

Position on Basic Principles about Public Education

Adopted 1987

Position

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes a primary purpose of public education in the United States is to produce informed, active, creative citizens with critical-thinking skills necessary for the success of our representative form of government. Public education must instruct students in the common heritage of all American groups and promote the tolerance and diversity that preserves our democratic institutions and safeguards our individual liberties. Therefore:

The Missoula League of Women Voters, consistent with the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, believes that in public education:

- Intellectual and academic freedom for both students and teachers must be respected;
- These freedoms must be upheld within the framework of law and mutual regard for all persons; and
- These freedoms may be tempered by appropriateness to the goals of specific courses and those of the student.

The Missoula League of Women Voters believes that teaching in public schools should be accurate and unbiased and that:

- The facts of a diverse world that is multi-cultural, multi-racial, and which includes both women and men, should be addressed;
- Wide exposure to a diversity of viewpoints should be available to students in addition to instruction in basic academic skills; and
- A robust exchange of ideas is essential to the development of skills for critical thinking and rational decision-making.

The Missoula LWV supports the Supreme Court decision which holds that "...one's education is not complete without a study of religion and...its relationship to the advancement of civilization...."

- Secular education should incorporate the study of important religious ideas and history into courses where relevant, but
- The teaching of various religious ideas and beliefs must never attempt to indoctrinate students in the tenets of a particular religion.

The League of Women Voters believes that in public education there must be a balance among legitimate rights of parents to control the education of their own children, the rights of all students to learn, and the country's need for educated citizens.

The Missoula League of Women Voters further holds that adequate funding, that is both efficient and equitable, must be assured for high equality public education. The Missoula League also, along with all Leagues, believes government at all levels must be accountable and accessible to citizens by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records available.