

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

Membership Manual *Section II: What We Stand For* *(last revised 2015)*



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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

SECTION II

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Table of Contents

THE LWVDV LOCAL POSITIONS.....	1
GOVERNMENT	1
CAMPAIGN FINANCING, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES	1
CIVIL SERVICE	1
EDUCATIONAL FINANCE	2
PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES.....	2
GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE	3
Planning Commissions.....	5
NATURAL RESOURCES	8
LAND USE PLANNING (General Plans).....	8
LAND USE	8
TRANSPORTATION	11
SOCIAL POLICY	13
JUVENILE JUSTICE	13
SOCIAL SERVICES	13
THE LWVC POSITIONS	14
THE LWVUS POSITIONS	14

THE LWVDV LOCAL POSITIONS

GOVERNMENT

CAMPAIGN FINANCING, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES (1983)

The LWVDV supports high standards for campaigns, increased public awareness of and community involvement in the election process, campaign finance practices which will ensure full disclosure of campaign contributions, and adherence by office holders to strict conflict-of-interest provisions. The League supports:

1. Extensive and equitable media coverage for candidates.
2. Timely, complete, and easily accessible disclosure of the amount and source of campaign contributions, including those made by or to independent committees. The League supports adding the following to the 60-Day Election Report:
 - a. An accurate financial summary for the entire campaign period.
 - b. An alphabetized list prepared by each candidate of all disclosed contributors for the entire campaign period.
3. An improved format for government-issued voter pamphlets, including use of large, easily readable type.
4. Improved voter information standards which will ensure relevant, accurate, and easily understandable information. The LWVDV supports campaign literature and political advertising which is clearly identified as to its source and as “paid political advertising.”
5. Standards for campaign practices which enable candidates to compete equitably and which speak to the issues. The LWVDV encourages candidates to enter into voluntary agreements for fair campaign practices.
6. A campaign ordinance provision that would define a large campaign contribution as a conflict of interest for an elected official when voting on an issue of economic benefit to the contributor.
7. Effective monitoring and enforcement of city and county campaign laws and ordinances. The LWVDV supports:
 - a. Greater public involvement in the monitoring and enforcement process.
 - b. Creation of a county-level election committee to educate voters, advise candidates, monitor elections, enforce campaign laws and ordinances, and process complaints.

CIVIL SERVICE (1974)

The LWVDV supports a modern, flexible, centralized, responsive county civil service system based on merit.

EDUCATIONAL FINANCE (1992)

(Adopted by concurrence with positions adapted from an LWV-Davis study.)

The LWVDV supports measures to involve the community at significant points in each district's budget process, particularly in the setting of priorities. LWVDV supports the following objectives:

1. Early publication of and adherence to a budget activities calendar which is well publicized throughout the community and which allows opportunities for formal public input through channels such as public hearings and advisory committees.
2. District policies requiring ongoing school-based and district-wide citizen advisory committees which review priorities annually. Such committees shall represent all segments of the community.
3. Early, well-publicized public hearings as a part of the priority-setting process and on other significant issues affecting the budget.
4. Use of the local press and district and school newsletters to inform the public on such matters as current policies, policy changes, agendas of board meetings and hearings, and school board proceedings.
5. Budget documents which are understandable to the community. Such documents should include detailed explanations of numbers, presented in graphic and narrative form; comparisons with previous budgets and actual figures; descriptions of programs that reflect true costs.

The LWVDV supports balanced district budgets with financing at a level adequate to meet the educational needs of students. LWVDV supports the following objectives:

1. Determination of class size, services, and programs based on educational needs rather than as a means of balancing the budget.
2. Maintenance of an adequate contingency fund reserved for emergencies.
3. Extended cooperation between school districts, community groups, and governmental agencies in bearing some of the costs of education. These may include such items as recreation, maintenance, transportation, health and welfare, etc.
4. A local tax as a legitimate tool for balancing the budget. (Such support is not to be construed as a blanket endorsement of all local taxes. Each must be considered on the merits of the specific issues and requires membership understanding and agreement.)

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES (Amended 1983)

(Adopted by concurrence with positions resulting from studies done by LWVs of Los Altos, Marin, Mountain View, and San Diego.)

