

League of Women Voters of North Carolina (LWVNC)

Public Policy Positions

Preface. League action occurs at every level of government after members reach a position on an issue. A League “position” is defined as: (1) a set of guidelines by which proposed government action can be measured; or (2) an expression of League goals against which proposed government action can be evaluated. League boards, with this guidance from the membership, can then study proposed legislation or regulations, and have the flexibility to work with others to achieve our goals. The League board decides whether to support or oppose proposed measures on specific issues.

The State League may use national positions for action on state issues and on issues in the state program that delegates to state conventions have voted to continue. Local Leagues may also take action within their jurisdiction based on state and national positions. If any action has the potential to affect Leagues in other states, the State League consults with the National League and with the affected Leagues. If Local League actions would impact Leagues in other communities or have an impact beyond the borders of that particular League community, it is necessary for that Local League Board to consult with the State and/or National League and the other affected Leagues. Most importantly, members should support the action, be kept informed, and have opportunities for discussion and evaluation. A complete list of the LWVUS positions may be found in the League of Women Voters of the United States **Impact on Issues 2020-2022: A guide to public policy positions** available at LWV.org.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Goals

- Government should be open, accountable, ethical and responsive to citizens.
- Citizen participation on state boards should be encouraged.
- Measures to eliminate barriers to voting should be encouraged.
- Authority for administration and enforcement of election laws should be centralized in the State Board of Elections.
- Elections should be applied consistently across the state and from one county to another.
- A permanent, uniform voter registration should be maintained across the state.
- Training of election officials should be mandated and paid for by the state at both state and county levels.

ELECTION LAWS

Promote measures that safeguard the rights of the voter and encourage clear and democratic election procedures. Promote and support election laws in North Carolina that emphasize full participation of all citizens in the democratic process.

ELECTION PROCESS. The US Constitution requires nationwide and statewide reapportionment and redistricting based on the decennial census, providing an opportunity to review mandates of the North Carolina Constitution as well as of the Voting Rights Act. The original LWV positions support centralization of authority for administration and enforcement of election laws and on the consistency of application of such laws across the state and from one county to another.

REDISTRICTING. The League of Women Voters believes responsibility for redistricting preferably should be vested in an independent special commission, with membership that reflects the diversity of the unit of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups, and members of minority groups. Every redistricting process should include specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan, full disclosure throughout the process, and public hearings on the plan proposed for adoption.

Redistricting at all levels of government must be accomplished in an open, unbiased manner with citizen participation and access at all levels and steps of the process, should be subject to open meeting laws, and should provide that any redistricting plan be adopted by the redistricting authority with more than a simple majority vote.

The standards on which a redistricting plan is based, and on which any plan should be judged, must be enforceable in court and require substantially equal population, geographic contiguity, and effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities. The standards should provide (to the extent possible) for promotion of partisan fairness, preservation and protection of “communities of interest,” and respect for boundaries of municipalities and counties. Compactness and competitiveness may also be considered as criteria so long as they do not conflict with the above criteria.

The standards should explicitly reject protection of incumbents, through such devices as considering an incumbent’s address, and preferential treatment for a political party, through such devices as considering party affiliation, voting history and candidate residence.

Congressional district, both houses of the state legislature, county, as well as municipal government districts including boards of education, should be apportioned primarily according to population. Districts should be

single-member, compact, convenient, contiguous, and should reflect a community of interest. Specific standards of fair representation as required by the National Voting Rights Acts should be assured.

Remedial provisions should be established in the event that the redistricting authority fails to enact a plan. Specific provision should be made for court review of redistricting measures and for courts to require the redistricting authority to act on a specific schedule. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review. The courts should promptly review and rule on any challenge to a redistricting plan and require adjustments if the standards have not been met.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public’s right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT/VICE PRESIDENT

The League believes the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government and therefore supports:

- Abolishment of the Electoral College by Constitutional Amendment
 - Use of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact as an acceptable way to achieve the goal of direct popular vote for the election of the President until the Electoral College is abolished.
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CITIZEN RIGHTS

PUBLIC POLICY ON REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES.

Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

NONPARTISAN SELECTION

The League supports:

- Non-partisan selection of judges
 - The concept of a broadly-based judiciary nominating commission for the selection of well-qualified nominees and appointment preferably from the nominees.
 - The option for counties to elect commissioners on a partisan or nonpartisan basis.
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NATURAL RESOURCES

Goals

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, waste management, and water resources.

ORGANIZE STATE AGENCIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES. Consolidate environmental regulatory agencies in the state.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASING EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT. Promote changes in the policies, procedures, and regulations governing the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and Tidelands.

Provide strict regulation to protect the environment, require responsible government management of the public's natural resources. Decisions on such protection and management must be based on a process that provides time and opportunity for full citizen participation.

The orderly and prudent development of publicly owned petroleum resources - both national and state - must be guided by national and state energy policies that recognize these resources as finite and not expendable. We support a decreased reliance on fossil fuels and an increased emphasis on conservation and the use of renewable energy sources. Such a policy would dictate greatly reduced frequency and size in lease sales with improved environmental safeguards.

Policies, procedures, and regulations must comply with all federal and state laws.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND POLLUTION CONTROL

Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

AIR QUALITY. Support high air quality through control of pollutants including acid rains and toxins.

Support measures to reduce vehicular pollution, including inspection and maintenance of emission controls; changes in engine design and fuel types and development of more energy efficient transportation systems; regulations and reduction of pollution from stationary sources; regulation and reduction of ambient toxic-air pollutants; measures to reduce transboundary air pollutants, such as ozone and those that cause acid deposition.

ENERGY. Support energy goals and policies that acknowledge the United States as a responsible member of the world community; reduction of energy growth rates; use of a

variety of energy sources, including alternative energy, conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies; the environmentally sound use of energy resources, with consideration of the entire cycle of energy production; predominant reliance on renewable resources; policies that limit reliance on nuclear fission;

action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources, alternative energy and energy conservation through funding for research and development, financial incentives, rate-setting policies, and mandatory standards; mandatory energy conservation measures, including thermal standards for building efficiency, new appliance standards, and standards for new automobiles with no relaxation of auto-emission control requirements; policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity through techniques such as marginal cost or peak-load pricing or demand management programs; maintaining deregulation of oil and natural gas prices; assistance for low-income individuals when energy policies bear unduly on the poor.

LAND USE. Support land use policies of statewide and regional application that would effectively guide development to conserve resources and protect the natural environment. Support property tax policies which will promote wise use of land to meet present and future needs.

The North Carolina state government should assume the responsibility:

- to formulate and implement a comprehensive state land use policy or to set policies in accordance with well-defined state goals.
- to prepare land resource inventories and to keep them updated with an emphasis on land capability.
- to identify critical areas and to provide for their protection from unwise development, including development which would result in predictable and unjustified costs to taxpayers.

Critical areas include fragile ecological systems, steep slopes, floodplains, and dunes.

- to designate a clearinghouse and coordinating agency for land use policies of other state agencies, federal and state expenditures affecting land use as well as local and regional planning efforts.
- to require that local, city and county governments do long-range planning and implementation according to state guidelines and in cooperation with regional planning offices.
- to acquire and hold lands for public purposes in fee simple and also to acquire certain selected property rights in land by use of such devices as easements, leases, and options. "Public purposes" should include not only health, safety and welfare, but also recreation, housing, industrial siting, aesthetics, and environmental protection.
- to coordinate location of transportation and delivery systems such as utility rights of way, power plant siting and dams.
- to study and recommend property tax and appraisal methods to further state, regional, and local land use goals. Preferential treatment on property tax should be granted only in exchange for the public acquisition of some property right or some public service deemed necessary or desirable.
- to see citizen participation at all levels of government, at formative stages of all major development projects. Wide publicity, public hearings, public consultation with local governments and regional planning agencies, and broad citizen representation on policy-making boards at all levels should be used in this effort.

