. Petition requirements for citizen-initiated change should be a percentage of actual voters in a recent jurisdiction-wide election. The League supports changes in the Illinois County Executive Act to provide a clear separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branches and easily understood referendum language.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: The League supports the increased use of intermediate sanctions in the community. Judges should retain discretion to choose between imprisonment and probation for most offenses. The League supports a sufficient number of trained probation officers and other court personnel, prompt trials, enforcement of jail standards and a system of bail that does not rely on financial ability as a criterion for pretrial release. Correctional services should conform to national professional standards, with programs and services that offer the opportunity for self-improvement. The League believes that the justice system must be adequately funded to carry out its goals. State funds should emphasize community sanctions over the construction of prisons. The League supports the expansion of prevention and treatment programs in order to ease the burden on the criminal justice system.

DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION: The League supports abolition of the death penalty in Illinois.

GUN CONTROL: The League supports legislative controls to stop the proliferation of private ownership of handguns and their irresponsible use. The League advocates restricting access to semi-automatic assault type weapons.

SCHOOLS: The League supports a system of high quality elementary and secondary schools for all children in Illinois, which provides for local control of school program and budget within minimum program requirements set by the State. The State should provide leadership to local communities for program development and should set standards for recognition and accreditation of schools. The effectiveness of educational programs should be evaluated regularly. The League favors minimum standards for graduation and promotion of students. The League supports increased professionalism for teachers including stringent teacher preparation standards, comprehensive teacher and principal evaluations, changes in tenure and increased teacher compensation. The State should assume the major responsibility for funding public schools and guarantee an adequate level of financial support. League believes that charters should be established by local school boards and that the Illinois State Board of Education should continue to monitor the progress of existing charter schools before supporting further expansion.

STATE ELECTION LAWS: The League supports uniform election laws and procedures throughout the state to ensure the integrity of the election system and opposes term limits for members of the General Assembly. The League believes that a good election system should provide stability and continuity of governance and should produce a legislature that addresses the problems of society effectively. It should be resistant to both outright fraud and other forms of political manipulation.

STATE FISCAL POLICIES: The League supports a diversified revenue system, which principally relies on a combination of broad-based taxes and user fees, is equitable, progressive, stable, responsive and simple.

STATE REDISTRICTING: The League supports a redistricting process, which is timely, orderly and meets the basic criteria relating to population, compactness and contiguity and the requirements of the 1965 U.S. Voting Rights Act and subsequent amendments.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on international relations issues only at the request of the LWWUS. These positions include: arms control; military policy and defense spending; trade; United Nations; and U.S. relations with developing countries.*

NATURAL RESOURCES POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWWUS positions: agriculture policy; environmental protection and pollution control; natural resources; public participation; and resource management.*

LAND USE: The League supports development of a comprehensive land use policy for Illinois that provides for orderly growth while preserving the environment, conserving natural resources and providing needed open space. The State should identify, plan for and have the final authority over key and critical areas within the state. Standards and guidelines for land use should be developed by the State with local governments making purely local decisions. At every stage there should be citizen input. The State should plan for adequate supplies of low and moderate income housing with every community providing a percentage under some kind of fair share plan. The League favors regional planning agencies with mandatory and continuous funding from local, regional and state sources. The League supports state enabling legislation for development impact fees.

LARGE-SCALE LIVESTOCK FACILITIES: The League supports strict regulation of large-scale livestock facilities on the state, regional and county levels to include statewide environmental controls, public hearings prior to siting and regional and/or county control of siting.

PESTICIDES: The League supports reduction of exposure to all pesticides. The use of non-toxic alternatives should be encouraged.

SOCIAL POLICY POSITIONS: *The Illinois League takes action on the state level in the following public policy areas based on these LWVUS positions: child care; early intervention for children at risk; equality of opportunity, including opposition to school vouchers and tuition tax credits, employment issues, affirmative action, fair housing, and equal rights; fiscal policy (see Government); gun control (see Government); health care; meeting basic human needs; urban policy; and violence prevention.*

CHILDREN'S SERVICES: The League believes that the State should play the leading role in meeting the needs of children and their families and have the primary role in funding to ensure that quality services are equitably available throughout the state. The League supports a continuum of community-based services that strengthens and preserves families and fosters healthy growth and development of children. Prevention and early intervention should have high priority. The League supports a juvenile court system that provides opportunities for effective protection, treatment, and rehabilitation. Detention should be reserved for delinquent children who meet professional screening criteria and provided separately from adult programs. The League opposes the automatic transfer of children to the criminal court and the death penalty for children.

INCOME ASSISTANCE: The League supports income assistance and supportive services for all low-income individuals and families.

MENTAL HEALTH: The League supports a comprehensive and coordinated system of treatment and rehabilitation services for mentally ill adults and children. There should be adequate funding, planning, program standards, and personnel training requirements for both state facilities and community programs. The League supports a broad array of adequate and accessible community services. Although primary responsibility should rest with the state, funding from local, federal, and non-governmental sources should be encouraged. A system of local boards to levy taxes, administer all funds, and to plan and coordinate services should be required throughout the state. The State should require local governments to provide in their zoning ordinances for residential programs for mentally ill persons.

ACTION FOCI and STUDIES

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Promote efforts to increase voter education, reduce barriers to the electoral process, and improve election procedures based on findings of the Election Administration Reform Committee including monitoring the implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. Assess and strengthen citizen participation in the state legislative process through the Democracy Project.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING: Promote efforts to provide stable, reliable and adequate revenues for public education and other social services.

STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: Investigate the need for a State Constitutional Convention. The Constitution of the State of Illinois requires that the question of a need for a constitutional convention be submitted to the voters every twenty years, if not sooner. The question was last submitted to the voters in 1988.

IMMIGRATION: Study how Illinois should respond to the challenges and opportunities of immigration in the areas of economic policy, social policy, which includes education, and the governmental process.