The League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley (LWVDV) supports public libraries as a basic service of government with adequate funding by local, state, and federal governments.

LWVDV supports free access by all persons to public library service as a means of lifelong education and learning, and as a major source of knowledge and information necessary for informed, active participation in a democratic society. Objectives of this position:

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

1. Recognition of the essential service of free public libraries in a democratic society and government's basic obligation to provide the service with adequate funding.
2. Recognition that basic library services include the following:
 - a. Provision of services for all users including children, young adults, and handicapped persons.
 - b. Open hours on weekday mornings, afternoons, evenings and on weekends.
 - c. Professional staff for children, young adults, reference, and administrative activities.
 - d. Provision of books, periodicals, documents, California and local history items, large print and audiovisual material, computer-based indexing, and an accurate and easily used catalog system.
3. Support of the use of all available funding for public libraries as follows:
 - a. Recognition by local governments that they have the prime responsibility to finance public libraries.
 - b. Increased state and federal aid for public libraries.
 - c. Support of increased tax revenues to bring library services up to adequate or better.
 - d. Continued and increased private funding to expand library facilities and supplement services.
 - e. Opposition to charging fees for basic library services.
4. Support of measures designed to increase the efficiency and economy of public library operations.
 - a. Consolidation of library functions or systems to achieve cost effectiveness, maintenance and improvement of services, accessibility, and responsiveness.
 - b. Consideration of fees for special library services.
 - c. Use of volunteers to supplement paid staff.
5. Support of improvement of existing facilities or construction of new ones to make provision of essential services easier and to increase accessibility. Recognition that library facilities should be accessible to the public; should have adequate light, heating, study space, seating, storage space, work rooms for staff, access for handicapped persons, and parking; and should be clean and properly maintained.

GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

LWVDV - Special Districts (1978)

The LWVDV supports:

1. Coordination and cooperation among districts, facilitated by the support and encouragement of the Board of Supervisors, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), the Mayors' Conference, and other agencies.
2. Fiscal accountability of special districts, assisted by careful oversight and budget review by the Board of Supervisors and by adoption of fiscal policies which are meaningful to the citizen and which offer options in establishment of spending priorities.
3. Citizen knowledge of and participation in the governance by special districts.
4. A reduction in the number of districts through consolidation, annexation, and elimination. If a service can be provided by an existing governmental unit, it should be.
5. Election and appointment procedures which will guarantee a balanced representation of

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

the public interest on boards and commissions.

Orinda Fire Safety (Adopted 2002)

The Lamorinda Unit of the Diablo Valley League of Women Voters supports increased fire safety in the Community of Orinda. We support:

1. Adequate fire flow for all of Orinda, with a minimum water flow of 1000 gallons per minute per hydrant.
2. Enforcement of existing vegetation management legislation with adequate financing.
3. Programs organized for facilitating the removal of flammable vegetation.
4. Public and private roads and driveways accessible to fire vehicles.
5. A general plan consistent with the fire code and fire safety in general.

All solutions to fire safety problems should be fair, effective, flexible, efficient, and provide accountability to the public. Fire safety problems need to be addressed in a timely manner. Financing methods used to solve fire safety need to be appropriate to the time frame of the project. The League believes that the Moraga Orinda Fire District and the City of Orinda have the primary responsibility for developing solutions to fire safety problems including education, financing mechanisms, appropriate regulations and their enforcement.

San Ramon Valley Incorporation (1981–1982; amended 1997)

Incorporation gives control of land use, planning and zoning, police protection, and parks, roads, and other needs. We support incorporation of separate communities within the San Ramon Valley.

[San Ramon Valley] Alamo Incorporation (1985)

The SRV members of the LWVDV favor the incorporation of Alamo primarily because it would allow Alamo residents to control local planning. We find that incorporation is financially feasible, and we favor firm control over spending to stay within the budget developed for the new city. In addition, we favor:

1. The formation of special assessment districts when necessary.
2. Expansion of the business district for retail use only, not office use.
3. Expansion of the business district only in areas already designated on the County General Plan for commercial development.
4. A height limit in the business district to preserve the present nature of Alamo.
5. Reevaluation in three to five years if incorporation is not approved.