WATER RESOURCES. Promote high water quality standards through monitoring, watershed protection regulation, stormwater management, basin-wide water resource planning, coastal water resource protection, and equitable financing.

WASTE MANAGEMENT. Support a comprehensive waste management program

that would encourage waste prevention, reduction, recovery and recycling and that would discourage the underground storage of hazardous materials. Hazardous waste that cannot be reduced, stabilized or destroyed should be stored in long-term retrievable storage until adequate technology is available.

Support: policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes; policies to ensure safe treatment, transportation, storage, and disposal of solid wastes in order to protect public health and air, water, and land resources; planning and decision-making processes that recognize suitable solid and hazardous wastes as potential resources; policies for the management of civilian and military high- and low-level radioactive wastes to protect public health and air, water, and land resources; establishment of processes for effective involvement of state and local governments and citizens in siting proposals for treatment, storage, disposal and transportation of radioactive wastes; full environmental review of treatment, storage and disposal facilities for radioactive wastes; safe transport, storage, and disposal of radioactive wastes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. Promote public understanding and participation in decision-making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

SOCIAL POLICY

Promote social and economic justice, secure equal rights for all, and combat discrimination and poverty.

Equality of Opportunity

EQUAL RIGHTS. Promote economic, social, legal, and constitutional equality for all.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Promote quality public education for all students through the secondary level, with a continuing emphasis on the equalization of financing of public schools, and consolidation of school districts, when feasible, to provide for improved administration, better use of facilities, and broadened school instructional offerings.

Support developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

Improve quality of teaching through such means as ongoing professional development, more comprehensive teacher training programs, and higher salaries.

Support appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Support increased citizen participation through formation of school site and district public school advisory committees.

Continue efforts to improve administrative efficiency and judicious use of funds. State funding should be sufficient to support state curriculum requirements in all counties.

Hold all schools and entities that receive public funds to the same educational accountability and transparency standards as traditional public schools.

Oppose shifting public school dollars to private and for-profit entities: this includes vouchers tax credits, scholarships or other use of public tax dollars to fund private and parochial school (real or virtual) attendance.

The League of Women Voters of North Carolina supports the following:

- That full access to a PK-12 public education that prepares individuals for their future as global citizens, is a basic right and should not be subject to discrimination on the basis of race,

religion, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, geography, socio-economic class, linguistic difference or disability. Our recommendations would include:

1. Full implementation of the Leandro Comprehensive Remediation Plan priorities with recommended action steps and timelines adopted and funded in order to meet the constitutional requirement of a sound, basic education for all students.
2. Enacting policies, standards and practices that promote equity of opportunity and access with the explicit recognition that diversity of educational professionals as well as students is a positive factor contributing to the success of individuals, schools, the workforce and the community.
- Supports provision of secure, sufficient and equitable state funding that accomplishes the following:
 1. Full funding of birth-K programs for all children including inclusive education and appropriate services for those with health, learning, language, physical, social, emotional challenges and other special needs. This includes funding policies and formulas related to special education and specialized services.
 2. Sufficient and appropriate resources to promote continuous student growth and achievement PK-12 including:
 - a. Safe, secure and sufficient space, equipment and materials and fully accessible virtual options for all general and specialized classrooms, programs and services across all grades; including full access to high speed internet and cell service available to all NC households set as a legislative priority essential for ensuring equal access to education for all students.
 - b. Manageable class sizes and caseloads that allow for differentiated and responsive instruction and student services PK-12;
 - c. Sufficient and equitable access for all students to up to date instructional resources, including high quality virtual learning and assessment options that expand instructional environments within the public school system;
 - d. Pay scales and benefits that attract and sustain sufficient numbers of qualified classroom teachers, pupil services professionals, administrators and support personnel. This includes actions that address achieving diversity across the workforce.
 3. Policies, working conditions and school cultures that respect professionalism and the teaching profession and which promote educator and administrator effectiveness including: ongoing professional learning, salaries competitive with the national average, access to up to date and sufficient classroom equipment and materials; evaluation systems and reporting that reflects the complexity of teaching and learning both in person and virtual and civil, respectful communications.