[Walnut Creek] City Budget (1981)

1. The Walnut Creek members of LWVDV support continued reliance on the sales tax as a major source of city revenue, as well as development of additional retail stores downtown. We do not favor a local sales tax over and above the state tax; however, if present tax sources become inadequate to fund local services, we would support a local vehicle tax, as well as a tax on office buildings and other commercial structures (excluding retail sales

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

buildings), to offset demands on city services such as police, street maintenance, and parking. If present and possible additional revenues are inadequate to fund present services, then cuts should be made in all department budgets before any program is entirely eliminated.

2. The Walnut Creek members of the LWVDV support continuing the present conservative fiscal management of the city, maintaining operating programs at present levels, maintaining the Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P.) at a high level, and changing the positions of City Clerk and Treasurer to appointive rather than elective positions.

PLANNING COMMISSIONS

Local Planning Commissions (Updated 2015)

The members of the LWVDV support the following:

1. A city (or town) Planning Commission should act as an advisory body concerned mainly with long-range planning and decisions affecting the physical growth of the city/town. It should be involved with developing general policies, zoning, approving subdivisions and other developments, as well as being alert to innovative solutions to planning problems.
2. A responsibility of the commission should be to inform the community of the objectives and nature of the planning process. Proper procedures should include adequate advance publicity of the agenda and opportunity for public input before decisions are made, availability to the public of the commission's working papers, and widespread publicity of the decisions.
3. The city/town council should, as far as is practical, appoint members to the Planning Commission who represent all segments of the community. By segments we mean those defined by geography, socioeconomics, age, sex, race, and ethnic background. While a balance of laypersons is desirable, candidates with professional backgrounds in related fields should not be excluded. Every effort should be made to avoid potential conflict of interest.
4. New members of the commission should be required to acquire a thorough knowledge of the area. Personal schedules of members should allow for ample time to do the job required.

[Moraga & Contra Costa Planning Commissions: Service on the commission should not exceed two consecutive two-year terms.]

5. Procedures for filling vacancies should include:
 - a. A well-publicized call for applicants stating the necessary qualifications, including that of being a resident of the jurisdiction.
 - b. Publication of a full list of applicants and their occupations.
 - c. An interview by the city/town Council of each applicant well in advance of the appointment.
6. The Environmental and Design Review Boards should advise the Planning Commission on the impact of development within the community, provide an architectural review of all projects, and work with applicants on matters such as grading, site plans, design, colors,

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

landscaping, signs, etc.

- a. Qualifications and vacancy procedures should be the same as for the Planning Commission.

[Lafayette]

1. Cooperation between the planning commission and other Lafayette commissions on matters of overlapping concern.

San Ramon Valley Area Planning Commission

The San Ramon Valley (SRV) members of the LWVDV support a local planning commission directly responsible to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, as opposed to a County Planning Commission. The purpose of the commission should be to provide the community with more local control over local decisions. Local commissioners are more aware of the needs of the community. The commission would recommend policies and special studies as the need arises.

The SRV members of the LWVDV recommend that:

1. The San Ramon Valley Area Planning Commission should meet the following criteria:
 - a. It should be composed of seven people.
 - b. Commissioners should reside in the San Ramon Valley and be involved in community affairs.
 - c. The Board should be balanced geographically, in background, and in business interests and occupations.
 - d. Commissioners should serve staggered two-year terms with no limit to the number of terms.
2. The San Ramon Valley Area Planning Commission should be chosen by a screening committee selected by the supervisors and composed of seven representatives from these groups:
 - a. One member, each representing the three general geographical areas of Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon.
 - b. One representative each from the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Realtors/Development, the R-7 Park District, and community organizations.
 - c. The screening committee would then recommend to the Board of Supervisors one candidate for each position on the Planning Commission.
3. The agenda should be available upon request and given to newspapers prior to each Planning Commission hearing. Staff reports and information on applications should be available to the public upon request and to the commissioners at least 4–5 days before the hearing. Commission meetings should be taped and those tapes made available to the public upon request.
4. The San Ramon Valley Area Planning Commission should look at the trend of planning decisions annually to see whether the General Plan should be reviewed. Review of the trends should be done at an open meeting. The Planning Commission should be empowered to appoint a citizens' committee to study and recommend revisions to the General Plan.
5. There should be long-term as well as short-term land-use planning, particularly in the following areas:
 - a. A balance in housing and employment in order to meet various socioeconomic needs.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

- b. Transportation planning, including circulation patterns and public transportation.
- c. Community, neighborhood, and regional parks.
- d. Contiguous development to prevent urban sprawl.
- e. Adequate school facilities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

LAND USE PLANNING

LWVDV - COUNTY AND CITY GENERAL PLANS (Updated 2015)

The LWVDV supports the concept of a Contra Costa County general plan as a guide to major land use in unincorporated areas of the county. The League also supports the use of city general plans as the guide to land use within incorporated cities. These plans should be effectively implemented. The LWVDV supports:

1. Measures and policies to preserve open space, parks, and agricultural land. The League supports the concept of cluster development and planned unit development as a means of maintaining open space in residential areas.
2. A coordinated transportation system which includes planning and implementation of alternate means of transportation to the private car, as well as adequate provision for pedestrian and bicycle paths.
3. Equality of opportunity for access to housing. A high priority should be placed on maintaining the housing element of each general plan; this should include a definite program for implementation.
4. Careful management of growth while balancing social, economic, and environmental criteria with energy concerns.
5. A careful and detailed review of general plans at least every five years, and adoption of ordinances to implement any resulting amendments. [PH: Adequate staff should be provided for continued long-range planning]
6. Full involvement of planning commissioners in long-range and current planning with delegation of minor decisions on variances and subdivisions to the zoning administrator or to a separate board of adjustment.
7. Thorough and careful study by each planning commission and its respective legislative body (Board of Supervisors or city council) of requests for rezoning which may be contrary to the general plan for that jurisdiction.
8. Better coordination between the planning agencies of the county and those of the cities for planning of unincorporated areas which are within the spheres of influence of the incorporated cities and for resolving issues of mutual concern.

LWVDV – LOCAL LAND USE (Updated 2015)

The members of the LWVDV support controlled growth of local cities and towns with concern for the physical character of the area. The General Plan should be followed closely and strong ordinances adopted to implement it. We support efforts to provide for a more attractive community by encouraging high standards in site planning, landscaping, and building design. We also support the following:

1. Stringent hillside ordinances to include controls on grading, tree and ground cover removal, sewage provisions, land use patterns, and flood and erosion control. We strongly support mandatory requirements of geological studies for hillside developments.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

2. Public transportation for the central business district, the dispersed employment centers, and residential areas.
3. Development of public facilities to serve the varying needs and requirements of neighborhoods in an adequate, balanced, and equitable manner, along with public transportation as a means of making community facilities accessible to all the dispersed areas.
4. Variety in housing for all income levels throughout residential areas, with emphasis on low-income housing that has been subsidized to below-market-value prices. As we increase density in development, planning for new construction should adequately provide for maintaining a good quality of life for new residents and the neighborhood as a whole.
5. A design for the central business district as a multipurpose area for commercial, educational, cultural, recreational, governmental, and residential use. Encourage the development of an attractive, viable, pedestrian-oriented core area.
6. [WC, 1984] Dispersed employment centers with landscaping, parking, and diversified transportation.
7. [Moraga] Limited expansion of service-connected businesses with a rigorous enforcement of esthetic standards.
8. [Orinda, 1990] Construction of new roads to conform with topography.

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

1. [Lafayette, 1980] The Lafayette members of the LWVDV support the maintenance and enhancement of the natural beauty and feeling of openness in Lafayette, including:
 - a. A coordinated program for preserving open space, especially prominent ridgelines, hillsides, and stream beds. The program should include environmental review, zoning regulations, planned unit development, public acquisition, and parkland dedication.
 - b. A comprehensive program for developing accessible and varied park and recreation areas, including coordinated trail systems.
2. [Moraga] Community parks which are easily accessible to all residents.
3. [Walnut Creek, 1984] Establishment of recreational areas throughout the city.