4. An equitable, meaningful and viable method for evaluating all public schools—including charter schools supported by taxpayer money—developed using input from a balanced representative body including public school superintendents.

FISCAL POLICY

TAX POLICY. Support an equitable and efficient system of taxation in North Carolina that will adequately fund needed services at both the state and local level.

- The burden of taxes should be in proportion to the taxpayers' ability to pay.
- All taxpayers have the duty/right to contribute to the common good.
- For government to tax in excess of the requirements of the common good or to waste tax revenues is unjust since this unfairly deprives the taxpayer of his property and the product of his labor without a corresponding common benefit.
- The taxation and appropriation process should allow government the necessary flexibility for responsible fiscal management.
- The use of tax laws as incentives or disincentives to action should be viewed in the light of the common good.
- The granting of tax preferences (e.g., exemptions, deductions, etc.) should be genuinely premised on the promotion of the common interest and not upon special interest or favoritism.
- Taxes once established should be collected with even-handed enforcement.
- The norm for choosing a form of taxation should first be the equitable distribution of civic burden and not the ease of collection or lack of popular opposition. However, where there are equivalent, equitable options the simpler methods should be used.

- The tax system should be diversified to provide a broad revenue base and to minimize the effect of imperfections in any one tax. Each form of taxation should not be examined in isolation but evaluated as part of the total tax system. Further, the impact of tax laws should be consistent with other public policies, e.g., the conservation of energy, the preservation of neighborhoods, etc.

CORPORATE INCOME TAXES. Support a corporate income tax schedule with graduated rates increasing as income rises. General business franchise rates, taxes and other franchise rates should be reviewed and adjusted. Exemptions for business should be reconsidered.

HIGHWAY FUND TAXES. If more revenue is needed for the highway fund, the highway use tax and overweight permits should be increased.

INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX. The current state individual income tax system should be simplified and better reflect ability to pay. Methods of determining individual taxable income should be aligned more closely with the federal income tax system. The state can apply its own policies through adjustments to income and levels of deductions. The standard deduction should be increased, and provisions made for future adjustments through periodic review and revision. Tax progressivism should be established with a broader range of tax rates, and the threshold for paying any income tax needs to be raised. Any exemptions should be applied to all types of pensions.

SALES TAX. Regressive taxes on essential products and services, such as food and utilities, should be removed. Current exemptions and preferential sales tax rates should be reviewed to determine if they are justified, consistent, and equitable. There should be an equitable extension of the sales tax to all services.

NEW REVENUE SOURCES. All local governments should be given the option to utilize new

revenue sources such as impact fees, land transfer fees, and room occupancy fees. There should be a severance tax for the removal of natural products from the ground.

HOUSING

Promote equal access to housing for all citizens of North Carolina. Support the adoption of a statewide housing policy and a minimum statewide housing code. Support a state initiative to increase the supply of housing for low-income persons in the wake of decreased federal funding.

CHILD CARE

Promote the availability of quality day care to all North Carolina families regardless of socioeconomic status, through adequate state and federal standards, financial assistance, and monitoring the enforcement of those standards.

The League supports:

- higher standards for licensing requirements, abolishing 20% tolerance above the number of children in the licensing specifications
- better staff training
- judging compliance at group level, equalization of licensing and certification standards
- strengthening existing monitoring programs and policies, greater emphasis on regulations and monitoring in the areas of health and safety, specific standards and required registration of family day care homes
- requiring an educational developmental program for all center-based day care
- a single state day care unit for licensing, certification, and monitoring
- a citizen majority on the Day Care Licensing Commission
- federal assistance to reimburse cost of care at a ceiling, to assist licensed centers meet certification standards, to help families

needing day care but exceeding Title guidelines

- abolishing socioeconomic segregation within the day care system
- encouraging state to purchase care from private centers
- encouraging families to purchase care from certified centers
- diversity of child care options
- more services to families with special needs, including: transportation, after-school care, migrant workers, families with disabilities or emotionally disturbed parents/children
- industry supported day care through tax incentives to businesses, scholarships for purchasing care, on-site care.
- a program of community and parental awareness.

EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

Support policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well being and encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children. These include: 1) child abuse/neglect prevention; 2) teen pregnancy prevention; 3) quality healthcare, including nutrition and prenatal care; 4) early childhood education; 5) developmental services, emphasizing children ages 0-3; 6) family support services; and 7) violence prevention.

ELDER CARE

Support the state in taking an aggressive role in the provision of services to dependent older adults.

Create standards and enforcement mechanisms.

- Establish, monitor and enforce standards defining state and county responsibilities for institutions ranging from in-home residential care to nursing homes.

- Expand and improve Ombudsman program services.
- Improve opportunities for citizen participation in establishing and monitoring county and state policies and programs.

Ensure access to services.

- Establish in each county, a single point of entry for information, referral, and intake for dependent older adults and families in need of assistance with their care
- Guarantee equitable access to all services
- Equalize formulas for county funding from the state based on age, race, poverty and other demographic status of the county
- Establish eligibility for public subsidies for services based on age, income, functional impairment, and type of residence and family support
- Expand and improve Medicaid eligibility

Require minimum services. Create, in every county, access to the following core services, not necessarily provided by the county, but accessible through county referral, for example: transportation, adult daycare, in-home aides, congregate meals, home-delivered meals, protective services, medical equipment, and therapies.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Promote fair and equal treatment of all citizens involved in the criminal justice system, including victims and witnesses.

Promote swift, sure, and fair disposition for every defendant and promote measures to assure the relief of overcrowding and inmate idleness; support improved services to juveniles through mandatory statewide guidelines, special training for personnel, and elimination of inter-agency fragmentation; support improvements in education and/or training for employment, and family visitation for

incarcerated females; provide special assistance to inmates with disabilities; and encourage increased use of alternatives to incarceration for non-violent crimes.

Support the establishment of a witness assistance program in every court district.

Support limited compensation for all victims of violent crimes, including services and financial support for all victims regardless of their income.

Establish community alternatives to incarceration in state training schools and local jails.

Encourage increased attention by policy makers to the needs of females in jails and prisons (family visitation, education, vocational training and work release opportunities).

Build public trust and positive community relationships through law enforcement engagement with community members and encourage community participation in the development of law enforcement policy.

Staff law enforcement departments to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, establish recruitment efforts that reflect this principle and conduct comprehensive background checks, to include such history as PTSD, domestic violence, sex offenses and affiliations with domestic terrorist groups, for all applicants to law enforcement positions.

Provide law enforcement accountability via independent citizen oversight of law enforcement and publicly available data on officer conduct. Disseminate information to the public about law enforcement policies, recruitment, procedures for complaint/commendation, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens and officers in interactions with each other.

*The League of Women Voters of North Carolina supports nonpartisan School Board elections.

*Pending action at LWFNC Council 2024

After the conclusion of the 2023 LWFNC Convention, it was brought to our attention by a convention delegate that the process to propose an amendment to our Program did not follow the procedure outlined in the LWFNC bylaws and that the motion and vote should therefore be rescinded. The amendment to add a sentence about supporting the nonpartisan election of school board members was brought from the floor, voted on and passed. At the time, the error in the process was not noted by the chair or our parliamentarian. However, bylaws stipulate that proposed Program changes must be submitted to the LWFNC board for review at least three months in advance of the convention. Upon approval by the board, the proposed changes are then shared with the membership. Because the amendment from the floor did not follow that procedure, we are designating the motion as "Pending" and have asked for the Public Education LAT to provide supporting data for the amendment and it will be reintroduced for a vote at the 2024 Council.

Jennifer McMillan Rubin
President