[Lafayette] Central Business District (see also Transportation) (1989)

We support an attractive and financially viable central business district, including:

1. Retail shops which are accessible, inviting, and complemented by adjacent zones designated for other commercial business. Retail use of ground floor in office buildings should be encouraged.
2. Designated crosswalks and improved signals to make it possible for pedestrians of all ages to cross Mt. Diablo Blvd., Moraga Road, and other four-lane arterials in the business district. Pedestrian circulation should be encouraged.
3. A unified plan of landscaping for the business district, as well as the requirement of extensive landscaping as a condition of approval for building in the business district.
4. Parking and pedestrian amenities achieved through assessment districts or other mechanisms.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

[Martinez] Land Use and Planning (1974)

The Martinez members of LWVDV support the concept of long-range planning for Martinez and the establishment of policies for implementing those plans. We support arrangement of land uses that will maintain or enhance the desirability of Martinez as a place to live for all its citizens. Consideration should be given to housing, traffic circulation, parks, recreation, and open-space needs, commercial and industrial factors, etc. We support detailed planning to achieve specific goals, particularly:

1. Maintenance of those natural features of the Martinez area that are visual and environmental assets.
2. Preservation of the image of historic Martinez and rehabilitation of older structures where feasible.
3. Retention of the major portion of the waterfront lands for open space, park, recreational, and related purposes. We oppose all industrial expansion or use in the waterfront area.
4. Amelioration of the physical, financial, and social impact of the county complex on the Martinez area. We encourage the city to pursue actively county cooperation in making this impact desirable rather than detrimental. Areas of concern include: traffic circulation patterns; increased daytime population; occupants, visitors, or outpatients of the jail and hospital; parking problems; visual impact of parking lots and county buildings; loss of tax base to the city.
5. Establishment of strong, cooperative relationships with all agencies affecting the development of Martinez or the quality of life of its citizens. We are concerned about the effects of pollution caused by peripheral industry. Further, we feel annexation of unincorporated islands and intruding peninsulas is desirable.

[San Ramon Valley] Slope Density/Ridgeline Development (1986)

The SRV members of the LWVDV support the adoption of a slope density/ridgeline development ordinance for all unincorporated areas of the San Ramon Valley. The purpose of the ordinance is to preserve the scenic ridgelines of the valley, as well as to protect owners in the areas of landslides and seismic danger.

The SRV members of the LWVDV recommend that:

1. The County's existing slope density ordinance, developed for Orinda, should be strengthened in the following manner and adopted for all unincorporated areas of the Valley:
 - a. The local planning commission should review architectural and landscape design.
 - b. All utilities should be placed underground.
 - c. Building within 100 feet of the ridgeline should be prohibited.
2. The local planning commission should have a balance of members, including those with engineering, architectural, and/or design backgrounds.
3. Cities wishing to adopt a slope density ordinance should review existing ordinances. The public hearing process should then be followed.
4. The review process of the planning commission should strictly control variances. A variance to build on top of a ridgeline should only be approved if no other development site is available per parcel. Any ridgeline variance should include a height restriction.
5. The use of planned unit developments should be encouraged in order to dedicate the ridgelines as general open space by clustering developments in the low lands.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

6. Development should be inspected to ensure that rules, ordinances, and/or professional guidelines have been strictly adhered to. Inspections should include technical and design reviews.

TRANSPORTATION

LWVDV – Transportation (1990)

The LWVDV recognizes the need for both long-term and immediate ongoing solutions to transportation problems. We support:

1. Improved public transportation.
2. A coordinated transportation system which includes planning and implementation of alternative means of transportation to the private car and adequate provision for pedestrian and bicycle paths.
3. Transportation Systems Management programs (TSM) which have wide citizen awareness and participation.
4. Measures to reduce traffic congestion, such as carpool lots near peripheral freeway interchanges and satellite parking for public transportation; adequate public transportation to BART stations to reduce traffic congestion; and shuttle bus service from parking areas to shopping areas and to public transportation.
5. Long- and short-term planning which includes:
 - a. Solutions to such problems as oversaturation, excessive noise, poor air quality caused by traffic, and a variety of intersection hazards on arterials involving automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
 - b. Planning and feasibility studies for new arterials or improvement of existing arterials, as well as addition of new and/or improvement of existing traffic control devices.
 - c. Development of circulation plans to relieve areas of traffic congestion.
6. Implementation of traffic mitigations identified in new-development EIRs.
7. Separation of bicycle and pedestrian circulation from motor traffic and encouragement of safety training for bicyclists.
8. Encouragement of multi-use trails with appropriate surfaces for pedestrians, joggers, bicyclists, and equestrians.
9. Cooperation between neighboring cities to solve transportation problems through the following measures:
 - a. Joint meetings of neighboring city councils, or their subcommittees, to discuss common transportation problems and possible mitigations.
 - b. Consideration of new roads, improvements to existing roads, and sources of funding. New road construction should be done in conjunction with growth management if the additional capacity created by the improvement is not to disappear.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DIABLO VALLEY

LWVDV - Transportation Right-of-Ways (1992)

The LWVDV supports the preservation of right-of-ways (ROWs) for the movement of people and goods. Criteria to be used in evaluating which ROWs merit support for preservation include:

1. Trip demand
2. Absence of alternative solutions to traffic problems
3. Cost/benefit trade-off
4. Availability for future use or acquisition
5. Current and anticipated population pressure/density
6. Environmental and economic impact
7. Accessibility (Can you get to it?)

The LWVDV supports the following measures to improve ROW planning:

1. More long-range planning
2. More interjurisdictional and interagency cooperation
3. Better financial accountability for distribution of transportation funds.

[San Ramon Valley] Southern Pacific Right-of-Way (SP-ROW) (Amended 11/87)

The SRV members of the LWVDV support:

1. The encouragement and facilitation of non-motorized transportation on the SRV portion of the SP-ROW through improvement and completion of a multiple-use trail. A multiple-use trail is defined as providing a paved surface for pedestrians and bicycles and an appropriate surface for joggers and equestrians.
2. Maintaining the present and future use of the ROW for an underground public utility corridor.
3. Preservation of the SP-ROW for use as a linear park. The proximity of the ROW to schools and business districts in Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon and to the business park development in San Ramon provides a unique opportunity for non-motorized transportation as well as recreational use.

We support the use of the ROW for non-motorized transportation, recreational, and underground utility corridor purposes only. We cannot justify the use of the ROW for motorized transportation. We believe that feasible alternative routes exist for motorized mass transportation in the San Ramon Valley.

SOCIAL POLICY

JUVENILE JUSTICE (Amended 1983)

The LWVDV supports:

1. Vigorous, well-staffed, and effective services for juveniles and their families.
2. Emphasis on prevention of delinquency and on early rehabilitation through establishment of adequate treatment facilities in the child's local community provided by individuals, families, foster homes, crisis homes, group homes, churches, schools, and other community agencies, in coordination with city and county agencies.
3. Detention of juveniles as a last resort.
4. Measures that de-institutionalize juveniles designated as 6O1s; that is, children whose offense would not be a crime if they were adults, such as running away, having "delinquent tendencies," or being beyond parental control
 - a. Legislative change to a judicial system (e.g., family court) separate from the criminal justice system, which would have mandated control over 6O1s, along with:
 - Greater cooperation between agencies;
 - Diversionary programs which would keep 6O1s out of the criminal justice system;
 - Emphasis on early assessment and treatment of problems leading to runaway behavior; e.g., court-ordered counseling.
 - b. Uniform countywide procedures for handling runaways by law enforcement agencies with flexibility allowed for specific local situations.

SOCIAL SERVICES (LOCAL POSITIONS)

[Lafayette] Recreation (1980)

We support adequately staffed and funded recreation programs and facilities to meet the needs of all of the citizens, especially those whose needs are not currently met through the volunteer programs.

THE LWVC POSITIONS

The League of Women Voters of California has positions on the following issues:

GOVERNMENT

- California State Constitution
- Campaign Financing
- Elections Systems
- Initiative and Referendum
- Intergovernmental Relationships
- Public Libraries
- Redistricting California
- State and Local Finances
- Voting Rights

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Agriculture
- Air Quality
- California Water Resources
- Energy
- Hazardous Materials
- Land Use
- Solid Waste
- Transportation

SOCIAL POLICY

- Child Care
- Community College System
- Education
- Housing
- Juvenile Justice/Dependency
- Legal Aid
- Mental Health Care

The LWVC also has Action Policies on the following issues:

- Sustainable Communities
- Growth Management Action Policy
- Children and Family Issues

See www.lwvc.org/issues/lwvc-positions for the full positions of the League of Women Voters of California or write LWVC, 801 12th Street, Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95814

THE LWVUS POSITIONS

See www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues for the LWVUS positions or write: The LWVUS, 1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036-4508.